



## 1 Introduction

Holme Court School is an independent, specialist provision for pupils aged 7-16yrs with dyslexia and associated specific learning difficulties. The school is registered with the DfE under the category of Cognition and Learning.

All pupils have special educational needs, most have EHCPs, and all are considered vulnerable.

Holme Court School is located within Cherry Hinton Park. To all intents and purposes, the park is an extension of the school grounds; being used on a daily basis for break times. COSMo, PE, forest school and additional curriculum activities also take place on a regular basis within the park grounds.

As stated in the school's Admission Policy, Holme Court School is not registered to accept pupils whose primary need is SEMH including those with challenging behaviour. Additionally, due to the potential dangers posed by its location it is not able to accept pupils who may have abscond.

## 2 Scope of policy and guidance

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. Children/young adults who go missing are potentially at risk of harm, be it physical, emotional, sexual and/or economic in nature.

Holme Court School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of pupils and expects all staff, volunteers, and visitors to share this commitment.

This policy and the procedures herein apply to all pupils who register at school in the morning and then go missing for any reason during the school day without permission.

A separate procedure exists for Children Missing Education.

## 3 Policy statement

Working Together (2015) outlines the key objectives for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing the impairment of children's health
- ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

All staff at Holme Court School actively work to provide a secure, safe environment, a school where pupils want to come to enjoy learning with others as part of a caring community.

We recognise that it is highly unlikely that a pupil will try to abscond from our school, but this policy and accompanying procedures are in place to ensure that we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

#### 4 Legislative compliance

Under Section 3 of the Health & Safety at work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.

This policy further takes into consideration:

- The Children Act 1989/2004 guidance
- Education Act 2002
- Health & Safety at Work Act, 1974

It also complements the following statutory guidance:

- Statutory Guidance on 'Children who run away or go missing from home or care DfE (2014)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE (2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children DfE (2015)
- Children Missing Education DfE (2016)

#### 5 Aims

This policy sets out procedures for maintaining safety and dealing with the unlikely event of a pupil going missing from the school site promptly and efficiently.

This policy aims to:

- ensure that the building, grounds and play areas are safe and secure during school hours
- ensure that staff keep pupils under proper supervision at all times
- set out clearly for all staff, parents/carers, pupils and stakeholders, the process that staff at Holme court School will follow in the event of a pupil absconding from school or a school led activity
- ensure that if a pupil goes missing during the school day, he/she/they is located quickly and returned safely to school as quickly as possible

While this guidance aims to be as comprehensive as possible it will inevitably omit some circumstances.

If staff are in any doubt about the need for reporting an incident the DSL/DDSL should contact the relevant Education Safeguarding Officer to the local authority as soon as possible.

## 6 Definitions

To **Abscond** is to 'leave without permission.'

A pupil will be defined as having gone missing if they have been out of sight of members of staff for more than ten consecutive minutes.

Internal absconding	External absconding
Internal absconding- where the pupil leaves the care of the responsible person without permission but remains on the school site	External absconding-where a pupil leaves the school site without permission
Where a pupil leaves a lesson without permission but remains on the school site	Where a pupil leaves an offsite provision without permission eg curriculum swimming or alternative education provision etc
Where a pupils leaves a club, run by or on behalf of the school, without permission but remains on eth school site	Where a pupil leaves a defined area or the supervision of the responsible adult without permission eg when undertaking field work or on an educational visit
	Where a pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission eg transport to and from school, transport to or from an educational visit

### Truancy vs absconding

Truancy means missing school on a regular basis for no good reason. It is also called 'unauthorised absence.'

Truancy is any intentional, unjustified, unauthorised or illegal absence from compulsory education. It is absence caused by pupils of their own free will, and usually does not refer to legitimate excused absences, such as medical conditions.

### **Children Missing Education**

Children missing education are children of school age (5-16) who are:

- not on a school roll
- not being educated other than at school
- identified as being out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time

Missing and truanting pupils can be vulnerable. It is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage with pupils who are not accessing education long term with a view to transitioning them back to appropriate education as soon as possible.

Neither 'Missing,' nor 'Truanting' pupils are covered by this policy.

Please see school Children Missing Policy, Attendance Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## 7 Roles and responsibilities

### **The Proprietor is responsible for:**

- ensuring that the policy is reviewed and where necessary amended at least every other year or as soon as changes occur to the management of the school, legislation, guidance or school circumstances
- monitoring the effectiveness of the policy
- working with the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to ensure that staff have the necessary physical resources, training and support they need to follow through with all guidance and procedures outlined

### **The Headteacher is responsible for:**

- ensuring that the guidance and procedures outlined in this policy are adopted
- ensuring that all members of staff understand the processes and their role within them and are able to implement them in the event that a pupil is missing
- acting as the lead person in the event of a missing pupil
- delegating roles and responsibilities to supporting staff to ensure that the procedures are carried out quickly and efficiently
- identifying a member of the senior leadership team to be the 'On Call' responsible person to take the lead role in her absence

**The Attendance Officer is responsible for:**

- ensuring that staff comply with their legal responsibility to keep registers up to date daily- both am and pm
- ensuring that any unauthorised attendance is dealt with swiftly to ensuring compliance with the regulations and is recorded
- ensuring that the pupil records of the missing pupil and for any relevant details that might have a bearing on the situation are up to date and available eg any court orders in place against either parent, or medical condition of the pupil etc) are recorded

**Teaching staff are responsible for:**

- ensuring that registers are completed at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions
- providing a safe learning environment in which the academic, social and emotional needs of pupils are taken into account
- planning and delivering lessons which are differentiated to meet the needs of individual pupils

**The school caretaker is responsible for:**

- completing site checks to identify any areas of concern relating to the safety and security of the site- most particularly exit doors, the perimeter fence and gates
- maintaining the school site to ensure that it is secure
- ensuring that any defects or concerns which relate to the safety and security of pupils are rectified as a matter of urgency

**All staff are responsible for:**

- ensuring that they are aware of and fully understand the contents of this policy and the role that they have in its implementation
- following all guidance and procedures as outlined in this and all related school policies
- ensuring that all visitors are screened at the point of entry in accordance with the school Visitor Policy
- providing a physical environment that is safe for all pupils
- providing appropriate levels of supervision for all pupils being aware of the individual academic, social and emotional needs of all pupils
- maintaining high standards of behaviour throughout the school
- monitoring the academic, social and emotional progress of pupils
- supporting the welfare needs of all pupils
- reporting any concerns relating to pupils to the appropriate person
- reporting concerns relating to the safety of the school site to the Headteacher/school caretaker as a matter of urgency

### **Site security**

- appropriate fencing and gates are in place to protect the school perimeter
- there is a single point of entry for all visitors and pupils who arrive late or are collected from school early
- a Visitor Policy is in place which requires all visitors to show photo ID (and a DBS certificate if appropriate) on arrival at the school
- all contractors and visitors are made aware of safeguarding arrangements on site
- visitors and contractors are accompanied by school staff when on site
- appropriate risk assessments are carried out to promote the safety of all pupils when contractors are on site and any work is being carried out
- school gates are secured with coded locks
- an adult is sited at the school gate at the beginning and end of the day to ensure entry/exit to the school site is supervised at all times
- CCTV covers school access points
- doors to the school building are locked from the outside with coded access
- all staff and pupils are aware that all school gates and external doors on site must be closed when not in use

### **Registration of pupils**

- the school uses Behaviour Watch to register all pupils
- pupils who arrive at school after the close of the register ie more than 30 minutes late are entered into the system even though they are officially counted as absent from the session
- a hard copy of attendees is completed each morning and afternoon-in each class and this is taken to other rooms to ensure that all staff have an accurate list of pupils who should be present for all lessons
- the hard copy session summary is used to ensure that staff responsible for all lessons, including this taking place off site eg PE and forest school are able to account for all pupils

### **Effective supervision**

- all staff and pupils are aware that all pupils must be supervised by an adult at all times when leaving the site- even when leaving Cherry Hinton Hall to go to the Atcost building
- all staff and pupils are aware that pupils must not use access codes to open doors or gates
- there is a high adult to pupil ratio particularly at break times and when off site to ensure that pupils are suitably supervised when outside the school perimeter

## **Collection and handover arrangements for all pupils**

- it is the school's expectation that all pupils will be escorted from the car park to the pupil entry gate by a parent/ taxi driver or appropriate adult as considered by parents/carers
- all pupils must be collected at the school gate by an adult. This will ordinarily be a parent/carer or taxi driver
- parents wishing for another adult to collect their child at the end of the school day must inform the school in writing before the day
- all staff are aware that pupils must not be allowed to leave the school site unsupervised or with unknown adults
- all pupils who have not been collected at the usual end of day time are taken back into the main building and supervised by a member of SLT until collected by an appropriate adult
- pupils arriving at school or being collected outside of usual school times must use the main entrance

## **External visits**

- staff ratios for all external visits are high and take into consideration the age and needs of pupils taking part as well as travel arrangements
- a first aider must be present for any medical intervention requirements
- as part of the pre-visit organisation, a named member of staff will be designated as the responsible person for the planning and duration of the visit
- the responsible person will be responsible for leading the external visit, putting in place arrangements to ensure the safety of pupils not involved in any incident and to liaise with the Headteacher/ 'On Call' member of SLT /Police on the event that a pupil goes missing
- the trip leader will ensure that there are enough adults to allocate small groups to specific adults to minimise the possibility of a pupil becoming lost and/or missing
- risks assessments are carried out prior to the visit
- pupils will wear school uniform where practical so they are easily identifiable
- number chants will be carried out on a very regular basis to quickly identify the name of any missing pupil
- all staff on the visit will have a mobile phone when on a school visit and are able to contact the school to raise the alarm if directed to do so in the event that a pupil goes missing and can communicate with other staff on the visit and at school
- contact details for all pupils are stored on Behaviour Watch and are accessible by a named member of staff at school

### **9 Procedure when a pupil absconds from a lesson/activity but remains on site**

A pupil who leaves a classroom, lesson or club will be treated in the same manner as a pupil seen to be leaving the premises in that he/she/they will not be actively pursued but will be given space.

- the class teacher will ensure that the class are supervised and if possible that the lesson/activity will continue
- if a LSA is present or close by the teacher will ask him/her/them to monitor the pupil from a distance
- if/when appropriate, the member of staff will try to re-engage with the pupil to find out what has happened, why the pupil has chosen to leave and to allow the pupil some time out to reflect on the situation
- if no other member of staff is available or staff feel that they require support the Headteacher or "On Call" member of SLT must be informed
- if/when appropriate the pupil will be taken back into class or given the opportunity to work in another room to allow the pupil to reintegrate gradually
- parents will be notified

## 10 Procedures when a pupil is missing

### **If a pupil is missing whilst in your care**

It should be noted that a missing pupil could potentially be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Remember that time is of the essence and prompt actions must be taken by all. However, it is important that all staff remain calm and focused.

If a pupil goes missing whilst in your care, you should take the following action:

- ask a member of staff to check the toilets and coat/bag storage area
- ensure that all other pupils are supervised by other appropriate staff
- inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is also the Headteacher – tell them when and where the pupil was last seen.

*if she is not on site the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) and the "On Call" member of SLT must be notified immediately*

### **The DSL/Headteacher will then ensure that the following actions are taken**

- conduct a thorough search of both Cherry Hinton Hall and the Atcost building building

*Under the direction of the Headteacher all available staff will search*

- the main building including*
- *the room the pupil was in last*
  - *the pupil's form room*
  - *storage areas*
  - *toilets*
  - *the 1 to 1 room*
  - *the admin office*
  - *SENDCo room*
  - *FA room*

*Staff in the Atcost building will be asked to search*

- *the lab*
- *art room*
- *kitchen*
- *Toilets*
- *resource area*

*While this is being done...*

- ensure all exits are closed to ensure no further breach of security

*Additional staff will be asked to 'man' points of exit from the building and school site ie*

- *Cherry Hinton Hall playground door*
- *Holme Court School pupil entry gate.*

*A member of staff will remain outside the Atcost building to cover the doors to three rooms*

- ask all staff supervising classes to check the register for the class that they are with to ensure that no other pupil is missing
- ask the Attendance Officer to check the pupil sign out book

## **If the pupil cannot be found**

### **The Head teacher will...**

- direct members of staff not supervising classes will (with their mobile phones), to search the immediate vicinity outside of the school building including :
  - *CIS playground*
  - *Oaks nursery playground*
  - *the play area immediately outside of the gate*
  - *the stream*
  - *the public swing park*
  - *tennis courts and table tennis area*
  - *the forest area*
  - *the water park*
  - *the car park*

*While this is being done...*

- ask the caretaker/ CIS office staff to check CCTV to see if the pupil has left the site
- ask the Attendance Officer to check the records of the missing pupil for any relevant details that might have a bearing on the situation eg recent behaviour, bereavement/upset, Child protection concerns etc

### **If the pupil is not found within 10 minutes**

#### **The Headteacher will ...**

- ask the Business Manager or SENDCo to call
  - *the Police (101 or Parkside Police Station 01223 358966*
  - *the Education Safeguarding Officer*
  - *parents*
- start a critical incident log

The school will then work closely with the Police, following all instructions given.

### **If the pupil is not found within 30 minutes**

#### **The Headteacher will...**

- inform
- *the Proprietor*
- *the school insurers*

#### **11 Notifying the police**

In the event that a missing pupil cannot be found, or visual contact of a running pupil is lost, the Headteacher will arrange for the Police to be called.

The information required by the Police to assist in locating and returning the pupil to a safe environment is as follows:

- the pupil's name/s; date of birth; status (for example looked after child); responsible authority
- where and when they went missing
- previous missing episodes and where they went
- who, if anyone, they went missing with

- height, build, hair colour of the pupil
- What the pupil was wearing plus any belongings they had with them such as bags, phone etc.
- pupil's mobile number
- medical history, if relevant
- time and location last seen
- circumstances or events around going missing with relevant safeguarding information
- details of family, friends and associates
- contact details of Designated Safeguarding Lead if it was after school hours

Whilst the search is ongoing, the school will continue to liaise with the Police and act in accordance with police instructions.

## 12 Action after the pupil is found

When the pupil has been found the following actions are required.

### **Immediately**

#### **The person who finds the pupil will..**

- talk to the pupil calmly and offer reassurances so they feel supported
- notify the DSL/Headteacher

#### **The Headteacher/DSL will...**

- Advise staff involved in the search that the pupil has been found
- notify
  - *the Police (if they are not already aware)*
  - *parents/carers*
  - *the Proprietor*
  - *the Education Child Protection Office*
  - *the school insurers*

#### **The Police will...**

- undertake a safe and well check with the pupil to ensure they are well

If the safe and well check raises any concerns about the pupil's safety or welfare

#### **The DSL/Headteacher will...**

- arrange for the safe return of the pupil to parents if it is considered safe to do so

- call the relevant LA Children’s Social Care Services and follow up with a written referral as soon as possible

### **As soon as possible but within 24hrs**

#### **The Headteacher will...**

- speak with all pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/ separate from a group on an outing
- brief all staff about
  - *the incident*
  - *the outcome of the process*
- consider support that the pupil and/or peers may require as a result of the incident
- consider any immediate action that can be taken to increase security and avoid a repetition of the incident
- ask all members of staff involved in the incident to write individual written statements which will be used as part of the school investigation
- undertake a full internal investigation into the event
- Complete and submit a RIDDOR report to the HSE if the pupil is injured

#### **If the pupil is aged 11 or older, Youth Services will...**

- complete a return home interview

<b>13 School internal investigation</b>
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A full investigation will need to be carried out by the school, as soon as possible.

- The investigation will be led by the Headteacher but will also include:
  - *The Proprietor and preferably*
  - *the Police*
  - *the Education Child Protection Officer*
  - *any other appropriate agency.*
- The investigation will include all written reports in addition to the Critical Incident Log
  - *The focus of the investigation must be on establishing*
  - *The time, place, numbers of staff and pupils when the pupil went missing*
  - *when and where the pupil was last seen*
  - *the length of time the pupil was missing*
  - *why the pupil decided to leave the school site*

- *how the pupil managed to leave the school site*
  - *factors relating to the pupil which need to be followed up*
  - *chronology of events*
  - *the effectiveness of the school's procedures*
  - *how a repeat of the incident can be prevented in future*
  - *changes required to the school's procedures*
  - *additional resources required to enact the amended procedures*
  - *additional training for staff*
- A summary of the findings will be recorded using the Serious Incident Form (SIF) which will be copied to:
    - *the Headteacher/DSL*
    - *the Proprietor*
    - *the Education Child Protection Officer*

#### 14 Pupils who return to school after absconding

Pupils who abscond will do so as a result of a specific incident which may have taken place at school, at home or on the way to school.

For those pupils who return to school either by their own choice, with parental support or following intervention by a member of staff/Police, thought should be given to their welfare. They are likely to be in need of support, understanding and perhaps some time apart from their peers.

Before the pupil can return to school a return to school meeting will be required.

#### 15 Understanding why the pupil has gone missing

It is important to establish why the pupil might have gone missing/absconded. This will help the school to decide how to deal with the situation.

Some questions for the school and parents/carers to help identify the cause are:

- does the pupil have a relevant special educational need that might contribute to his/her/their decision to run away?
- has something happened in school which may have triggered this reaction?
- has something happened in the pupil's life outside of school that might affect his/her/their behavior in school?
- has the pupil experienced acute stress at home or school for any reason?
- is he/she/they a victim of bullying?
- has this happened before?

## 16 Role of parents/ carers

Parents and carers of pupils are responsible for supporting the work of the school and encouraging their children to keep to all school procedures and policies.

Once school has informed the parents that their child has absconded, parents and carers are responsible for actively supporting the school with subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming into school to help secure the safety of their child.

When a pupil has returned or been found a return to school meeting will be convened.

## 17 Return to school meeting

A return to school meeting will need to take place before the pupil can be readmitted to school.

The aim of this meeting will be to:

- consider the circumstances that led to the pupil absconding (see above)
- complete a risk assessment for the pupil
- consider any additional support which may be required to support the pupil
- explore ways of reducing any incidents in future

Further actions which may take place as part of the meeting/ post meeting include:

- referral to children's social care if applicable
- calling of an emergency annual review in order to request additional support from the relevant local authority

## 18 Action if the pupil is not found

### All staff must...

- keep calm
- do everything possible to avoid other pupils from becoming anxious
- refer any media enquiries to the Headteacher/Proprietor
- fully co-operate with the Police/Children's Social Care/HSE or other agencies as required

### Staff MUST NOT

- **discuss any missing pupil incident with the press**

## If the incident warrants a police investigation the Police will...

- handle all aspects of the investigation including
  - interviewing staff
  - involving Children's Social Care if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address
  - inform and liaise with the Press if required

## The Headteacher and Proprietor will...

- speak with parents/carers
- carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all members of staff
- write a serious incident report detailing
  - *the date and time of the report*
  - *the name of the member of staff designated responsible for the missing pupil*
  - *the names of staff and pupils who were in the group*
  - *the time that it is estimated that the pupil went missing*
  - *when the pupil was last seen*
  - *any previous incidents or any possible triggers*
  - *what had taken place since the pupil went missing*
  - *a conclusion as to how the breach in security happened*
- Report the incident under RIDDOR arrangements
- Report the incident to the Local Authority Health & Safety Officer
- Update the school's insurance provider

NB Ofsted only need to be informed if a pupil in Early Years goes missing

## In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken

### The Headteacher or Proprietor will...

- Inform Ofsted

19 If a pupil goes missing at the end of the school day
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### The adult taking pupils to the gate/ dismissing pupils will...

- make arrangements to ensure that for any pupils that are on site waiting to be collected are supervised until they are collected by their taxi driver or parent
- ask any pupils or parents who are still at the gate if they have seen the pupil
- return to the classroom, cloak area and toilets to check that the pupil has not been left behind
- notify the Headteacher or "On Call" member of SLT

## Headteacher will...

- arrange for parents of friends- who have collected the pupil in the past to be contacted to ensure that the pupil has not gone with them

If the pupil cannot be found the procedure for a pupil missing when they should be in school will be applied.

### 20 If a pupil is seen leaving the premises

Staff should always bear in mind that pupils who have chosen to abscond – be it internally or externally may be upset and as such, they may not be thinking rationally.

It is important that the response of staff is to remain calm, maintain visual contact where possible and try to re-engage the pupil to return to school safely.

At no point should staff run after a pupil nor should they ask other pupils to assist in pursuing the absconding pupil as this may encourage the pupil to leave the vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic and possibly put themselves at risk

Where a pupil attempts or is seen to be leaving school premises without permission the following procedure should be followed:

- the member of staff will alert the Headteacher or the "On Call" member of SLT immediately

### A member of staff who knows the pupil well and has a good relationship with the pupil will ...

- follow the pupil to the perimeter fence, exit or gate and will try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school
- the member of staff will try to keep a child in sight at a distance
- the member of staff will call the Headteacher/"on Call" member of SLT to update them and request support as required

If visual contact is lost or the pupil is deemed to be in danger the procedure for a missing pupil will be followed.

### 21 Links to other policies

This policy links to the school's

- Admissions Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Attitude to Learning (Behaviour) Policy

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Health and Safety and Risk Management Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- Peer on Peer Abuse Policy
- Positive Handling Policy
- Responding to Prejudice Incidents Policy
- Trips and Visits Policy
- Visitor Policy
- Staff Wellbeing Policy
- Trips and Visits Policy
- Holme Court School Critical Incident Plan (Red Book)

22 Monitoring and review of policy

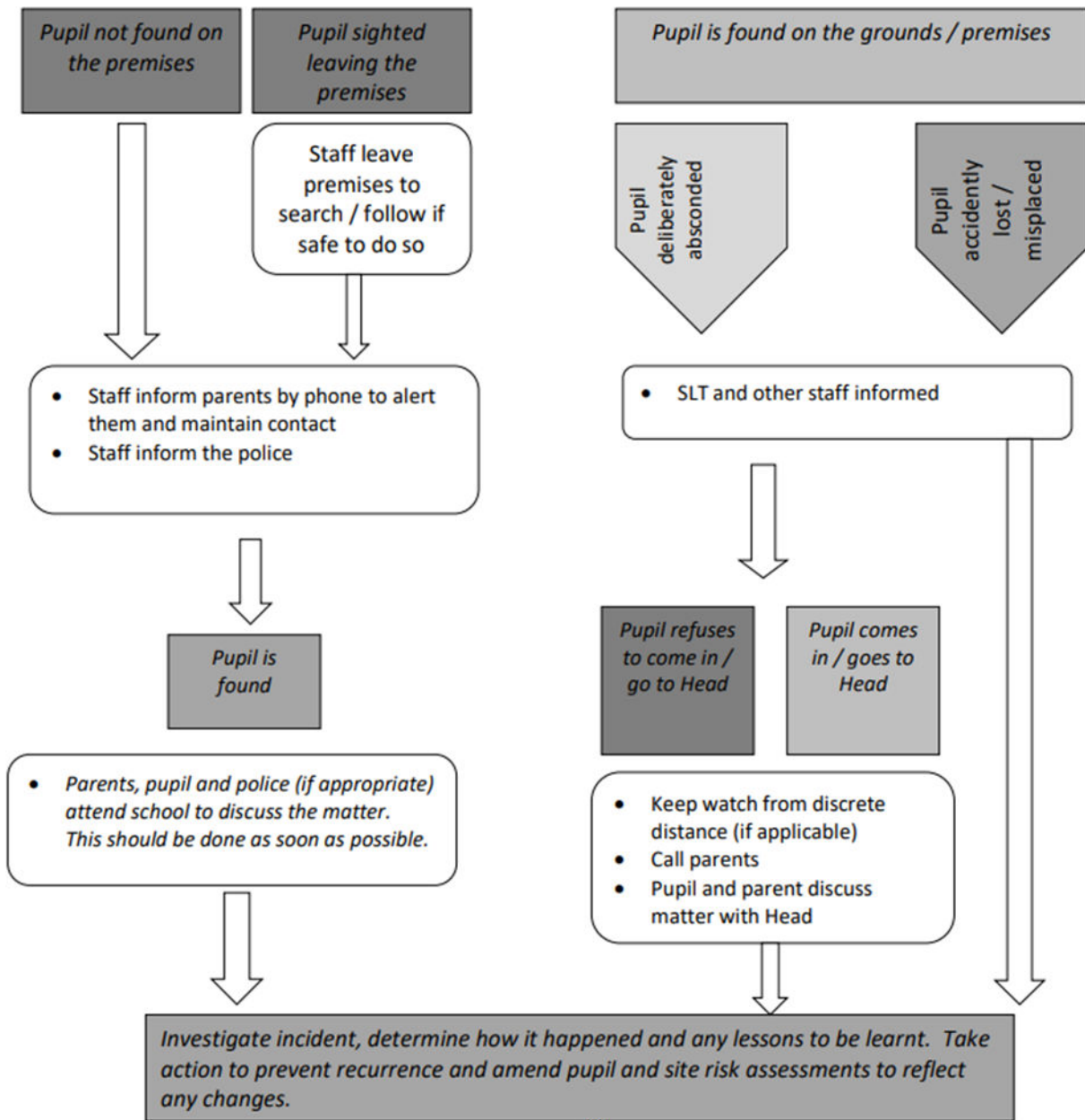
This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Proprietor every two years or as required.

23 Policy administration

Version Number	2.0
Date reviewed/amended	September 2025
Date ratified	Proprietor September 2025
Electronic copy of this policy	SharePoint- staff Team/Staff/HR/policies  School website <a href="http://www.holmecourt.com">www.holmecourt.com</a>
Hard copy available	Red School Policy file in admin office
Distribution	All staff and volunteers
Date of next review	September 2026 or sooner if changes to legislation or guidance
Person responsible for review	Head Teacher



**Flow chart to summarise actions when pupil has absconded**







Report details	
Author of report	
Date of report	
Report sent to	

Pupil information	
Name of pupil	
Address of pupil	
Date of birth	
known to social care?	
Is the pupil safe now?	

Incident details					
Date and time of incident					
Staff involved					
Context and background					
Details of incident					
Chronology of events (list in date and time order)					
Who has been notified					
police	parents	Proprietor	Education Child protection	Social Care	DfE

<b>Lessons learnt</b>	
What action has been taken to assess the immediate impact?	
What action has been taken to prevent a repeat incident?	

Form to be sent to Education Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer within 24hrs of incident occurring.