

OLD VICARAGE SCHOOL – EARLY YEARS DEPARTMENT

14b EYFS Missing Child Policy and Arrangements When a Child Is Not Collected

Policy reviewed	September 2026
Next review	September 2027, or earlier if statutory guidance changes
Policy owner	Head of School / Designated Safeguarding Lead
Applies to	Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision

Purpose and scope

This policy sets out the arrangements to be followed if an EYFS child goes missing while in the school's care, including during an off-site visit, and the arrangements to be followed if a child is not collected at the agreed time.

This policy should be read alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Attendance Policy, Educational Visits Policy, Behaviour Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and any relevant emergency or critical-incident procedures.

Old Vicarage School takes all reasonable steps, including appropriate risk assessment, planning, supervision, secure handover arrangements and regular headcounts, to keep children safe. The School recognises its duties under the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and its wider safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and the welfare of the child is paramount.

Key principles

- Any unexplained absence of an EYFS child from the place where they are expected to will be treated seriously and acted upon immediately.
- The safety and supervision of all other children must be maintained while a search is undertaken.
- There is no fixed waiting period before contacting the police. If a child cannot be located promptly, or there is any reason to believe that the child may be at risk of harm, the police will be contacted immediately.
- Parents/carers will be informed as soon as practicable, unless doing so would place the child at increased risk or the police or Children's Social Care advise otherwise.
- Any missing-child incident will be treated as a potential safeguarding matter until the child is safely located and the circumstances have been assessed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Missing from the classroom or School premises

In the unlikely event that a child is identified as missing, the following procedure must be followed:

1. The member of staff identifying that the child is missing must immediately check the immediate area and the places used by the group since the child was last seen, while ensuring that the remaining children continue to be appropriately supervised.
2. The member of staff must immediately alert the senior member of staff present, the Head of School and the DSL. The senior member of staff present will coordinate the response until relieved by the Head of School or DSL.
3. The time and place the child was last seen, a description of the child and their clothing, any known risks, possible destinations and relevant information from staff or children will be established without delay.
4. A coordinated search of the building, grounds, toilets, classrooms, play areas, gates, exits and other relevant locations will begin immediately. Staff must not place themselves or other children at risk while searching.
5. Where information suggests that the child may have left the School site, an appropriately briefed member of staff may search the immediate vicinity while maintaining contact with the School.

6. If the child cannot be located promptly, or if there is any concern that the child may be at risk of harm, the police will be contacted immediately. Staff will follow police instructions and continue searching where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
7. Parents/carers will be informed as soon as practicable and kept appropriately updated.
8. The DSL will consider whether Children's Social Care or any other safeguarding agency should be contacted and will make any referral required by the circumstances.
9. When the child is found, their immediate physical and emotional welfare will be checked. First aid or medical assistance will be obtained where necessary, and the child will be given an opportunity to explain what happened in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner.

Safeguarding assessment and recording

The DSL will consider whether the circumstances indicate abuse, neglect, exploitation, coercion, unauthorised absence, an unsafe handover, a supervision failure or any other safeguarding concern. Information will be shared with safeguarding partners where necessary and proportionate, in accordance with current statutory information-sharing requirements.

A contemporaneous written record and chronology will be completed. This will include the time the child was identified as missing; when and where the child was last seen; searches undertaken; staff involved; decisions and reasons; contact with parents/carers, police, Children's Social Care and other agencies; the time and circumstances in which the child was found; the child's account where appropriate; and actions taken afterwards.

Records will be retained securely in accordance with the school's safeguarding, records-management and data-protection arrangements.

Procedure for uncollected children

Old Vicarage School is committed to the care and safeguarding of any child who is not collected at the expected time. Parents/carers are asked to notify the Early Years Department as soon as possible if they expect to be late.

Children will be released only to a parent/carer or another adult authorised in accordance with the school's collection arrangements. Where an unfamiliar authorised adult is collecting, staff will verify the adult's identity using the school's agreed password or other approved verification procedure before releasing the child. A child will not be released to any person where staff have reasonable grounds to believe that doing so would place the child at risk; the DSL or senior leader will be consulted immediately.

EYFS collection arrangements

The EYFS school day ends at 3.15 p.m. Children are supervised by Early Years staff at collection until their parent/carer arrives, or until 3.30 p.m. EYFS Late Room begins at 3.30 p.m. and is held in the Nursery Classroom or outside, weather permitting. Any child not collected by 3.30 p.m. will automatically join EYFS Late Room unless they are attending an extra-curricular activity.

From 4.00 p.m., EYFS children join KS1 for the extended Late Room provision until 4.45 p.m. Abbey Club is held in the main School building from 4.45 p.m. until 6.00 p.m.

If a child arrives at Abbey Club but has not been booked in, the School Office will:

1. contact the parent/carer using all available contact numbers;
2. if necessary, contact the emergency contacts held by the school; and
3. ensure that the child remains safely supervised until an authorised adult arrives or the safeguarding escalation procedure below is implemented.

Action if a child remains uncollected

If a child has not been collected by 6.00 p.m., staff will continue to supervise and reassure the child and will:

1. make repeated reasonable attempts to contact each parent/carers using all available contact details;
2. contact the child's authorised emergency contacts;
3. inform the DSL or senior leader on duty and record all attempts to make contact;
4. if the child remains uncollected and parents/carers and emergency contacts cannot be reached, seek advice from Children's Social Care without delay and follow the advice given; and
5. contact the police where appropriate, including where there is an immediate concern for the child's safety or welfare, or where advised by Children's Social Care.

Staff will not take an uncollected child to their own home or leave the child with an unauthorised person. The child will remain appropriately supervised until collected by an authorised adult or transferred in accordance with the instructions of Children's Social Care or the police.

A written record will be maintained of late and uncollected child incidents. Repeated or concerning late collection will be considered by the DSL as a potential safeguarding concern and managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Missing on an outing or off-site visit

The following procedure applies if an EYFS child goes missing during an off-site visit:

1. The Group Leader named on the visit risk assessment will take control of the immediate response. An immediate headcount/roll call will confirm that all other children are accounted for and safely supervised.
2. The time and place the child was last seen and any relevant information will be established immediately. Relevant staff, children and venue personnel may be asked for information.
3. A member of staff will search the immediate vicinity while the Group Leader alerts the venue manager and requests implementation of the venue's missing-child procedure.
4. The Head of School and DSL will be informed immediately.
5. If the child cannot be located promptly, or there is any concern for the child's safety, the police will be contacted immediately. The search will continue in accordance with police and venue instructions.
6. Parents/carers will be informed as soon as practicable and kept appropriately updated, unless the police or Children's Social Care advise otherwise.
7. The remaining children will continue to be appropriately supervised and, where appropriate, arrangements will be made for their safe return to School. Staff will not compromise the search or the safety of other children.
8. The DSL will consider whether Children's Social Care and any other relevant safeguarding agency should be notified.
9. The school will cooperate fully with any police, safeguarding or regulatory investigation and will inform its insurers where appropriate.

All staff supervising an outing must have access to emergency contact arrangements and the visit risk assessment. The Group Leader will ensure that staff and volunteers understand the line of command, emergency arrangements and this missing-child procedure. Headcounts will be undertaken at appropriate transition points and whenever the Group Leader considers them necessary.

Notifications and external reporting

The school will make all notifications required by law and by its registration arrangements. Where the School's EYFS provision is required to notify Ofsted as the registered provider, any significant event that may affect the suitability of the provider or the safety of children — including an incident in which a child leaves the setting or is

missing for any period — will be notified as soon as reasonably practicable and, where the statutory 14-day limit applies, within 14 days.

Where a serious accident, illness or injury, or a death, occurs while a child is in the school's care, the school will make any notification required to Ofsted and local child protection agencies and will act on their advice. Where an incident meets the statutory reporting criteria under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR), the school will make the required report to the Health and Safety Executive.

Any serious safeguarding incident will also be reported internally to the Proprietor/Governing Body in accordance with the school's safeguarding oversight arrangements and to any other regulator or authority where required.

Post-incident review

Following any missing or uncollected-child incident, the Head of School and DSL will ensure that the circumstances and the effectiveness of the response are reviewed. The review will consider supervision, staffing, handover arrangements, premises security, risk assessments, educational-visit controls, communication, training and any safeguarding implications.

Lessons learned and required actions will be recorded. Relevant risk assessments and procedures will be amended promptly where necessary, and significant themes or repeated incidents will be brought to the attention of the Proprietor/Governing Body.

Training and staff responsibilities

All staff, volunteers and temporary staff working with EYFS children will be made aware of this policy and the action to take if a child is missing or uncollected. Staff will receive safeguarding and supervision training appropriate to their role. All staff must read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and follow the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.

Staff must act immediately, maintain a child-centred approach, record concerns accurately and share safeguarding information with the DSL and relevant agencies where necessary.

Information for parents and carers

This policy is made available to parents/carers and explains the school's procedures if a child goes missing or is not collected at the appointed time. Parents/carers are responsible for keeping the school informed of current contact and emergency-contact details and for notifying the school promptly of any change to normal collection arrangements.

Legislation and statutory guidance

- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage for group and school-based providers, in force from 1 September 2026.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, in force from 1 September 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Information sharing to safeguard children and young people: statutory guidance (2026).
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended, including Part 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils) and Part 8 (quality of leadership in and management of schools).
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, as amended.
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR), where applicable.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and earlier where there is a relevant change in legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements, School practice or following a significant incident.

Last reviewed: September 2026

Next scheduled review: September 2027

The Old Vicarage School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.