Connected Futures Partnership

Authoring our story.

Dorothy Gardner Nursery School
Mary Paterson Nursery School
Tachbrook Nursery School
Essendine Primary School
Hallfield Primary School
Oxford Gardens Primary School
Queen's Park Primary School
Queen's Park Family Hub
Bayswater Children's Centre

Missing Child Policy

SEPTEMBER 2026

Table of Contents

1. Purpose and scope....3
2. Statutory and safeguarding framework....3
3. Responsibilities....3
   3.1 Executive Headteacher and setting leaders....3
   3.2 All staff....3
   3.3 Parents and carers....3
4. Preventing a child from going missing....4
   4.1 Arrival and attendance....4
   4.2 During the day....4
   4.3 Break, lunch and outdoor provision....4
   4.4 Collection and home time....4
   4.5 Educational visits and off-site activity....4
   4.6 Clubs and extended provision....4
5. Immediate response: child missing on a CFP site....5
6. Higher-risk circumstances....5
7. Child missing during an educational visit or off-site activity....5
8. When the child is found....6
9. Incident review and learning....6
10. Unexplained absence and children missing education....6
11. Review....6

Approved by	Executive Headteacher
Approval date	September 2026
Policy lead	Heads of School and Setting Leads
Next review due	September 2027

1. Purpose and scope

The safety of children is the first priority of Connected Futures Partnership Federation (CFP). This policy sets out the preventative arrangements and immediate response where a child who should be under the care or supervision of a CFP setting cannot be located.

It applies across CFP schools, nursery schools, the Queen's Park Family Hub and Bayswater Children's Centre, with local procedures reflecting the age of children, site layout, opening hours and the nature of each provision. For schools and early years provision it should be read alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Attendance Policy, Educational Visits Policy, Collection of Children arrangements, Health and Safety Policy and site security procedures.

This policy concerns a child who goes missing, is unaccounted for or is not where they are expected to be while responsibility rests with the setting. It is distinct from the statutory term 'children missing education' (CME), which concerns compulsory-school-age children who are not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere. Unexplained absence from school may nevertheless raise safeguarding or CME concerns and must be followed up under attendance and safeguarding procedures.

2. Statutory and safeguarding framework

This policy has regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, Working Together to Improve School Attendance (updated July 2026), the Children Missing Education statutory guidance (September 2025), the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers effective from 1 September 2026.

A missing child is always treated as a potential safeguarding matter. The response will be child-centred and proportionate to the circumstances and known risks. Staff must not assume that a child is deliberately hiding, has gone home, or is safe simply because there is no obvious evidence of danger.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Executive Headteacher and setting leaders

- ensure this policy and setting-level procedures are understood and implemented;
- ensure clear arrangements for attendance, handover, collection, visitors, access control and site security;
- ensure staff know how to raise an immediate alert and who will coordinate a search;
- ensure appropriate emergency contact, police and safeguarding escalation arrangements are understood;
- ensure incidents and near misses are recorded, reviewed and used to improve practice; and
- ensure the Governing Board receives appropriate assurance about significant incidents and control measures.

3.2 All staff

- maintain appropriate supervision and know which children are in their care;
- complete registers, headcounts and handovers accurately and promptly;
- report immediately if a child cannot be accounted for - staff must not conduct a prolonged search alone before raising the alarm;
- follow the directions of the incident lead while maintaining safe supervision of all other children; and
- record and report relevant information accurately.

3.3 Parents and carers

- keep emergency contacts and collection permissions current;
- follow the setting's arrival, departure and signing-out arrangements;
- tell the setting promptly about any circumstance that may increase a child's risk of leaving, going missing or being taken without authority; and
- ensure any early collection or change to normal collection arrangements is agreed and recorded.

4. Preventing a child from going missing

Each setting will maintain local controls appropriate to its site. Fixed federation-wide gate opening times are deliberately not specified in this policy because arrangements differ between CFP settings.

4.1 Arrival and attendance

- Responsibility at handover points will be clear to families and staff.
- Attendance/session registers will be completed accurately at the required times and amended promptly when a child arrives late or leaves early.
- Unexpected or unexplained absence will be followed up promptly in accordance with the Attendance Policy and safeguarding procedures.
- Early years settings will follow the EYFS requirements and their procedures for following up absences, particularly where there are safeguarding concerns.

4.2 During the day

- External access points will be appropriately secured while preserving fire safety and emergency egress.
- Staff will maintain supervision appropriate to the children's age, needs, activity and environment.
- When children move between rooms, interventions, therapy, clubs or other activities, staff will use registers, handovers or other reliable systems so that their whereabouts are known.
- Headcounts will be used where appropriate, particularly during transitions, outdoor provision and with younger children.
- Known risks relating to SEND, communication needs, impulsivity, anxiety, exploitation, family circumstances or previous episodes of leaving supervision will be reflected in individual risk assessments and plans.

4.3 Break, lunch and outdoor provision

- Duty staff will be in position before children enter the supervised area.
- Boundaries and external gates will be checked and supervision will cover all relevant areas.
- Children will be accounted for when groups move back inside or between activities.

4.4 Collection and home time

- Children will be released only in accordance with the setting's authorised collection arrangements.
- Independent travel by older pupils will require prior parental agreement and local school arrangements.
- Children not collected will remain safely supervised while parents/carers and emergency contacts are contacted.
- Any dispute, unexpected collector or safeguarding concern will be referred immediately to a senior leader and dealt with under safeguarding procedures.

4.5 Educational visits and off-site activity

- Risk assessments will identify supervision, meeting points, headcount/register arrangements, emergency contacts and action if a child becomes separated from the group.
- Registers/headcounts will be taken at appropriate transition points, including before departure and return.
- Visit leaders will have a reliable means of contacting the setting and emergency services.
- Information about children whose needs increase the risk or impact of going missing will be shared with relevant supervising adults.

4.6 Clubs and extended provision

- An accurate register will be taken and maintained.
- Collection and independent-travel arrangements will be recorded.
- External providers must understand the site's missing-child and emergency procedures and know how to contact the designated setting lead.

5. Immediate response: child missing on a CFP site

The moment a child cannot be accounted for, the matter must be escalated. The timing of police contact must reflect risk: there is no requirement to wait before reporting a missing person.

1. Raise the alarm immediately with the school/setting office and the most senior leader available. Record the time the child was first identified as missing and the place they were last seen.
2. Confirm that the child is genuinely unaccounted for by checking the relevant register, signing-out/off-site record, intervention or club list, known appointments, collection information and staff who may have moved the child.
3. Nominate a senior incident lead. Allocate staff to search while preserving safe supervision and security for all other children. Do not leave groups inadequately supervised.
4. Search systematically and promptly: the child's last known location and likely route first, then toilets, classrooms, offices, halls, stairwells, storage/quiet spaces, outdoor areas, perimeter and any other accessible location. Check CCTV promptly where available and lawful.
5. Check exits, gates and access-control information for any indication that the child may have left the site. Do not compromise fire exits or emergency egress while doing so.
6. Gather key information: recent photograph if available, full description and clothing, time/place last seen, known destinations or people, mobile phone if relevant, medical needs, SEND/communication needs, vulnerability, family or safeguarding concerns, and any known risk of exploitation or self-harm.
7. Contact parents/carers promptly unless doing so would increase safeguarding risk or police/children's social care advise otherwise. Confirm whether the child may have been collected or returned home and ask for relevant information about likely whereabouts.
8. Contact police without delay where the child is believed to have left the site and cannot be located, or sooner where risk warrants it. Call 999 if the child is in immediate danger or there is an emergency; otherwise contact police through 101/online reporting as appropriate. There is no minimum waiting period.
9. Where there is a safeguarding concern, inform the DSL and make/refine referrals to children's social care and other agencies as required. Known social workers or other professionals should be informed where appropriate.
10. Continue the coordinated search and follow police instructions until the child is located and responsibility has been safely transferred or the police confirm the next steps.

6. Higher-risk circumstances

Police and safeguarding escalation should be immediate where information suggests heightened risk. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a very young child or a child who cannot keep themselves safe;
- significant SEND, communication needs, medical needs or vulnerability;
- risk of road, rail, water, construction or other environmental danger;
- known or suspected exploitation, abduction, family conflict, domestic abuse, honour-based abuse or unsafe adult contact;
- risk of self-harm, suicide or serious emotional distress;
- extreme weather or inappropriate clothing;
- the child is believed to have left with an unauthorised adult; or
- any circumstance in which staff believe delay could expose the child to significant harm.

7. Child missing during an educational visit or off-site activity

1. The visit/group leader must be informed immediately and take control of the response.
2. Confirm the child is missing through an immediate register/headcount and check with accompanying adults.
3. Secure the safety and supervision of the remaining group. Do not leave an arbitrary minimum of two adults if doing so conflicts with the visit risk assessment or leaves another group unsafe; supervision must remain adequate.
4. Search the immediate vicinity and agreed meeting point without dispersing staff in a way that creates further risk. Alert venue/security staff where applicable.

5. Contact police immediately where the child cannot be located promptly or where any risk factor makes delay unsafe. Call 999 in an emergency or where the child is in immediate danger.
6. Notify the CFP setting as soon as practicable. A senior leader will coordinate communication with parents/carers and the DSL, unless the visit leader needs to contact them immediately because circumstances require it.
7. Provide police with the child's description, photograph if available, last known location, medical/SEND information, relevant risks and contact details.
8. Follow police/venue instructions, maintain a written chronology, and do not abandon the remaining group's safeguarding arrangements.

8. When the child is found

- Confirm the child's immediate physical and emotional safety and provide first aid or medical assistance where needed.
- Inform police, parents/carers, the DSL, setting leader and other agencies already involved.
- Welcome and reassure the child; do not begin with blame or punishment.
- Give the child an appropriate opportunity to explain what happened, taking account of age, communication and SEND needs.
- Consider whether the episode indicates abuse, neglect, exploitation, bullying, unmet SEND/medical need, anxiety, family difficulty or another safeguarding concern.
- Agree any immediate safety plan, risk assessment or changes to supervision before normal arrangements resume.
- Record the incident and actions taken, including times, searches, contacts and the child's account.

9. Incident review and learning

Every missing-child incident and significant near miss will be reviewed by a senior leader. The review will consider why the child became unaccounted for, whether supervision and security arrangements were followed, whether the response was sufficiently rapid, whether information was available to responders, and what changes are required.

Where appropriate, the review will involve the child, parents/carers, DSL, staff, site team, educational visit lead and external agencies. Actions will have named owners and deadlines. Serious incidents will be reported through the federation's safeguarding, health and safety, governing-board and regulatory arrangements as applicable.

For EYFS provision, leaders will additionally consider whether the incident triggers any notification requirement to Ofsted or another regulator under the current statutory framework.

10. Unexplained absence and children missing education

A child who is absent from school is not automatically a 'child missing education' in the statutory sense. However, unexplained absence can be a vital safeguarding warning sign. Schools will make immediate enquiries where absence is unexpected and unexplained and will follow the CFP Attendance Policy, safeguarding procedures and local-authority arrangements.

Where enquiries indicate that a child may no longer be attending and the family has not provided reliable information about suitable education elsewhere, the school will work with and refer to the child's home local authority CME team as required. A child will not be removed from the admission register unless the statutory conditions for deletion are met.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner following a significant incident, near miss, change to statutory guidance or material change to a CFP site or provision.