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<p>This policy and procedures should be read in conjunction with other related school policies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protection Policy</li> <li>• Admission and Reception of Pupils Policy.</li> </ul>	

Date ratified by Governors: 7<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Signed: 

## Mary Hare Schools Absence without authority policy

### Policy statement

1. This policy's protocols are compatible with [West Berkshire LSCB procedures manual](#), [Thames Valley Missing Children Guidance \(December 2010\)](#), the [Thames Valley Joint Protocol \(2014\)](#), [Children missing education \(September 2016\)](#) and [Keeping children safe in education \(Sept 2018\)](#). It seeks to address four forms of absence without permission. The first is withdrawal of pupils by their families for holidays and for other reasons. The second is when a pupil fails to return to school after a weekend or holiday. The third is when a young person removes themselves from the care or school setting without permission and is missing for a short period. The fourth is when a young person removes themselves from school for a longer period, including being absent overnight.
2. This policy should be read in conjunction with '[Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care \(January 2014\)](#)'.

### Aim

3. To provide all staff with a clear understanding of how to respond and who to inform should a child not return to school, or discovers a child missing. The following procedures are to;
  - Provide a clear procedure which is understood and effectively implemented by all staff,
  - Enable the missing child to be located as quickly as possible.

### Definitions

4. The following definitions are sourced from the Thames Valley Joint Protocol referencing Children and young people who run away or go missing from home or care (January 2014).

### Missing

5. 'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another'.

### Absent

6. 'A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be'. The 'absent' category should comprise cases in which children / young people are not presently where they are supposed to be but there is no apparent risk and they are not believed to be immediately at risk of harm.
7. Police will not be sent to cases where children / young people are defined as being 'absent'. Instead the onus will be on care providers to

take steps to locate the child / young person, with monitoring by the police and escalation to 'missing' if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk. It is expected that all reasonable steps should be taken by care providers to locate the child/young person prior to making a report to the police. Where they remain absent, and the care provider feels that they may be at risk of harm, then a report should be made to the police. Police will attend reports of 'missing' children / young people'.

8. Thames Valley Police will not categorise the following as absent – they will always be subject of a missing person investigation:
  - All children 14 and under
  - All children 15 and over who have a child sexual exploitation (CSE) warning marker, CSE intelligence or are named in a child abduction warning notice.
  
9. A child will be classified by the police as either 'missing' or 'absent' after considering 10 risk assessment questions carried out by police call handler.
  - What is the specific concern that has caused you to call the police?
  - What has been done so far to trace the individual?
  - Is this significantly out of character?
  - Do they need urgent medical attention or essential medication that is not likely to be available to them?
  - If under 18 are they currently at risk of child abuse including CSE?
  - Are they likely to be subjected to any other crime?
  - Are they likely to be the victim of any other form of abuse?
  - Are they likely to attempt suicide?
  - Do they pose a danger to other people?
  - Is there any other information relevant to their absence?

### School context

10. Mary Hare School has a very low level of absence without permission or absconding and when it does occur, it is likely to be an upset child seeking time to cool off but has not felt able to do so through appropriate channels. The geography of both campuses is helpful in that they are far enough from town to mean that pupils are unlikely to make their way to town alone. Hazards are the main roads and the proximity of the motorway services from the Secondary school site. Traditionally, pupils have not had close ties with groups of young people in town, so absence linked to choosing to stay away with unknown young people is not in our experience.

### Pupils failing to return to school after a period away from school

11. If a pupil fails to return following a period away from school without parental notification, the guidance below should be followed:

- When a pupil fails to arrive when expected and without parental notification, first day contact should be made by care staff, or, if a day pupil, the head of year (HOY).
- An email of all known absences (including reasons if known) is sent by care staff to the *vice principals, HOY, form tutors and the school nurse*.
- Unauthorised absence is recorded on SIMS by the form tutors daily.
- Further contact is made by HOY and/or care staff, to determine on-going reasons for absence and liaise regarding arrangements for work and access to full-time education.
- Mary Hare will inform the relevant local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without school's permission for a continuous period of 6 school days or more.
- Any safeguarding concerns relating to absence should be made to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead**.

### Unauthorised holidays

12. Request for any term time absence should be made through [absence@maryhare.org.uk](mailto:absence@maryhare.org.uk).
13. Unauthorised holidays is primarily the responsibility of the Principal and teaching staff but information from care staff, who may be the first to know of such plans, should be passed to the Vice Principal - Education. It will be made clear to families that the school cannot authorise extended leave during term time, but if families take such leave without permission, the school will notify the placing Local Authority.

### Procedures for when a pupil is missing or has absconded

14. When a pupil is missing from school or care, the member of staff who discovers they are missing should do the following or ensure that they are done by colleagues:
  - During the school day inform reception and Anita Leach (Librarian) of the pupil absence, who will check the signing out book, SIMs registration and Medical Centre.
  - During Care Hours (before 08:40 and after 15:55) care team to be alerted via school radios and email to all care staff.
  - If the first actions do not result in identifying the location of the missing pupil then notification given to the Vice Principal(s) or member of SMT during the school day or, Team Leader and Head of Care/Senior Team Leader (on-call) during residential time.
  - Arrange as many staff as possible to carry out a thorough search inside and out. Check all legitimate possibilities, including; residential houses, Speech and Language Therapy, the medical department, sports fixtures, etc.

- Talk to a friend or peer of the pupil to see if they know where they are.
- Try contacting the pupil by phone or text message. It may be appropriate to ask a friend or peer to attempt contact. This should be done sympathetically, considering the impact on the friend or peer.
- Check areas the pupil may go when upset (typically the bottom of the field, the woods, etc.).
- Contact, and maintain contact with parents AFTER legitimate reasons for absence have been explored.
- If the pupil is not located by the above methods, the senior staff should arrange for a member of staff to drive around campus and, if necessary, towards the Chieveley Services / town centre.

### **Longer unauthorised absence**

15. In nearly every case at Mary Hare, the issue would have been resolved by the above measures. **If the pupil is not located by the above action, within 30 minutes**, the following additional action will be necessary;

- If not already done, inform the pupil's parents of their absence and see if they have any information. Note: this call will by definition be a difficult one and should be made with the support of senior staff such as; the Team Leader, Head of Care or SMT on call.
- Further searches of the grounds and premises will be necessary.
- Notify the police and follow any advice or guidance they have. Note: it may be difficult to get the police to act when a child has been missing for a relatively short period of time and it may be necessary to stress their deafness and additional vulnerability.
- Telephone or visit Newbury Train Station and drive around the main streets of the town.
- Inform the duty team at Children's Services.

16. When the Police are notified, they may require information regarding the circumstances of the pupil's disappearance, what they were wearing and where possible a photograph of the pupil. They will also require contact details for the pupil's parents or carers and may contact the duty team at Children's Services themselves. A risk assessment will be produced which will be regularly reviewed; if the answer to any of the initial 10 questions is yes, the pupil is recorded as missing. An officer will visit the school and commence a missing person investigation. It is standard procedure for the police to search the pupil's bedroom and surrounding area. They are searching for the pupil and evidence of 'push/pull' factors behind the pupil going missing. This may lead to the pupil being added to the Missing Person's Database and the Police National Computer.

### **The returning pupil**

17. After a pupil has returned to the school, it is important they are offered a return meeting. This provides an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect the pupil from the risk of going missing again, or from the risks they may have been exposed to while missing.
18. The incident must be properly recorded in the **absence without authority book** held in the Head of Care office (Secondary school) or Main Office (Primary school). Details to include; name of pupil, date, time, place, details of event leading to absence (if known), time that the child was missing, details of search (with time scales), names of staff involved, parental and other agency contact and any lessons for the future.
19. Depending on the circumstance leading up to or during the pupil's time missing/absent, a pupil risk assessment should be completed.
20. Any safeguarding concerns these should be directed to the **Designated Safe Guarding Lead**. Thames Valley officers will be deployed to complete a *Safe and Well Check*, which should cover, the reason for going missing, a summary of the circumstances whilst the child was missing/absent, location found and all other information obtained by the police.

## Children Missing Education

21. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. It is essential that staff are alert to the signs to look out for and to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including CSE and the risk of potential travel to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriages.
22. Mary Hare recognises the increased vulnerability of deaf and disabled children to abuse and neglect and the barriers they may face, especially around communication.

*Abuse can happen to anyone but deaf and disabled children are 3 times more likely to be abused or neglected than non-disabled children (Jones et al, 2012)<sup>1</sup>.*

The vulnerabilities increase the potential for deaf and disabled children to miss education. The nature of the residential provision at Mary Hare reduces the risk of children missing education but does not negate it.

23. If there are any child protection concerns, then the school's safeguarding procedures should be followed. This policy should be read alongside the schools *Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy*.

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, J. et al (2015) *Deaf and disabled children talking about child protection*. London: NSPCC.

24. Mary Hare is committed to maintaining an accurate and updated admission register (SIMS and the Access Data Base). Ensuring that pupils are entered onto the list at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If the pupil fails to attend on this day, the school will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts. Mary Hare will notify the local authority at the earliest opportunity.
25. Mary Hare will monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance. This is done through the daily registers and pupil returning information provided by the care team. Patterns are determined by the admin staff and teachers, this will be passed on to the Vice Principals.
26. The school uses a range of strategies when a pupil is absent from school which starts with the first day of absence contact, such as, phone call home, text messages or emails. Other actions include furthermore formal contact with home including emails, letters, meetings and referrals to the authority's Education Welfare Officer.
27. The school will only remove a pupil's name from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the regulations (See Annex A of CME 2016) and only after the school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable enquires and efforts to maintain the placement. The school will notify the local and placing authority when the pupils name is removed.
28. Mary Hare will notify the local and placing authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. The information held on the admission register will be provided to the authorities.
29. For further information on the schools use of Common Transfer Files and the sharing of information see the Admissions and Reception of Pupils policy.

### Children at particular risk of missing education

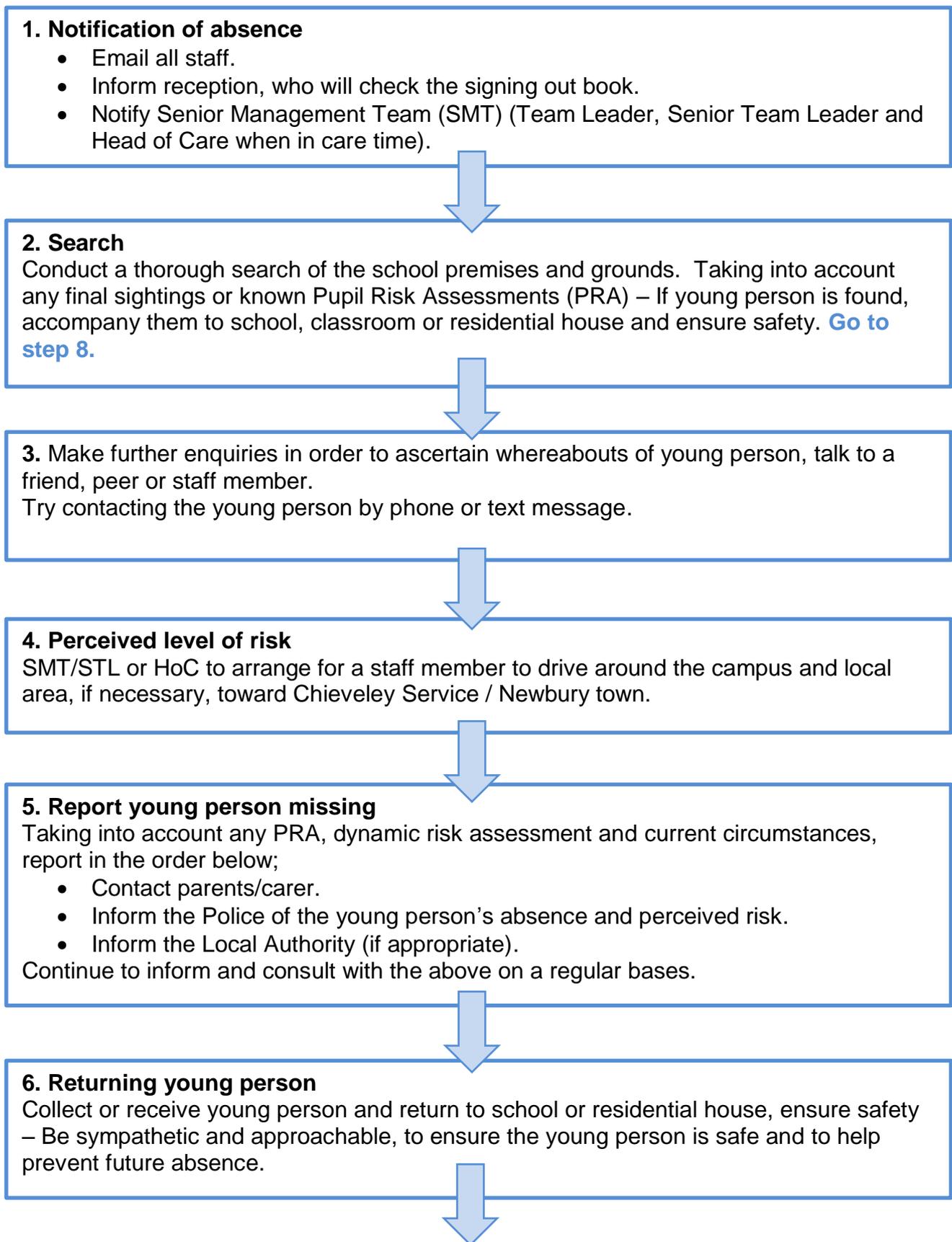
30. There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education. It is vital that staff are aware of reasons children fall out of education. The list (which is not exhaustive) below are identified through the statutory guidance *Children missing education – September 2016*.
  - Pupils at risk of harm/neglect (including those at risk from FGM and CSE).
  - Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Families.
  - Families of Armed Forces.
  - Missing children/runaways.
  - Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System.
  - Children who cease to attend a school.



*Securing the future of deaf children and young people*

- Children of new migrant families.
- Pupils at risk of radicalisation.

## Annex 1: Missing or absconding procedure flow chat



7. Notify all relevant people in step 4 and 5 of the return of the young person.



**8. Discuss the reason for absence/behaviour with the young person**

Include strategies for avoiding a recurrence of absence.

- Update any PRA.
  - Take into account the young person's view and feelings.
  - Implement any sanction (if appropriate).
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**9. Complete record of absence**

Document the incident using the *Absence without Authority* report form. Details will need to include; name of pupil, date, time, any details known about reasons for absence, time the young person was missing, details of search and contacts made.