

THE HUB MISSING CHILD POLICY

Updated with National Statutory Guidance and Leicester/Leicestershire/Rutland (LLR) Multi-Agency Requirements Date of Policy: April 2025 Date of Review: April 2026

Procedures for the Event of a Child Going Missing from The Hub

The Hub recognises that the safety of children is paramount and that any incident involving a missing child constitutes a safeguarding emergency requiring immediate, coordinated action. This policy aligns with *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*, the *Children Act 2004*, the *LLR Multi-Agency Missing Children Protocol (2022)*, and statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care. The Hub also adheres to the expectations of the *Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (LRSCP)*, which requires all agencies to respond promptly, proportionately and collaboratively when a child's whereabouts cannot be established.

Immediate Internal Response

When a member of staff fears that a child has gone missing while at The Hub, they must inform the Directors without delay. The staff member who identifies the concern will calmly gather all pupils into a pre-arranged safe area. A designated member of staff will engage the group in an appropriate activity to maintain calm and supervision, unless it is judged safer or more appropriate for learners to continue with their normal routines.

Once assembled, staff will conduct a full name check and headcount against the register to confirm which child is missing. This must be done with precision and repeated if necessary to ensure accuracy.

Simultaneously, all available staff will undertake a thorough search of the premises and surrounding areas. Staff must check all rooms, storage areas, toilets, outdoor spaces, and any concealed or less-frequented areas. They must notify the Directors immediately if the child is located.

A full inspection of all exits must be completed to confirm that doors were locked and that no alternative exit routes were accessible. Any breach of security or potential exit point must be reported to the Directors at once so that immediate safeguarding measures can be implemented.

If the child is not located within ten minutes of the initial report, parents or carers must be contacted. Staff should request that they bring a recent photograph of the child to support identification efforts.

Information Gathering and Risk Assessment

The staff member who last saw the child must record a detailed description of the child's clothing, appearance and any distinguishing features. If the child has medical needs, learning needs, communication difficulties, or vulnerabilities linked to exploitation, self-harm, trauma or previous missing episodes, these must be documented and shared with emergency services.

If parents or carers confirm that they have not heard from the child, the police must be contacted immediately by dialling 999. This aligns with the LLR protocol, which states that any child whose whereabouts cannot be established must be considered missing until located and their wellbeing confirmed.

Information Required by Police

When contacting the police, staff must provide:

- The full address and location of The Hub.
- The child's next of kin and parental contact details.
- A detailed description of the child, including age, sex, height, build, hair, clothing and footwear.
- The circumstances surrounding the disappearance, including any known triggers, emotional distress, arguments, or safeguarding concerns.
- The time the child was last seen and the duration of absence.
- Details of who is currently searching for the child, their locations, and their mobile numbers.

The incident must also be reported to other relevant agencies, including:

- The educational establishment where the child is on roll (if different from The Hub).
- The associated Local Authority (Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council or Rutland County Council depending on the child's home address).

Media and Communication Protocol

In the event of media interest, all staff must follow a unified communication line:

"At this moment in time I have no comment on the incident. Please refer to the Directors. Thank you."

No staff member should provide information, speculation or reassurance to the media. All communication must be managed by the Directors to protect the child's privacy and ensure accuracy.

When the Child is Found

When the child is located, staff must provide calm reassurance and care. Children may be frightened, distressed, or unaware of the seriousness of their actions. Staff should avoid blame and focus on safety, wellbeing and emotional regulation.

Other pupils should be spoken to sensitively to reinforce the importance of staying within supervised areas and understanding why safety rules exist.

Post-Incident Communication with Parents/Carers

The Directors and relevant staff will meet with parents or carers to discuss the incident, share factual information and outline next steps. If appropriate, a short meeting or written communication will be provided to all parents to ensure transparency and reassurance.

Liability must not be discussed until the incident has been fully investigated.

The Investigation

The Directors will conduct a full investigation, taking statements from all staff present. The key staff member will complete an incident report detailing:

- The date and time of the report.
- Staff and children present.
- When the child was last seen.
- Activities taking place at the time.
- The estimated time the child went missing.

A conclusion will be drawn to identify how the incident occurred and what measures are required to prevent recurrence. Findings will inform future risk assessments and safeguarding practice.

Procedures for the Event of a Child Going Missing on a Trip or Visit

When a child goes missing off-site, the same core procedures apply, but additional measures are required due to the increased risks associated with unfamiliar environments. All off-site responses must align with the LLR Missing Protocol and The Hub's Educational Visits Policy.

Immediate Response by Trip Leader

The trip leader must ensure the safety of all remaining pupils. They will gather the group in a pre-arranged safe area and maintain calm supervision. A designated staff member may engage pupils in an activity or continue the planned itinerary if this is safer.

One or more adults must begin searching for the child immediately, following the risk assessment and venue-specific emergency procedures.

Dynamic Risk Assessment

Staff must continually reassess risks throughout the visit. Weather changes, crowd density, venue layout, and alterations to the itinerary may introduce new hazards not covered in the original risk assessment. Staff must remain vigilant and adapt supervision accordingly.

Regular headcounts must take place, particularly before leaving a venue or boarding transport. Pupils should be encouraged to remain easily identifiable, for example by wearing lanyards or high-visibility items where appropriate.

Emergency Procedures

If a child is missing, the group leader must alert the trip leader immediately. A staff member will take control of the incident and search the immediate area.

If the child cannot be found promptly, The Hub must be contacted without delay. The Directors will then determine which emergency numbers to call, including the police via 999.

The Hub must be kept informed throughout the incident. If hospitalisation is required, at least two staff members must accompany the child in the ambulance to ensure continuity of care and safeguarding.

Transport-Related Incidents

If an accident occurs on a coach, train, car or other transport, children must gather in their groups away from the accident site. The same missing-child procedures apply.

Major Emergencies or Disasters

In a major emergency, the group will fall under the jurisdiction of emergency services. All children must return to their group leaders, remain still and silent, and await instructions.

Staff must:

- Count their groups immediately.
- Alert the trip leader if any child is missing.
- Maintain a duty of care at all times and act as a reasonably prudent parent would.
- Never leave children unsupervised.
- Contact The Hub and the Directors as soon as possible.

Integration with Local Safeguarding Requirements (LLR)

This policy is strengthened by the following local safeguarding expectations:

LLR Missing Children Protocol (2022)

The protocol requires all agencies to treat missing episodes as safeguarding concerns, to share information promptly, and to work collaboratively to reduce repeat missing episodes. It defines a missing child as *anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and whose wellbeing cannot be confirmed*.

Local Authority Contact Routes

If staff have safeguarding concerns or need to report a missing child, they must use the following local authority numbers:

- **Leicestershire County Council:** 0116 305 0005
- **Leicester City Council:** 0116 454 1004
- **Rutland County Council:** 01572 722407

Police Contact Routes

- **Emergency:** 999
- **Non-emergency:** 101
- **Leicestershire Police Missing Persons Team:** missingpersonsteam@leics.police.uk
- **Missing Prevention & Reduction Unit (MPRU):** MPRU@leics.police.uk

Return Home Interviews

In line with LLR guidance, all children who go missing must be offered a Return Home Interview within 72 hours of being found. This is arranged by the Local Authority and helps identify risks, triggers and support needs.

Contextual Safeguarding

Missing episodes may indicate risks such as exploitation, coercion, county lines involvement, peer pressure or unsafe relationships. Staff must consider contextual safeguarding factors and share concerns with the Local Authority via the Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF).

Conclusion

This strengthened policy ensures that The Hub meets all statutory and local safeguarding requirements, providing a robust, detailed and legally compliant framework for responding to missing-child incidents both on-site and off-site. It reflects best practice, aligns with LLR multi-agency expectations, and ensures that staff act swiftly, collaboratively and with the highest regard for pupil safety.