



ST MARY'S SCHOOL HAMPSTEAD

Missing Child POLICY

September 2026

Reviewed September 2026
Next Review Date: September 2027

MISSION STATEMENT

St Mary's School seeks to provide an outstanding education firmly founded on the Catholic Faith.

Spiritual and moral principles are nurtured in a way that is reflected in daily life.

Within a happy and caring environment and based on the recognition of the dignity, worth and wellbeing of each child, high standards are expected. Intellectual development is emphasised and fostered along with the pursuit of academic excellence.

St Mary's values the unique contribution of every child within the school community.

St Mary's is inclusive and welcomes girls from all communities and faith backgrounds, or none, and believes that all benefit from the school's values.

St Mary's aims to encourage an active partnership between home, school, parish and the wider community.

INTRODUCTION

The welfare of all of our children at St Mary's School, Hampstead is our paramount responsibility. A child being absent from education, for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including abuse or neglect, child sexual and/or criminal exploitation and county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Every adult who works at the school has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. This includes the importance of effective information sharing to ensure our children are safe and receiving suitable education. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child being absent in the future. Where staff have concerns that a child is absent from school for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, or missing from school, this policy should be followed.

Every member of our staff who works with children has read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is supervised the whole time that they are in our care.

EYFS

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our youngest children are set out as part of the School's Health and Safety Policy which is on our website and can be provided to parents on request. We review this policy regularly (at least once a year) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of very young children and read at least Part 1 of KCSIE, or at least Annex A of KCSIE, if their role does not require them to work directly with children.

ACTION TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF IF A CHILD FAILS TO ATTEND FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

All new pupils (regardless of their age) are placed on the School's admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the School has agreed that the pupil will attend the School. If a child fails to attend on the agreed date, staff must inform [the Head / Designated Safeguarding Lead] without delay. The [Head / Designated Safeguarding Lead] will consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

The School admission register, also known as the School roll, contains specific personal details of every pupil in the School along with the date of admission or re-admission to the School, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended.

Where there are changes affecting the child (including a change of address or school), these will be reflected in the admission register. This will assist the School and external agencies when making enquiries to locate any missing children.

The School also has an attendance register which records pupil attendance. The attendance register is taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion we will record whether each registered pupil is physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Registers are legal records and school leaders must ensure that the school's admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Please see the School's [Attendance Policy] for more information.

The School will preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date of entry. Where amendments are made to the registers, the School will ensure that the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment.

DUTY TO REPORT

The School monitors attendance of its pupils closely and will take action to address poor or irregular attendance.

The School has a statutory duty to inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the School's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

The School will make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive or cumulative school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

Please refer to the School's Attendance Policy for further information on reporting duties.

PROLONGED AND/OR PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Where a pupil has not returned from a period of leave or has had a continuous period of absence, the School, together with the local authority, may need to carry out joint reasonable enquiries under regulation 9(1)(h) or (i) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to try to find out where the pupil is.

Where a pupil has been continuously absent without authorisation for a period of not less than 20 school days (and there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil is unwell or unable to attend because of any unavoidable cause), and the School and local authority have failed, following reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is, the School may delete the pupil's name from the admission register. The School will inform the local authority of such deletion no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

In addition, the School recognises its wider reporting duties following deletions from the admission register, in accordance with regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, to help identify children who are missing education and/or otherwise at risk of harm.

The School also recognises that children who are absent from education particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. The School's response to persistently absent pupils supports identifying such abuse and helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.

ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF IF A CHILD GOES MISSING FROM THE SCHOOL

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child were found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions:

- Take a register in order to ensure that all the other children were present
- Check the Medical Rooms
- Check with the School Administrator/Receptionist who will check the signing out/in book
- Inform the Headmistress or the Deputy Head in the absence of the Headmistress and Head of EYFS
- Ask all of the adults and children calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the child
- Occupy all of the other children in their classroom(s) with a relevant activity
- At the same time, arrange for one or more adults to search everywhere within the EYFS Department, both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, cupboards, washrooms etc. where a small child might hide
- Check the doors, gates and CCTV records for signs of entry/exit

A record is kept by the School of any instances in which a pupil is missing from school without satisfactory permission and documentation, including the action taken and the pupil's explanation.

If the child is still missing, the following steps would be taken without delay:

- Inform the Headmistress, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Head of EYFS
- Ask the Headmistress to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the School at once
- The DSL/Headmistress would immediately notify the Police
- The Headmistress would arrange for staff to search the rest of the School premises and grounds
- If the child's home is within walking distance, may be asked to check to see if the child has gone home. They would set out on foot to attempt to catch up with the child
- The DSL would inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) who should liaise with safeguarding partners including local children's services as appropriate. The DSL will check with the LSCB this has happened
- The School would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Chair of Governors and Chair of Trustees
- The School's insurers would be informed
- If the child is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

During the course of the investigation into the missing child, the School will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other pupils and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

The School will always consider the wider circumstances around a child going missing from School and whether there are wider safeguarding concerns that may need to be addressed in line with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF IF A CHILD GOES MISSING ON AN OUTING

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other children were present
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity
- Immediately inform the Headmistress, the DSL and Head of EYFS (where relevant) by mobile phone
- The remaining children would be taken back to school as soon as reasonably practicable
- Ask the Headmistress to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened as soon as reasonably practicable to explain what has happened and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the venue/the School at once
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search (where relevant)
- Immediately contact the Police
- The DSL would inform the LSCB who should liaise with safeguarding partners including local children's services as appropriate
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority including children's services

- Inform the Chair of Governors and Chair of Trustees without delay
- The School's insurers would be informed as soon as reasonably practicable
- If the child is injured and is taken directly from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than 15 days of the accident

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. The school will review its procedures and, if appropriate, these would be adjusted.

ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF ONCE THE CHILD IS FOUND

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- The Headmistress will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident
- The Headmistress will oversee a full investigation (if appropriate involving the LSCB)
- Media queries should be referred to the Chair of Trustees
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements
- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the child was missing and how she appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future
- Consider whether actions need to be taken in line with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy where there are concerns about the welfare of the child

PART TWO: PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF WHEN A CHILD IS NOT COLLECTED ON TIME

If a child is not collected within half an hour of the agreed collection time, the School will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. Where reasonably possible the School will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. If there is no answer, the Headmistress / member of SLT/SMT will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child. During this time, the child will be safely looked after by the School.

If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers by 7pm, the Headmistress will contact the Social Care Duty Officer (Tel 020 7974 4444). Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police. The School will make a full written report of the incident.

The School will look after the child safely throughout the time that she remains under the School's care, until such a time as she has been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate, alternative care arrangements have been made with Social Care and/or the Police in order to prioritise the child's safety. The school's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures.

Collection procedures are on display on parents' noticeboards outside which are located each EYFS classroom.

YEARS 1 TO 6

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Our Pupil Supervision Policy describes:

- The arrangements for children arriving at school and leaving the premises at the end of the day
- The qualifications of our staff and the arrangements for supervising the children whilst they are in school
- The arrangements for registering the children in both morning and afternoon. For day pupils we take a register of pupils at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Parents are responsible for notifying the School if their child is absent for any reason. The School will always contact the parent if the child fails to arrive at school without an explanation
- The physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to or exit from the building
- The supervision of the playground and the physical barriers that separate it from the rest of the school

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our pupils are set out in our Health and Safety Policy. This document is on our website and can be provided to parents on request.

We review all our policies regularly (at least once a year) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of pupils and read at least Part 1 of KCSIE, or at least Annex A of KCSIE, if their role does not require them to work directly with children.

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Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child were found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions without delay:

- Check with the pupil's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check the sick room
- Check with the School Administrator/Receptionist who will check the signing out/in book
- Inform the senior member of staff on duty
- Ask all of the adults and pupils calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the pupil
- Occupy all of the other pupils in their classroom(s)
- At the same time, arrange for one or more adults to search the school grounds
- Check the doors, gates and CCTV records for signs of entry/exit

A record is kept by the School of any instances in which a pupil is missing from school without satisfactory permission and documentation, including the action taken and the pupil's explanation.

If the pupil is still missing, the following steps would be taken:

- Inform the Headmistress and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Ask the Headmistress to ring the pupil's parents and explain what has happened and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the School at once
- The DSL/Headmistress would notify the Police
- The Headmistress would arrange for staff to search the rest of the School premises and grounds
- If the pupil's home is within walking distance, a member of staff may be asked to check if the pupil has gone home and would set out on foot to attempt to catch up with the child
- The DSL would inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) who should liaise with safeguarding partners including local children's services as appropriate. The DSL will check with the LSCB this has happened
- The School would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Chair of Governors and Chair of Trustees
- The School's insurers would be informed
- If the pupil is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

During the course of the investigation into the missing pupil, the School will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other pupils and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.

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- Ask the Headmistress ring the child's parents and explain what has happened and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the venue/the School at once
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search (where relevant)
- Contact the Police immediately
- The DSL would inform the LSCB who should liaise with safeguarding partners including local children's services as appropriate. The DSL will check with the LSCB this has happened
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Chair of Governors and Chair of Trustees without delay
- The School's insurers would be informed as soon as reasonably practicable
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- Consider whether actions need to be taken in line with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy where there are concerns about the welfare of the child

SCHOOL PROCEDURES WHEN TRAVELLING BY TUBE

Pupils occasionally travel by tube accompanied by teachers. All children are made aware of the procedure which they must follow if they become separated from the teachers or remainder of the party for any reason:

1. If any pupil is left alone on the platform at a tube station because they have not boarded the train with the remainder of the party for any reason, they should wait on the platform. A teacher will get off at the next stop and return immediately to collect them.

2. If a pupil boards a train at a tube station for any reason without a member of staff, the pupil should get off at the next stop and wait on the platform. A member of staff will come on the next tube to meet them.

PART TWO: PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF WHEN A CHILD IS NOT COLLECTED ON TIME

If a child is not collected within half an hour of the agreed collection time, the School will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. Where reasonably possible the School will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. If there is no answer, the Headmistress / member of SLT/SMT will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child. During this time, the child will be safely looked after by the School.

If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers by 7pm, the Headmistress will contact the Social Care Duty Officer (Tel 020 7974 4444). Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police. The School will make a full written report of the incident.

The School will look after the child safely throughout the time that she remains under the School's care, until such a time as she has been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate, alternative care arrangements have been made with Social Care and/or the Police in order to prioritise the child's safety. The school's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures.