Missing Student Policy & Procedure

Date of Policy	September 2026
Next Review Date	September 2027
Aproved by head	September 2026
Key Staff	Head Teacher, DSL, Deputy Head Pastoral
Lead Staff for Review	Head Teacher

Contents

Aim 3
Purpose 3
Responsibility 3
Thresholds 4
OVER 18s 4
UNDER 18s 5
UNDER 16s 5
All students: General procedure upon discovery that a student is missing 6
Reporting a student missing to the Police 7
If a 'missing' student returns to School 7
Confidentiality 8
Follow-on procedures 8
Policy review 8

Aim

CATS Cambridge is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so the students can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. As such, it is the policy of the School to actively investigate, and provide effective support and interventions, to students who are reported as 'missing' or who have taken leave without appropriate permissions.

Additionally, we will work to reduce the incidence of students going missing and the risks associated with young people who go missing.

This policy is consistent with the legal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of students as described in section 175 of the Education Act 2002, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and DfE guidance Children Missing Education 2016.

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a student going missing in future.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for all staff, including volunteers, who work at the School about our approach to managing incidents of missing students and students who take leave without permission.

It should be remembered that international students are a vulnerable group, who are often isolated from their friends and family who may be living thousands of miles away. International students may have an imperfect command of English and/or be unfamiliar with British customs. As such, information requests from the families of international students should be dealt with particularly sympathetically; as persons may not appreciate the provisions of the Data Protection Act, or the School's position on confidentiality.

Responsibility

Ultimate responsibility for this policy and procedure lies with the Head Teacher / Rector. The School has a legal responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its students, staff and visitors and aims to provide a healthy and safe environment that promotes the welfare of all. All staff and students have a legal responsibility to take reasonable care for their own safety and for that of others.

All members of staff including volunteers but specifically those in the Boarding Team, the Welfare Team and House Directors must be aware of the policy, procedures, and sanctions applicable to incidences of missing students or students who take leave without permission and apply them accordingly.

The procedures in this policy may be adapted as necessary. The Head Teacher has a wide discretion in relation to the procedures in this policy.

Thresholds

There are three thresholds which allow for different procedures to be adopted in the case of missing students and students who are absent without leave. The three thresholds are Under 16's, Under 18's and Over 18's. In most cases staff will be dealing with students who are absent without proper authorisation. Cases in which students are determined to be 'missing' are rare. In order to ascertain which procedure should be followed when a student is missing or absent without permission, the senior person coordinating the School's response should determine the age of the student and assess the risk. Staff should be aware that they do not need to wait until the threshold to report any students they have concerns about. A number of contextual factors will be taken into account, including:

- Is the student despondent or mentally or physically disabled?
- Is the student experiencing academic, personal, or financial problems?
- Has the student disappeared before?
- Does the student have a known habit which would increase potential risk?
- Has the student received any threats or warnings?
- What was the student's lifestyle? Does the student have a criminal record?
- Did the student or perpetrator leave a note?
- Possible threat factors: time of day; darkness; weather conditions; known local concerns

OVER 18s

For the purposes of this policy an over 18 student is defined as missing when they have been absent for more than 48 hours without proper authorisation or notification and where all other avenues of information gathering about their location and well-being have been exhausted. Students living in Independent Accommodation are defined as missing if they have been absent from School for 2 consecutive days and there has been no response to calls and emails.

Staff will review contextual factors and should not wait for 48 hours to start mitigating actions if there are concerns.

These students are adults and have the right to be treated as such. Students who are over 18 have the right to privacy. Their parents, guardians, next of kin, members of staff or fellow students do not have an automatic right to know their whereabouts. Indeed, to reveal an over

18 student's whereabouts to any of these parties, without the permission of the student concerned, may well be a breach of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that came into effect in the UK on 25 May 2018.

It is important to remember that some students do not wish to have contact with their immediate family for personal reasons; as adults, this position must be respected. It is a serious matter to disclose personal details of a student to a third party, even if it is an over 18 student's next of kin. Personal details should only be disclosed with the permission of the Head Teacher or Senior Deputy Head. It is important to remember that any person who decides to breach confidentiality must be able to justify their action in terms of the prevention of serious harm, or a genuine and reasonable belief, with evidence, that serious harm to the student might be prevented by such disclosure.

Attendance staff will monitor daily absence reports. Any student who has had unauthorised null attendance for two consecutive days, will have an iSAMS Welfare note raised and the Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL), Deputy DSL, the Senior Deputy Head and the Head Teacher will be notified by e-mail.

UNDER 18s

For the purposes of this policy an under 18 student is defined as missing where they fail to return back to the Boarding House at curfew time, or if living in Independent Accommodation are absent from School for 2 consecutive days with no reply received from their parent/guardian stating that they are aware of their whereabouts.

For students in Independent Accommodation the parent/guardian should be contacted directly if there has been no explanation of the absence by the end of morning.

UNDER 16s

For the purposes of this policy an under 16 student is missing when they do not appear at their required times of registration during the School teaching day or curfew times after the end of the School teaching day, or if living in Independent Accommodation are absent from School for 2 consecutive days with no reply received from their parent/guardian stating that they are aware of their whereabouts.

For students in Independent Accommodation the parent/guardian should be contacted directly as soon as possible if there has been no explanation of the absence.

All students: General procedure upon discovery that a student is missing

The safety of the student is paramount. The absence of a student from the School for a prolonged period, or an extremely anxious enquiry from a friend of relative, may give rise to concerns about the student's safety.

These concerns may be particularly acute if it is known that the student is suffering from a health problem. Staff should alert a member of SLT immediately.

The first step must always be to confirm that the student is missing using the thresholds laid out above. Having confirmed that a student is missing and alerted SLT, all other avenues for information gathering about their location and well-being can be collated These may include:

- Investigate available sources of information:
- Acquiring information through IsAMS to determine last time seen in residence, personal contact details, authorised absences, check exeat system etc.
- The student file, (to determine whether confidential information has been stored on file) and other relevant information, e.g. Health issues, etc.
- Speak to the Senior Deputy Head, House Parents, House Director, Maintenance Staff, etc.
- Obtain a photograph (from iSAMS) and familiarise yourself as to what the student looks like
- Ask other staff on duty in the Boarding House, if they know any reason for absence
- Obtain the student or friend's number and make direct contact if possible
- If appropriate ask friends to try to make contact using phone or social media as available
- Ask other students if they are aware of any reason for the absence - though their information should only be taken as a guide to be followed up, and certainly not as the only evidence. Obtain mobile phone numbers to make direct contact if possible
- Begin a search of the Boarding House in other rooms, as it may be that the student is with a friend and has not told anyone
- If appropriate visit private residence if student is in independent accommodation
- Ask duty staff in other areas, to check their areas and ask their students for any information (i.e.
  for them to do what you have done within the House)
- Check other areas of the school, e.g. Reading room, Common room IT room, etc.

If none of this produces any information and all avenues of information have been reasonably exhausted, then the on-call Designated Senior Leader should then make a decision to enquire/inform the parents or guardians of the missing student (if they are

not already aware as they may be, particularly for students in independent accommodation) and/or inform the police. The on-call Designated Senior Leader will also determine who is to make contact.

The member of staff designated as leading the response should maintain all notes, records, and recordings of telephone conversations.

Reporting a student missing to the Police

When reporting a student missing the police will ask questions. The questions may be as follows so please ensure you have these details at hand when speaking to the police.

- All personal details known to you, including their full name, date of birth, address.
- Any details relating to the disappearance; when you or others last had contact with the individual, what they were wearing when they disappeared and any other details relating to possible reasons behind their disappearance.
- Any factors that might put the student at risk. This might be age, physical or mental health issues or perhaps the individual may have received bad news or been in emotional distress.
- The police may ask for various personal items belonging to the missing individual. This may include mobile phones, diaries and laptop computers.
- The police may also want to visit the accommodation and carry out a routine search and ask for a picture of missing student.

If a 'missing' student returns to School

If/when the student returns Boarding Staff must telephone Senior Staff, at most appropriate time,
e.g., if student returns at 3am inform Senior Staff at 9am the following morning. The police should be informed as soon as the student returns.

When the student returns an interview should be completed, documenting where the student has been, who they have been staying with, reasons for being absent, etc.

Staff must maintain all notes, records, and recordings of conversations and telephone calls.

Confidentiality

Staff cannot and should not promise total confidentiality. All staff must follow our Confidentiality Policy.

Follow-on procedures

Based on the return interview, students will usually be required to speak to a member of the welfare team regarding their being missing. The welfare team will consider what support the student requires upon returning to the School in accordance with the 'Working Together' guidance.

Follow up will be in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and the Student Behaviour Policy, as well as any guidance from local agencies.

Completion of the 'missing' student procedures is onerous. Such cases usually arise out-of-hours and typically require a very labour-intensive approach. The School reserves the right to recover unnecessary costs from students or their parents. As such, House Parents must outline the procedures for exeat and the consequences of being absent without leave during the students' induction.

Students missing from education

In addition to following this policy for unexplained absences reaching the defined threshold, Cambridge Arts and Sciences is obliged to notify the local authority when a CSA student fails to attend school regularly or is absent without leave for more than 10 school days (continuous).

Our Attendance Policy details our processes for monitoring and following up student attendance.

Policy review

This policy will be evaluated and reviewed annually. It may also be reviewed in the light of new legislation or any incident that may relate to this policy. This policy has been developed and implemented in consultation with the whole School community including students, parents/carers, staff, and partner agencies.