



**Oxford Sixth Form College**

A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

# Missing Student Policy

Revised June 2022

Review date: June 2023

## **Introduction**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the College's Safeguarding & Child Protection, and Attendance Policies and is in line with National Minimum Boarding Standards 2022 (NMS) and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022.

Staff working within the college know and implement the college's policy, and local protocols, in relation to boarders going missing and understand their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for boarders who are missing, including working with police where appropriate. The college ensures that all adults providing lodgings for boarders on its behalf have undergone suitable safeguarding training at least every three years, and that they understand the college's policy in relation to boarders going missing and their role in implementing that policy.

This guidance gives actions to be followed by College staff to ensure that missing students, as defined below, are found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible.

### **Aims**

- Locate the student as quickly as possible
- Ensure his/her safety
- Determine the cause for a student's absence
- Avoid raising unnecessary alarm
- Ensure that as far as possible and where appropriate, investigations remain confidential to protect the privacy of the student

### **Definition of a Missing Student**

For the purposes of this policy a boarding or day student aged 18 or over as at the 31<sup>st</sup> August prior to the academic year in which the student is studying at the College is defined as missing:

- when they have been absent for 24 hours from the College without proper authorisation or notification and the senior tutor or designated deputy has not been able to establish contact with the student's responsible adult or student
- when they have without proper authorisation or notification of being away from a College boarding house failed to meet boarding house or homestay curfews

For the purposes of this policy a boarding or day student aged 16-18 i.e. 16 or 17 as at the 31<sup>st</sup> August prior to the academic year in which the student is studying at the College, is defined as missing:

- when they have been absent from the college for 5 hours without proper authorisation or notification and the Senior Tutor or designated deputy has not been able to establish contact with the student's responsible adult or student

- when they have without proper authorisation or notification of being away from a College boarding house have failed to meet boarding house curfew and the Houseparent's have not been able to establish contact with the student's responsible adult

For the purposes of this policy a boarding or day student of Compulsory School Age aged i.e. 15 as at the 31st August prior to the academic year in which the student is studying at the College, is defined as missing:

- when they have been absent from required registration times and the Senior Tutor or designated deputy has not been able to establish contact with the student's responsible adult
- when they have without proper authorisation or notification of being away from a College boarding house failed to meet boarding house or homestay curfew

### **Identifying Missing Students**

Outside of the College's teaching day hours, Houseparent's are responsible for ensuring that they record and act upon any boarding student who has, without proper authorisation or notification of being away from a College boarding or homestay house, failed to meet boarding house or homestay curfew and who thereby constitutes a missing student.

During the College teaching day, the relevant Senior Tutor is responsible for ensuring that they are aware when a student has reached a 'trigger point', as defined above, whereby the student is categorised as a missing student and for acting upon the latter.

### **Process during College Hours**

Upon a student being categorised as missing, the senior tutor should inform the Director of Student Services (DSS) and the Vice Principal (VP) will lead the search and involve key staff as appropriate to assist in this search. The DSS and VP will risk assess the student to enable a quick assessment of the level of concern. The DSS will organise, in liaison with the Head of Boarding, (where the student concerned is a boarder):

- a search of the College teaching and boarding buildings including a check of common areas, the student kitchen, common rooms and toilets
- a thorough search of the student's room if they are a boarder or board with a host family
- for friends and classmates to be spoken with; and
- for parents/carers/guardians to be notified

The VP will notify the Principal or designated deputy of the student being missing. The DSS will maintain detailed notes of all actions with timings will be made throughout the process using the missing persons form (Appendix A).

The Principal, or designated deputy, will make the decision as to when the Police should be telephoned and an official Missing Person Report made depending on the Principal or designated deputy's assessment of the situation.

## **Process outside of College Hours**

### **Host family students**

- If efforts by the host family to contact the student via their mobile are unsuccessful and the student's whereabouts are unknown **one hour after the curfew time elapses**, the host family should call the College's emergency telephone number held by the Houseparent at Penson's Gardens or St Ebbes boarding house (*designated, at the time of the call, as Duty Officer*). These calls will be logged by the Duty Officer.
- The Duty Officer should advise the homestay to continue trying the student's mobile phone at 15-minute intervals (calls and texts) and do a thorough search of the student's room.
- Concurrently the Host and Duty Officer are permitted, and encouraged to use social media to try and contact the student. Using the student's friends to help with the search electronically (calls, text, message and social media) will help.
- The Duty Officer will check iSAMS and telephone and email the missing student to get in touch with either themselves or the host immediately.
- The host family should try to make contact where possible with known friends in consultation with information given to them by the College and/or Boarding staff; the Duty Officer should contact and inform the on duty Head of House of the situation. If the student is of compulsory school age, his or her parents/guardian will be contacted by the Duty Officer and informed of the situation.
- If after a second further hour, following the first call from the host family, the student is still missing, the Duty Officer will inform the (non-compulsory school age) student's parents/guardian of the situation and contact the Head of House. The Head of House will make the decision on whether the police should be contacted and when. In all cases the Head of House will contact a member of SMT (whomever is on duty at the time) once the police have been called. The decision on whether or not to inform the police will be based on the level of risk and any known mitigating factors.

All actions taken should be logged by the Duty Officer, the host family member and SMT member concerned, this information will subsequently be sent to the DSS to compile a report and log the incident which will then be submitted to the VP for formal logging.

## **Boarding House Students**

Students residing in the College boarding houses are supported and kept safe by Houseparent's.

### **Detailed Procedure as per the flowchart (Appendix B)**

1. After curfew a student has been listed on the curfew log as "not returned to boarding house"
  - a. Check Reach Boarding to ensure that they are not permitted to be out.
  - b. Check Salto to see when they last left the boarding house.
2. Start completing a "Missing Student Form" (Appendix A)
  - a. If the Student has a sibling at another OxSFC boarding house, then contact the Houseparent at that house to check they are not there.
  - b. Start to complete the paperwork process here (name of student, time of discovery, actions taken so far)
  - c. **THE PAPERWORK SHOULD BE COMPLETED AFTER EACH TASK FROM NOW ON WITH ACCURATE TIMES & ACTIONS TAKEN**
3. Search the Boarding House in a discreet manner:
  - a. Check the student's room
  - b. Discreetly check student's friends' rooms
  - c. Check the common areas (kitchen, common room and immediate area around the building).
4. Attempt to Contact the student
  - a. Call their listed Mobile Number. Leave a message stating the time of your call and instruct them to contact you immediately.
  - b. If the call isn't answered, text the students mobile instructing them to get in touch with you immediately.
  - c. Send an email to their listed address(s) (College and private). Sometimes Students will pick up email's swifter than calls. Student's College and private email addresses can be found on iSAMS.
  - d. Send a message to the student via Microsoft Teams.
5. Ask friends of the student to contact the missing student whilst you remain with them
  - a. If successful, ascertain where the student is, and, if it is the safest option, instruct them to return to the boarding house. It might be that it is safer for the student to remain where they are e.g. a hotel or a friend's house. You will need to make a call-back to check that the student is where they say they are and ascertain who the responsible adult is that's with them (this cannot be another student unless it is an older sibling, in which case

you will need to contact the parents to get permission for the sibling to take responsibility).

If, for example, they have told you they are in a hotel, but you know that they are not you should call the Head of House immediately. If you are unable to reach the Head of House then you must call the police and then a member of the Senior Management Team: Mark Love, Carole Nyssen, or Marc Lewis.

- b. Utilise the College taxi account if required in order to get the student back safely.
- 
6. If the student remains missing one hour after curfew,
    - a. Contact the Head of House who will take charge of the situation
    - b. Inform them of the name of the missing student and the actions you have taken so far
    - c. Ask them to try to contact the Student whilst you remain on the other line (the student may recognise the Boarding House Number)
    - d. Contact local hospitals to check for admittance.
    - e. Use social media to try and contact the student. You should also ask known friends to try and contact the student.
  
  7. If the student remains missing two hours after curfew,
    - a. The Head of House will make contact to ask whether you have heard from the student.
    - b. If contact has still not been made, then the Head of House will contact the police (the student will have been missing for 2 hours) and the student's parents/guardian will need to be informed of the situation.

### **In all cases:**

The following questions will help you build a **risk assessment** so that you can judge the seriousness of the situation and therefore take appropriate action.

### **Questions to be asked:**

- When was he/she last seen?
- Who was he/she with?
- Where might he/she have gone?
- Has he/she signed out?
- Is there a College activity that he/she might be on?
- Has he/she been ill or injured and gone to hospital?
- What emotional state did he/she appear to be in?
- Is this out of character?
- Has anything upset him/her recently?
- Did he/she speak to anyone about leaving?

- Who are his/her main friends at College?
- Does he/she have a special friend?
- Is there any reason to believe he/she might have been abducted? (E.g. family custody dispute; very wealthy/prominent parents/modern slavery.)

### **Other action to consider taking**

- Check his/her room for indications of how he/she is dressed, where he/she might have gone.
- Check his/her desk and wastepaper bins for scribbled notes.
- Check the CCTV, signing out book and Salto. You are looking to see footage before the student left; what they were doing, who they were with and if, for example, they were carrying an overnight bag.

### **Police response**

The Police treat all missing person reports as serious. Each risk is assessed, and the following are trigger factors to be considered:

- Boy/Girl in an emotional or depressed state of mind
- Unusual behaviour prior to disappearance
- Boy/Girl needs essential medicine or treatment
- Suspicion of abduction
- Suspicion of self-harm/suicide
- Involvement in a violent confrontation prior to disappearance
- Previously disappeared and suffered or was exposed to harm whilst missing

### **Record keeping:**

The College will keep a full written record (timeline) of any incident of a missing boarder including:

- the student's name
- relevant dates and times (e.g., when it was first noticed that the boarder was missing)
- the actions taken to find the student including the time that each action is taken
- whether the Police or Social Services were involved
- outcome or resolution of the incident
- any reasons given by the student for being missing
- any concerns or complaints about the handling of the incident
- a record of the staff involved.

A full written record of the incident will be kept on the student's safeguarding file and the NMS record spreadsheet, which is maintained by the VP, therefore it is important

that the timeline and any statements are submitted to the VP within 24 hours of the incident.

## Appendix A

### Missing Persons Form

A precise record of **ALL** actions taken should be recorded in chronological order. Once the student has been found, returned to the College or residence this form must be submitted to the DSS who will use it to compile a full report for the VP.

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Name of missing student:</b>
<b>Name of Duty Officer:</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Actions taken</b>
<i>e.g. 22:30</i>	<i>Identified student is missing</i>

## Appendix B

### Missing student procedure flowchart

