Missing Student Policy

Revised June 2020

Review date: June 2021

This policy should be read in conjunction with the OxSFC COVID-19 policy that overrides the guidelines/procedures in this policy, where appropriate. The guiding principle will always be to maintain the health and safety of all stakeholders.

Introduction

This policy should be read in conjunction with the College's Child Protection and Attendance Policies.

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 in order 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 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 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 curfews

For the purposes of this policy a boarding or day student aged 16-18 i.e. 16 or 17 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 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 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 house, failed to meet boarding house 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 Assistant Principal Pastoral and Boarding (APPB) will lead the search and involve key staff as appropriate to assist in this search. The APPB 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, toilets
- a thorough search of the student's room if they are a boarder or board with a host family
- for parents/carers/guardians to be notified
- for friends and classmates to be spoken with

The APPB will notify the Principal or designated deputy of the student being missing and 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.
- The Duty Officer will check 3SYS and telephone and email the missing student to get in touch with either themselves or the host immediately.
- If after one further hour following the first call from the host family of curfew being missed and the student is still missing, 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 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 Assistant Principal Pastoral and Boarding (APPB) to compile a report and log the incident.

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 the permission slips/emails from the College to ensure that they are not permitted to be out.
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). Sometimes Students will pick up emails swifter than calls. Student's College and private email addresses can be found on 3SYS.

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. In the event that, 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 SMT.

      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.

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 and inform them 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 therefor 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?
- 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 waste paper bins for scribbled notes.
- Check the CCTV and signing out book. You are looking to see footage before the student left; what they were doing, who they were with and if 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 notices that the boarder was missing)
- the action 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 file and in the Missing Person File (NMS 3 major incidents).

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 APPB.

Date:	Name of missing student:
Name of Duty Officer:	
Time	**Actions taken**
	Identified student is missing

Appendix B

Houseparents

Missing student procedure flowchart

Student reported as missing. Start recording actions taken →

Check permissions, if no permission given and no contact made with student or responsible adult proceed as missing student →

Annotate curfew log to identify a student is missing and contact College staff member holding out of hours telephone

Search boarding house in a discreet manner ← No ← Check for siblings ← Start completing Appendix A

Check students room → Check friend's room/s → Check common areas → Attempt to contact the student again (phone & email)

Organise safe return to the boarding house ← Yes ← Ask friends to try and contact the student ← No

Contact Head of House who will Risk Assess to determine next actions

No

Contact local hospitals → No

Contact Head of House

One hour check call back

Unable to contact the Head of Boarding

The parents/carers/guardians will be alerted after exhaustive searches and interviews and the decision for timing of this action will be taken by the APPB/Principal in consultation with relevant staff.

Contact Police 101, then contact the APPB