



# Oakfield School

## 35. Absenting/Missing Children Policy

	Date
To be Reviewed:	April 2021

# Oakfield School

## Absenting/Missing Policy and Procedures

This policy has been designed to work in conjunction with the Hull Children's safeguarding board guidance on dealing with children who absent or go missing, in addition this policy also adheres to the statutory guidance on "children who run away or go missing from home or care" (Department for Education January 2014).

The safety of the children is paramount so it is vital to ensure that the Policy and Procedures for when a child absents or if a child has been categorised by the police as missing are clear and concise.

There could be many any factors that contribute to a child absenting/or go Missing from school so we need to be alert and mindful to the potential difficulties that may arise in the lives of our pupils.

Oakfield School is a residential special school for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties. Due to the nature of the pupils that attend Oakfield the risk of a child going into crisis and choosing to leave the school premises without authorisation is increased. Although staff make every attempt to de-escalate potential situations/incidents of a pupil leaving unfortunately they may be times where this occurs. Once a pupil absents staff will initiate the necessary protocols.

Each time a pupil absents from school the circumstances can and will be different the following policy and procedures are a guide for staff to ensure that all the necessary safeguarding procedures are adhere too and that the safe return of each pupil is the paramount concern. Actions and timings can differ for different circumstances and different individuals, decisions always need to be considered carefully and in conjunction with SLT, risk assessments, this policy and the relevant national and local guidance.

## PROCEDURES

### **Away without authorisation from the classroom, residential house, school building or activities but remains in view of staff.**

When a young person/ child leaves the classroom, residential houses, school building without authorisation, but remains in visual sight of staff.

- Inform Senior Manager and Administration (during school hours) and explain the situation and the form of action you are taking
- Engage with the Young Person/Child in an attempt to de-escalate any difficulties that has arisen, causing them to leave.
- Young person/child returns and follow up talk takes place.
- Make an electronic daily diary entry as the child was away without Authorisation.

The electronic diary entry should include:

1. Length of time young Person/child was out for
2. Where Young Person/child was located.
3. Cause of the difficulty that resulted in child leaving,
4. Thoughts and feeling of the child/young person.
5. Action to be taken to prevent further issues.
6. Were necessary; update of relevant paperwork i.e. Risk Assessment, PHP

## **YOUNG PERSON/CHILD ABSENTS OR GOES MISSING**

When a pupil leaves the school site without authorisation every effort is made to locate the pupil, staff conduct a search of the local area, however we do not chase, unless exceptional circumstances apply, as we run the risk of the pupils going further afield, or will increase the level of risk of the pupil running across roads. Every attempt should be made to convince the pupil to return. Staff will monitor from a safe distance or until the pupil/s are no longer visible.

- At this point an accurate recording of the clothing worn by the pupil, location and direction of travel is imperative.
- Inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team, who will make a further assessment of the current situation.
- Inform the administration Office, this is ensuring all channels of communication are active. You are required to inform Administration of all up dates. After 3pm inform Manager on duty, by using duty mobile.
- If pupil does not return and we have not had sight of the pupil/s for 10 minutes, then we contact parents/carers to report that they child has absented from school.
- Staff will then ask if the parents/carers want us to report their child to the Police, explaining that their child is absent without authorisation from school.
- If a parent/carer requests us to contact the Police we use **101 Non – Emergency Number stating Humberside.**
- In the event of parents requesting their child not to be put out to the police, a member of SLT will risk assess that request and we as a school retain the right to overrule that request.
- Staff will then be required to complete an **Absenting** or **Missing** Incident report form. These can be located on the incident management system and will remain an active Incident until the child has been returned.
- Staff will document the pupil Absenting in the Absenting/Missing Incident Log Book (green book) – located in the **Administration Office** (in the cupboard), after 3pm you must consult with the Manager on duty
- Police will be contacted – (following the Procedures for contacting Police Services)
- The duty Officer will also inform you of the category that the individual has been placed as **“ABSENT” or “MISSING”.**
- The duty officer will grade the young person if categorised as MISSING by completing a risk assessment and decide whether the child/young person is **Low – no police involvement**

**Medium – police involvement High Risk – immediate response. The duty inspector will tell you what action they intend to take.**

- Where a child is categorised as **ABSENT** the Police will review timings. The case will be subject of constant review. A point of contact will be established to liaise with the Police during this time.
- A member of SLT or appointed Staff member will then take charge of the incident and will continually update the Missing Person/Absent Incident Report with any further actions taken by the school, communications or any additional information until the child has been returned to school or home.
- Staff will keep parents/carers and relevant agencies updated.
- All telephone calls, change of grading, any further sightings, must be accurately documented on the active **Absenting/Missing Incident Report forms**.
- **In the case of children that are looked after by the Local Authority staff will immediately contact one of the schools Safeguarding Coordinators - Jayne Oakley/ Leanne Middleton who will make contact with the appropriate social services department. All details given from the police will need to be also passed to either Jayne Oakley or Leanne Middleton.**
- If the child/young person returns or has been returned to the school, the form must reflect this information and again recorded.

**REFER TO APPENDIX A FOR FLOW CHART OF PROCEDURES.**

**REFER TO APPENDIX B FOR FLOW CHART OF PROCEDURES BY POLICE.**

**REFER TO APPENDIX C – POLICE RISK ASSESSMENT TABLE.**

**REFER TO APPENDIX D FOR FLOW CHART OF PROCEDURES BY SOCIAL CARE.**

## **PROCEDURES FOR CONTACTING POLICE SERVICES**

If police are contacted by the member of staff acting as the “Responsible adult” or at the request of a parent/carer the following information will be passed via to the police using their non-emergency 101 telephone Number. The police will then determine whether the child is “**ABSENT**” or “**MISSING**”

Information can be found on student profiles, so prior to contacting the police ensure you have all the details at hand, enabling the police to have an accurate risk assessment/ grading of the individual child.

During this conversation an agreed point of contact will be established, this person normally will be a member of SLT staff and will be contacted by the police at regular interval with any updates. This is to ensure that all safeguarding procedures are adhered too and to reassess current status. This also may change to a Missing Person Report if the category changes from absented to missing. All details and information must be recorded on the absenting/missing form.

## RETURN TO SCHOOL

- Inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the Administration Team (if during school hours).
- Parents/Carers will be informed. Social Worker will be contacted by a Safeguarding Coordinator (if Applicable)
- Police informed of pupils return give all details as required (arrange a Safe and Well Check with Police, if pupil has been categorised as missing.)
- Complete the absenting/missing report detailing all information about the pupils return, times, dates and whom was spoken to etc.
- Dependent whether the child is categorised as “**Absent**” or “**Missing**” by the police, will determine the next course of action.

### ABSENT

- All relevant parties must be informed of the pupils return, parents, police, social care etc.
- Ensure that the return section of the absenting/missing form is fully completed with all relevant information clearly documented.
- Pupils should then have the opportunity to read the form and should be asked about the reasons for them absenting. This should all then be recorded in the relevant sections of the absenting/missing form.
- If possible the information regarding their return should be collected by the pupils Keyworker, a member of SLT or someone whom the child is familiar with and has a positive relationship.
- This is to identify any potential issues that may have arisen whilst “Absent” from school. This will indicate if any further action is required:
  - Reason for “**Absenting**” i.e. Bullying, staff will then initiate the bullying intervention forms and inform Senior Management and one of the Safeguarding Coordinators Jayne Oakley/Leanne Middleton of the situation, staff must complete forms and resolve.
  - To look for any indications that the child has suffered harm;
  - Identify where and with whom they have been; and
  - To give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by, or against, them.

### MISSING

- If a child is categorised as “**Missing**” by the police, on the child’s return to school. The Police or the VEMT (Vulnerable Exploited Missing Trafficked) team should complete a face to face Safe and well check with the pupil.
- Missing person’s cases should not be closed without the person first being seen by the Police or VEMT team.
- The child should still be offered an **Independent Return Interview**.

- If the child refuses an independent return interview, the school MAY initiate a back to school review. This is to highlight potential cause for concerns and risk associated with that child. Management strategies will be up dated to their risk assessment to prevent further re - occurrences.
- If the pupil agrees to the Independent Return Interview, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will initiate contact with the school's Independent visitor to arrange a time for the interview to take place.
- It is good practice that the Independent Return Interview takes place within 72 hours
- Liaise with one of the schools Safeguarding Co-ordinators.
- Part 2 of the Absenting Procedures to be initiated. Senior on duty will be responsible for completing part 2 – Missing pupil

## **INDEPENDENT RETURN INTERVIEWS**

When a child has gone missing from their residential school arrangements should be made for the child to have the opportunity for an Independent Return Interview. **This interview will be carried out by the school's independent person.** Many children who run away or go missing need to build up trust with somebody before they will discuss in-depth the reasons why they decided to run away. The interview and actions that follow from it should:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the Safe and Well Check, and any need for medical attention;
- Understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away;
- Try to prevent it happening again.
- Where there are more complex needs, help may be provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need). Where there are child protection concerns local authority services must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, see Chapter 1 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 for more information.

## **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

Local Authority Protocol will be initiated when categorised as Missing. Jayne Oakley/Leanne Middleton will liaise with Police and relevant Social Service department. All information regarding Absenting/ Missing are monitored by the Senior Leaderships Team as these are recorded on the Absent/ Missing Data Base and will be used for further planning for a child/young person's, care, behaviour or Risk Assessments.

## **ASSOCIATED RESOURCES:**

- Local Protocol and Procedures Children Safeguarding partnership.  
<http://hullscb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>
- Association of Chief of police (ACPO) Guidance on Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons **published November 2016 last updated March 2020**  
<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/>
- Keeping Children safe in education (relating to concerns why the child absconded and potential Risk whilst not in the care of the School) – September 2019  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/835733/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835733/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2019.pdf)
- Statutory Guidance on Children who run away or go missing from home or care January 2014  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/307867/Statutory\\_Guidance\\_-\\_Missing\\_from\\_care\\_3\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307867/Statutory_Guidance_-_Missing_from_care_3_.pdf)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children  
A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children- July 2018  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/729914/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard\\_Children-2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/729914/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children-2018.pdf)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-you-suspect-a-child-is-being-sexually-exploited>
- [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/418131/Preventing\\_youth\\_violence\\_and\\_gang\\_involvement\\_v3\\_March2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418131/Preventing_youth_violence_and_gang_involvement_v3_March2015.pdf)
- Children Act 2004 to safeguard children and young people and to promote their welfare
- Education Act 2002 To make arrangement to ensure that functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding
- National Minimum Care Standards – Standard 15 Paragraph 15.6  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/416188/20150319\\_nms\\_rss\\_standards.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416188/20150319_nms_rss_standards.pdf)
- The Prevent Duty April 2019  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

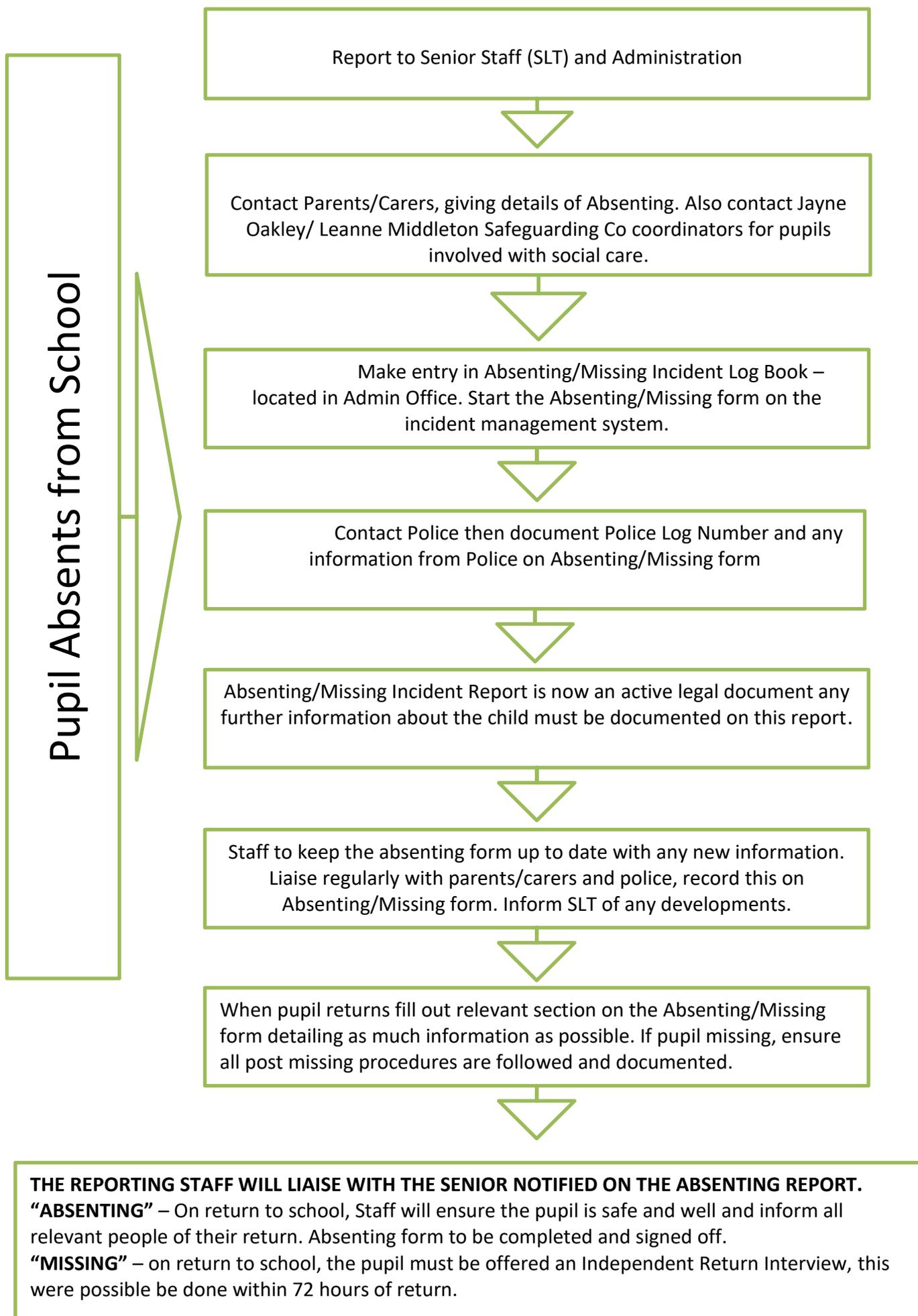
**This Policy was reviewed April 2020.**

Signed: ..... Date: .....

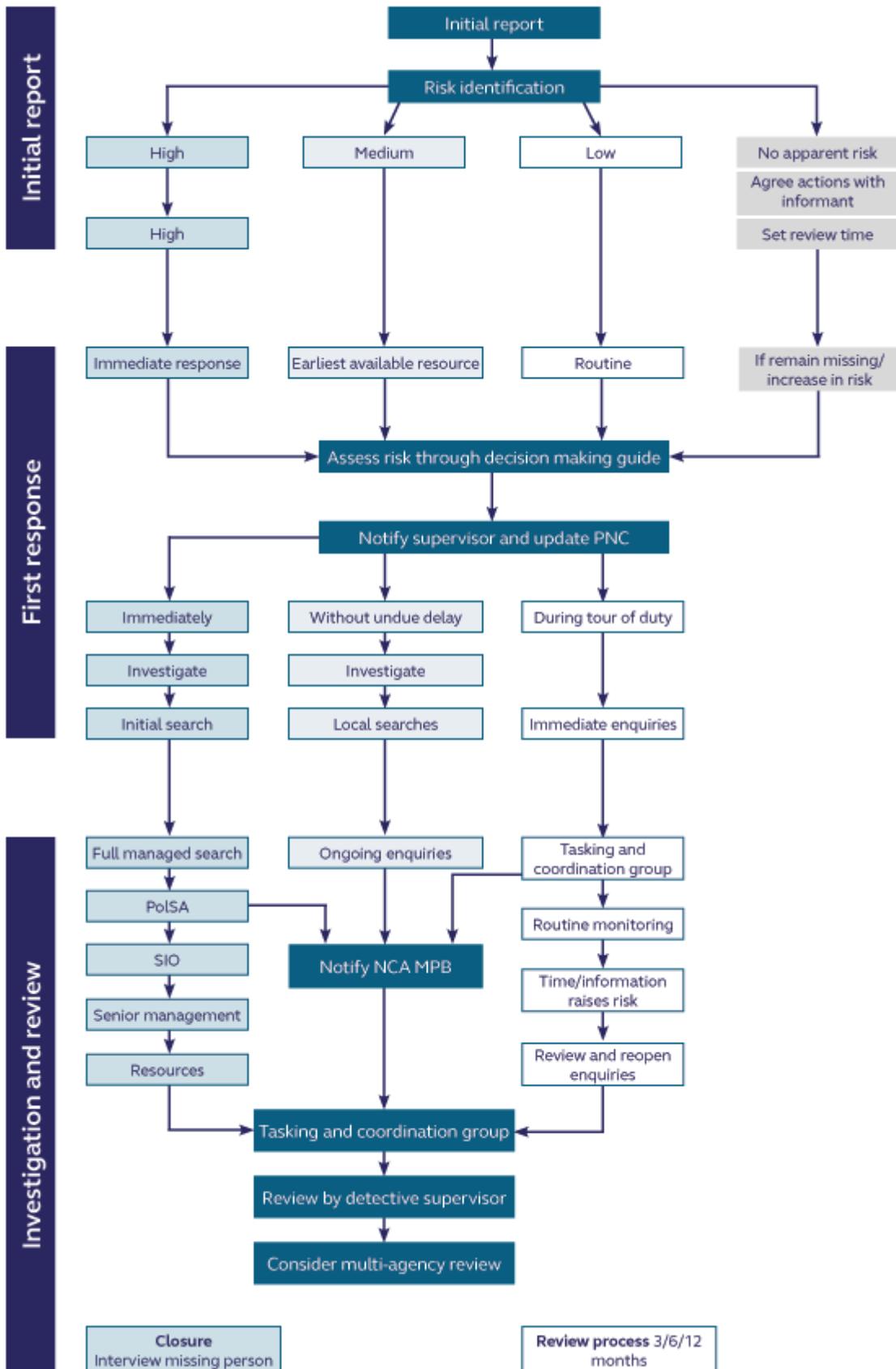
Mr Lee Morfitt (Chair of Governors)

**Next Review April 2021 unless guidance changes then this policy will be amended according to statutory guidance from the Department of Education.**

## ABSENTING/MISSING PROCEDURE FLOWCHART – APPENDIX A



MISSING PERSONS PROCESS CHART – POLICE PROTOCOL - APPENDIX B



## RISK ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE – POLICE PROTOCOL – APPENDIX C

### The Risk Assessment Table

The following table should be used as a guide to an appropriate level of police response based on initial and on-going risk assessment in each case. Risk assessment should be guided by the College of Policing [Risk principles](#), the [National Decision Model](#) and Police [Code of Ethics](#).

<b>No apparent risk (absent)</b>	
There is no apparent risk of harm to either the subject or the public.	Actions to locate the subject and/or gather further information should be agreed with the informant and a latest review time set to reassess the risk.
<b>Low risk</b>	
The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal.	Proportionate enquiries should be carried out to ensure that the individual has not come to harm.
<b>Medium risk</b>	
The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.	This category requires an active and measured response by the police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting.
<b>High risk</b>	
The risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely.	<p>This category almost always requires the immediate deployment of police resources – action may be delayed in exceptional circumstances, such as searching water or forested areas during hours of darkness. A member of the senior management team must be involved in the examination of initial lines of enquiry and approval of appropriate staffing levels. Such cases should lead to the appointment of an investigating officer (IO) and possibly an SIO, and a police search adviser (PoISA).</p> <p>There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies. Family support should be put in place where appropriate. The MPB should be notified of the case without undue delay. Children’s services must also be notified immediately if the person is under 18.</p>

**RETURN MISSING PROCEDURES –SOCIAL CARE FLOWCHART – APPENDIX D**

