

Policy for Students Missing in Education

For the attention of: All Staff

Produced by: Assistant Principal Student Services (6F)

Approved by: SLT

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Vision, Purpose & Values

Our Vision

Our students will be recognised locally & nationally for their positive impact on the communities and industries in which they choose to work.

Our Purpose

To inspire our students to gain the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to be resilient and thrive in an ever-changing world.

Our Values

Excellence: A culture of creativity, high expectations, ambition and aspiration

Respect: Showing fairness, courtesy and mutual respect to each other and our environment

Integrity: Honesty, openness and trust at the heart of College life

Diversity: Celebrating diversity and inclusivity as a key to our success

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1. Policy statement

The Windsor Forest Colleges Group (hereafter TWFCG) is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students, including those who may be missing from education. This policy aims to provide clear guidance and procedures for identifying and addressing cases of children and vulnerable adults missing in education, in accordance with statutory guidance.

This policy should be read alongside TWFCG Safeguarding Policy (incorporating Child Protection and Adults at Risk Procedures).

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of staff in identifying and responding to cases of children and adults missing in education. It aims to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to safeguard the welfare of these and mitigate the risks they may face.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all staff members of the Windsor Forest Colleges Group, including teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers, and contractors.

4. Policy details

This policy relates specifically to students who are aged under 18 years or age or 24 years of age if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Schools (College) have specific duties under the 2024 guidance "Children Missing Education".

All staff should be aware that children and vulnerable adults being absent from college, particularly repeatedly and for prolonged periods, can act as a vital warning sign of safeguarding concerns, including child exploitation and abuse.

In addition, those absent from education are at risk of:

- Not achieving their academic potential
- Becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training)
- Being victims of abuse, harm or exploitation

The following groups of students are the main focus of this policy:

Children including

- Students under 16 (also known as School 14-16 Provision)

- Students under the age of 18

Vulnerable adults

- Someone over the age of 18 who may need extra support or protection due to age, disability, or other factors

Additionally, there are certain vulnerable groups who are more likely than others to become young people missing in education:

- Young people who have committed offenses
- Young people living in domestic abuse refuges
- Young people in homeless families perhaps living in temporary accommodation
- Young people with long-term medical or mental health issues
- Children Looked After (CLA)
- Care Leavers
- Young people with a Gypsy/Roma/Traveller background
- Young Carers
- Teenage parents
- Young people who were permanently excluded in school
- Young people who are being exploited either criminally or sexually

5. College responsibilities

As part of the enrolment processes at TWFCG all students are required to provide an emergency contact. We aim for a minimum of one other key contact detail for each student so that where concerns arise, we are sufficiently equipped to contact a responsible adult.

As part of their professional duties, staff are expected to:

- Ensure that students are made aware of the reporting processes for absences at the start of each academic year as part of their induction.
- Take registers in a timely manner within 30 minutes of each registered session.
- Use designated register marks accurately to allow for correct reporting of absences and escalation of any concerns.
- Follow up on non attendance with the student and / or parent / carer where appropriate after each instance of non-attendance or within 24 hours of absence taking place.

As delivery methods and registration periods vary for individual classes and sites, staff will not immediately contact home to report absenteeism, unless there are existing safeguarding or welfare concerns in place for an individual student.

For students attending TWFCG as part of the “Schools 14-16 Provision”, the team will follow up with parents/carers (EHE students) or the linked school regarding any non-attendance.

Where there is unreported non-attendance or a ‘missing’ concern, staff will be vigilant and professionally curious to identify any risks associated with the individual and any concerns will be logged centrally with the Safeguarding Teams or on the safeguarding reporting system.

Where external agencies are involved with an individual, such as Social Care teams, they will be treated as the parent / carer for monitoring of absences.

In addition, staff will ensure that multi-agency working and local authority reporting is in place for all EHCP, high risk vulnerable students or where students are in other high risk categories such as those under local authority care.

All attempts to contact students will be tracked within the student’s ILP (Individual Learning Plan - an electronic college record).

6. Absence reporting processes

Students and parents / carers will be informed of the absence reporting system during the induction period for each college campus and in the student handbook. This will be reinforced by pastoral and curriculum staff across the academic year.

All absences both planned and unplanned should be reported via the college’s [absence line](#). Unplanned absences should be reported daily.

Planned absences, such as medical absences should be reported as per the procedures, in advance and may require evidence or direct confirmation from a parent / carer in the case of absences reported by under 18s.

7. Where other concerns are present

If staff have wider concerns about a student’s wellbeing, they will report any concerns about students missing in education to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will be responsible for coordinating the appropriate response.

The DSL or their deputy will liaise closely with local authority children’s social care and follow the procedures outlined in the statutory guidance for making referrals and conducting assessments where appropriate.

The DSL or their deputy will work collaboratively with other relevant professionals to gather information and assess the risks and needs of the missing student. They will ensure that appropriate actions are taken to safeguard the student's welfare.

The DSL or their deputy will maintain accurate records of escalated cases for missing students, including the actions taken and outcomes.

The DSL or their deputy will provide support and guidance to staff members involved in the identification and response to children missing in education.

They will ensure that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and receive appropriate training on safeguarding and child protection.

If a student or parent / carer cannot be reached and there are significant safety risk factors in place then the DDSL or DSL will contact the police for a welfare check and inform the next of kin via voice message or email where possible as they have not responded to the phone call. All agencies supporting the student will also be informed.

8. Missing students

What do staff do if a student (under 18 or vulnerable adult) goes missing during the college day

The decision to report a student as missing to the police will be informed by the following definition:

Missing child (anyone under the age of 18)

Where a child's location or reason for absence is unknown and/or there is concern for the child because of their susceptibility, or there is a potential danger to the public, the child shall be deemed to be missing and the police informed immediately.

The decision to report a student missing should only be made by a member of the safeguarding team/SLT, this includes when a child walks off the site.

Considerations

- The circumstances of the absence
- The age of the child
- The maturity of the child
- Any physical or cognitive disability of the child
- Any continuing or urgent need for the child to have medication or other medical treatment
- The legal status of the child

- Previous behaviour and history of the child
- Danger posed by the child to themselves and others
- General susceptibility of the child
- The child's tendency to drug/substance abuse
- Whether the child is perceived as running to, or running from, someone or something
- Any circumstances that may be relevant to the absence, distance from home for example:
 - The risk of offending
 - The influence of peer groups, families or friends
 - Predatory influences on the child, (e.g. child exploitation) – these may not be recognised or accepted as risks by the child
 - Any known risk of abduction
- Environmental factors including weather, time of year, community events or tensions

Initial actions

Several basic actions should be carried out, when there is a concern that a student is missing. These will be based upon the circumstances of each child, and particularly any previous incidents of the child going missing. The following list should be considered purely as a guide:

- Contact the safeguarding team/SLT to check CCTV cameras
- Ask other staff if they know where the student is
- Search the college and grounds
- Contact peer group to ascertain any reasons or likely locations where the child may be found
- Physically look for the child, including:
 - Locations where previously found
 - Locations likely to be found, e.g. safe places
- Conduct telephone enquiries, including friends, family and to the child themselves
- consider students risk assessment

The maximum time to wait, when a child is absent without authority, before reporting them to the police missing is 3 hours (reporting may well be sooner due to the vulnerability of some student). When either a member of the safeguarding team/SLT has made the decision to report the student missing, the police should be contacted (101 or 999 if urgent).

9. Associated documents

- Statutory Guidance: "Children Missing Education" - August 2024
- Windsor Forest Colleges Group Attendance Policy
- Safeguarding Policy (incorporating Child Protection and Adults at Risk Procedures).