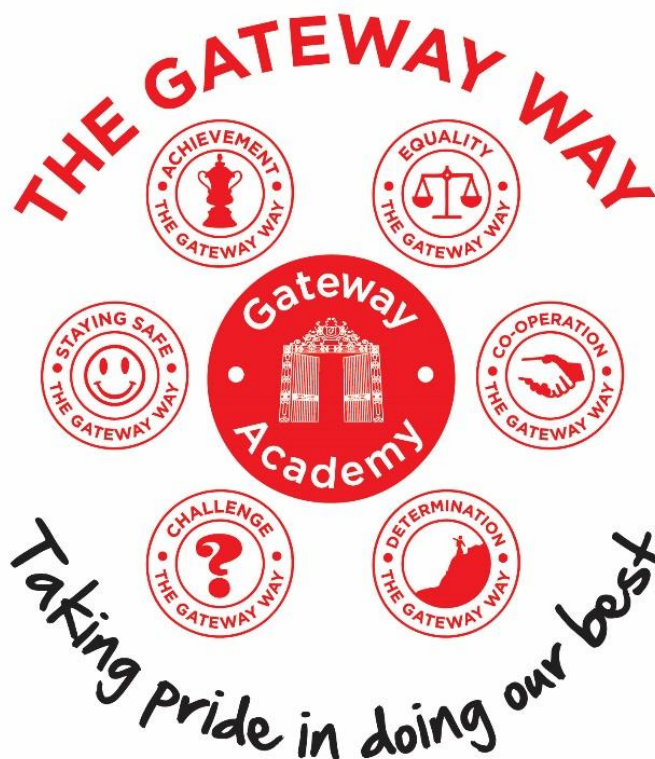


GATEWAY ACADEMY



Lost/Missing or Uncollected Child Policy

Approved by:

Lisa Breslin and Claire Cleary

Last reviewed on:

September 2026

Next review due by:

September 2027

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The welfare and safety of every child is the Academy's paramount consideration. This policy sets out the arrangements to prevent and respond to a child being lost or missing from the Academy or an educational visit, a child not arriving home when expected after dismissal, or a child not being collected at the agreed time.

The policy applies to all pupils from Nursery to Year 6, all staff, volunteers, agency staff and adults working on behalf of Gateway Academy.

It should be read alongside the relevant Academy policies.

Core principle

A missing child is a safeguarding concern. Staff must act promptly, proportionately and in a child-centred way. No member of staff should delay contacting the police where a child is believed to be at immediate risk, is a young child, or is otherwise vulnerable to harm.

LEGAL AND STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

This policy has been reviewed against the legal and statutory framework in force in England in October 2026, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (DfE).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 (DfE).
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 3, including requirements to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare, provide proper supervision and implement effective risk assessment arrangements.
- The Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, as amended.
- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026, and the Early Years Foundation Stage (Welfare Requirements) Regulations 2012, as amended.
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR), where an incident meets the statutory reporting criteria.
- DfE guidance Health and Safety on Educational Visits.
- UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.
- Information sharing to safeguard children and young people: statutory guidance (DfE, September 2026), including the information-sharing duty that came into force on 30 September 2026.
- Local safeguarding procedures of the Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Where statutory guidance or local safeguarding procedures are updated during the life of this policy, the Academy will follow the current requirements and review this policy accordingly.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Board is responsible for ensuring that appropriate safeguarding, supervision and risk-management arrangements are in place.

The CoHeadteachers have overall responsibility for implementation of this policy. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) leads the safeguarding response and decides, with the CoHeadteachers or senior leader on duty where appropriate, whether Children's Social Care, the police, Ofsted or another agency must be notified.

All staff must know how to raise an alarm, who to contact, how to preserve supervision of other children, and how to make an accurate contemporaneous record of actions taken.

PREVENTION AND DAY-TO-DAY CONTROLS

- Registers must be completed accurately and promptly. Staff must follow up unexplained absence in accordance with the Attendance Policy.
- Children must be appropriately supervised at all times. Staffing arrangements and deployment must reflect age, need, activity and identified risk.
- Gates, doors and access controls must be used in accordance with Academy procedures. Staff must report any defect or security concern immediately.
- Transitions, movement around the building, outdoor learning, assemblies, playtimes, clubs and educational visits must include appropriate headcounts or register checks.
- For EYFS children, statutory supervision, staffing and welfare requirements must be maintained, including on outings.
- The Academy will hold up-to-date parent/carer and emergency contact details. Parents are expected to notify the Academy promptly of changes.
- Collection arrangements, including authorised adults and permission for independent travel, must be recorded and communicated to relevant staff.
- Where a child has previously gone missing, attempted to leave the site, is at risk of exploitation, has SEND, communication needs or another known vulnerability, an individual risk assessment and safety plan will be considered.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE IF A CHILD IS MISSING FROM THE ACADEMY SITE

Immediate action

Do not wait for a fixed period before escalating. The response must be based on the child's age, vulnerability, known risks and the circumstances of the disappearance. Call 999 immediately where the child may be in immediate danger, is a young child, or is particularly vulnerable to harm.

1. The staff member who identifies that a child is missing must immediately alert the office/SLT and give the child's name, class, time and place last seen, clothing and any known relevant risk information.

2. A senior leader will take control, ensure the DSL is informed and allocate clear roles. One person will maintain an incident log with times, actions and information received.
3. The remaining children must continue to be safely supervised. Staff must not compromise the safety or statutory supervision of other children in order to search.
4. A rapid, systematic search of the Academy site will begin immediately, including relevant rooms, toilets, hiding spaces, outdoor areas, gates and exits. CCTV may be checked by an authorised person.
5. Registers, club lists, sign-out records and known collection arrangements will be checked. Staff and pupils may be asked calmly when and where the child was last seen.
6. Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as practicable unless doing so would place the child at greater risk or the police/Children's Social Care advise otherwise.
7. The police will be contacted without delay where the child cannot be located promptly or where the circumstances indicate risk. There is no requirement to wait 24 hours. The Academy will use 999 for immediate danger and 101/the Metropolitan Police missing-person reporting route for non-emergency reports.
8. Where relevant, Children's Social Care and any allocated social worker will be informed. The DSL will consider exploitation, family circumstances, previous missing episodes and any other safeguarding indicators.
9. The senior leader will coordinate with police and other agencies and preserve relevant evidence, including CCTV and written records.
10. The search will continue only where it is safe and proportionate to do so and in accordance with police direction.

STAFF SAFETY DURING SEARCHES AND INCIDENTS

The Academy has a duty to protect staff as well as children. A missing-child response must not expose staff to avoidable danger.

- Staff must not be instructed to undertake unsafe lone searches away from the Academy site.
- Staff should not enter private property, isolated locations, unsafe buildings or other high-risk environments in an attempt to locate a child.
- Staff are not expected to physically pursue, restrain or place themselves in danger to stop a child leaving. Any physical intervention must be lawful, necessary and proportionate and follow Academy procedures.
- Staff must not transport a child in their private vehicle as part of a missing or uncollected child response unless an exceptional emergency arrangement has been expressly authorised by a CoHeadteacher and is consistent with insurance, safeguarding and risk-assessment requirements.
- Where a distressed, angry or aggressive parent/carer attends the Academy, a member of SLT should lead communication and staff should not be left to manage threatening behaviour alone.
- Staff must not communicate with the media or post about an incident on personal social media. All media enquiries must be referred to a CoHeadteacher.
- After a significant incident, staff directly involved will be offered appropriate support and a debrief. Any review will be evidence-based and will not assume individual fault before the facts have been established.

IF A CHILD DOES NOT ARRIVE HOME AFTER DISMISSAL

A report that a child has not arrived home must be treated seriously and without reassurance that assumes the child is safe. Staff should acknowledge the family's concern, gather facts and begin safeguarding checks immediately.

1. Confirm the child's identity, class, expected collection or independent-travel arrangement and the time the child was last seen.
2. Check the attendance register, club registers, late-collection records, office messages, collection permissions and any sign-out information.
3. Establish who the child left with, or whether they were authorised to leave independently. Speak to relevant staff and, where appropriate, pupils who may have seen the child leave.
4. Clarify the expected route home and any known changes, friends, relatives or places the child might reasonably have gone. The parent/carer should keep a responsible adult available at home and remain contactable.
5. Inform the senior leader on duty and the DSL.
6. If the child's whereabouts remain unknown, or if there is any concern about risk, the parent/carer and/or Academy must contact the police promptly. The Academy must not delay a police report while carrying out extended checks.
7. Where there are safeguarding concerns, notify Children's Social Care and any allocated social worker in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
8. Maintain a timed written record of all actions and information.

MISSING CHILD ON AN EDUCATIONAL VISIT OR OFF-SITE ACTIVITY

1. Stop the activity and carry out an immediate headcount/register check to confirm who is missing and ensure all other children are accounted for.
2. The Visit Leader will allocate staff so that the remaining group continues to be safely supervised and the agreed staffing/risk controls remain effective.
3. Search the immediate vicinity and alert venue staff/security immediately. Follow the venue's emergency procedure where applicable.
4. Inform the Academy, the CoHeadteacher/senior leader on duty and the DSL as soon as possible.
5. Contact the police without delay where the child is not located immediately or where there is any risk of harm. Call 999 for immediate danger.
6. The Academy will contact the child's parents/carers and relevant safeguarding agencies. Staff on the visit should not make uncoordinated calls that interfere with the agreed response.
7. The Visit Leader must consider whether the remaining group should stay at the venue or return to the Academy, taking account of staffing, transport, safeguarding and police advice.
8. A full written record must be made, including headcounts, timings, places searched, people contacted and instructions received.

The educational visit risk assessment and emergency plan must identify foreseeable risks, communications arrangements and supervision controls. For EYFS outings, the statutory EYFS requirements, including paediatric first-aid arrangements, must be met.

ACTION WHEN A MISSING CHILD IS FOUND

- Confirm the child's immediate physical and emotional wellbeing and arrange first aid or medical assistance if required.
- Inform parents/carers, police, Children's Social Care and other agencies involved that the child has been located, following any instructions they give.
- Do not conduct a detailed or leading interview with the child. Staff should listen, reassure and record the child's spontaneous words accurately, referring safeguarding disclosures to the DSL.
- The child should be returned to appropriate supervision and should not be blamed or punished for being missing where this would be inappropriate or could undermine safeguarding.
- The CoHeadteacher/DSL will consider whether a safeguarding referral, exploitation assessment, individual risk assessment, safety plan or other support is required.
- Where the police or Children's Social Care require a return interview or other follow-up, the Academy will cooperate and share relevant information lawfully.

USUAL END-OF-DAY COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS

The Academy's published End of Day Safety Procedures apply. In summary:

- Years 1–6 are dismissed to their authorised adult from the playground unless an alternative arrangement has been formally agreed.
- Nursery children are collected from the Nursery Garden via Frampton Street.
- Reception children are collected from the Quiet Garden via Frampton Street.
- Nursery and Reception children must be released only to an authorised adult.
- Only pupils in Years 4–6 may leave the Academy independently, and only where the Academy has received the required parent/carer permission and considers the arrangement appropriate.
- Where an older sibling is authorised to collect a younger child, the arrangement must be agreed and recorded by the Academy, taking account of age, journey, vulnerability and any safeguarding concerns.
- If a different adult is collecting, the Academy office must be informed in advance. Staff must satisfy themselves that the person is authorised before releasing the child.
- If there is doubt about identity or authority to collect, the child must remain safely supervised while a senior member of staff verifies the arrangement.
- Children attending after-school clubs must be transferred using the relevant register and handover arrangements.

UNCOLLECTED CHILD

A child who is not collected remains the responsibility of the Academy until they are safely handed to an authorised adult or an alternative arrangement is agreed with Children's Social Care or the police.

1. At the end of the normal collection period, the child will be taken to the office or other designated supervised area and handed to the member of staff/SLT responsible for late collection.
2. The Academy will telephone the parent/carer and, if necessary, the authorised emergency contacts. All reasonable contact attempts and responses must be recorded.

3. The child will be reassured and supervised. Their individual needs, including medical, SEND, communication, dietary and emotional needs, will be considered.
4. Late collection will be recorded using the Academy's agreed system. Repeated or concerning patterns will be recorded on CPOMS and considered by the DSL/SLT as a possible safeguarding or neglect concern.
5. For clubs, the same process begins after the club's agreed collection time. Staff must follow the club's handover and late-collection procedures.
6. If no authorised adult can be contacted and the child remains uncollected, the DSL/senior leader will contact Westminster Access to Children's Services without unnecessary delay for advice and safeguarding action. The Academy will not wait until a fixed cut-off where the circumstances give rise to concern.
7. Outside normal office hours, the Westminster Emergency Duty Team will be contacted. If the child is in immediate danger or there is another emergency, staff will call 999.
8. Staff must not take an uncollected child home, ask the child to leave alone, or go to search for the parent/carer. Staff must not make private childcare arrangements with the family.
9. The child will remain under appropriate Academy supervision until formally transferred to an authorised adult or to another agency acting lawfully.

Current Westminster safeguarding contacts

Access to Children's Services: 020 7641 4000 (9am–5pm, Monday–Friday). Emergency Duty Team: 020 7641 2388 outside those hours. In an immediate emergency, call 999. These details must be checked against Westminster City Council's current published safeguarding contacts when the policy is reviewed.

NURSERY AND RECEPTION / EYFS REQUIREMENTS

- EYFS children must be supervised and released only in accordance with the 2026 EYFS statutory framework and the Academy's recorded collection arrangements.
- If a Nursery or Reception child is not collected, staff will begin contact attempts promptly and maintain safe supervision and reassurance.
- If a morning Nursery child is not collected at the agreed time, the Nursery Manager/SLT will decide the safest temporary arrangement, maintaining statutory ratios and the child's welfare while contact attempts continue.
- The DSL will consider whether an uncollected or missing EYFS child incident meets the threshold for referral or notification to Children's Social Care, Ofsted or another regulator. Any notification required by the EYFS framework or registration requirements will be made within the applicable timescale.
- Any serious accident, illness or injury arising from the incident will be recorded and reported in accordance with EYFS, first-aid and statutory reporting requirements.

SAFEGUARDING, INFORMATION SHARING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Information may be shared without consent where this is necessary and lawful to safeguard a child. Staff must not allow uncertainty about data protection to prevent appropriate safeguarding information sharing.

- Information shared with police, Children's Social Care or other safeguarding partners should be relevant, accurate, necessary, proportionate and recorded.
- The Academy will follow the September 2026 statutory information-sharing guidance and its Data Protection Policy.
- CCTV footage, photographs, contact details and safeguarding records will be handled securely and disclosed only where there is a lawful basis.
- A recent photograph of the child may be shared with police where necessary to help locate the child.
- Records will be retained in accordance with the Academy's retention schedule and safeguarding recordkeeping requirements.

RECORDING, REPORTING AND REVIEW

- Every missing-child incident and every significant uncollected-child incident must be recorded on the Academy's safeguarding/incident recording system.
- The record should include: child's details; date/time; location; last confirmed sighting; staffing and supervision arrangements; searches/checks undertaken; calls made; agencies contacted; advice received; time found/collected; child's presentation; parent/carer communication; and follow-up action.
- The CoHeadteachers/DSL will decide whether the incident is reportable to the police, Children's Social Care, Ofsted, the Health and Safety Executive, insurers, governors or another body.
- RIDDOR reporting is required only where the statutory criteria are met; an injury to a pupil is not automatically reportable.
- A serious incident review will identify learning about systems, supervision, site security, risk assessment, collection arrangements, information sharing and staff training.
- Any action plan will be monitored to completion and significant incidents will be reported to governors in an appropriately anonymised form.

SUPPORTING STAFF AND FAIR INCIDENT REVIEW

Incidents involving a missing or uncollected child can be distressing for staff. The Academy will ensure that staff are treated fairly and supported throughout any review.

- Staff may be asked for a factual written account as soon as reasonably practicable while events are fresh.
- Staff should record what they personally saw, heard and did and should avoid speculation.
- Where appropriate, staff will be offered a debrief, welfare support and access to HR or trade union support.
- A safeguarding or health-and-safety review is distinct from a disciplinary process. No assumption of misconduct will be made merely because an incident occurred.

- If the evidence indicates a potential staff conduct, safeguarding or low-level concern, the Academy will follow the relevant policy and KCSIE 2026 procedures.
- Where parent/carer behaviour towards staff becomes abusive, threatening or harassing, the Academy may apply its Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy, restrict contact, seek police/legal advice or take other proportionate steps to protect staff.

TRAINING AND MONITORING

- All staff will be made aware of this policy through induction and safeguarding updates.
- Relevant staff will practise or review missing-child and emergency-response procedures so that roles are understood.
- EYFS staff will receive safeguarding training in accordance with the 2026 EYFS framework, including the applicable renewal requirements.
- The DSL and CoHeadteachers will monitor incidents and identify patterns, including repeated late collection, repeated missing episodes, site vulnerabilities or exploitation indicators.
- This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following a significant incident or a change in legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or Academy procedures.

RELATED ACADEMY POLICIES

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Schedule
- End of Day Safety Procedures
- Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy