



## Missing Child Policy & Procedures

This policy applies to the whole school and should be read in conjunction with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

### Introduction

The safety and welfare of all the pupils at the Oporto British School is our paramount responsibility and everyone who works at the School is aware that they must do their utmost to ensure this. Making sure the pupils are present, accounted for and safe is a vital role of the staff at the school.

Note: A child going missing from school or from home is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect.

Staff should follow this procedure for dealing with children who go missing and refer to the safeguarding and Child Protection Policy if appropriate.

### 1. Procedures to ensure all pupils are present

Parents are responsible for making sure their children come to, and are delivered to, the school safely. This, and arrangements that follow are communicated in the Home School Agreement that all parents sign. Parents are asked to advise the School in advance via email ([school@obs.edu.pt](mailto:school@obs.edu.pt)) if there is a reason for absence. During registration at 8.50am all pupils are registered and records are kept on the school's database system. If a pupil is not present, the office staff will reconcile this fact with any request made. If there has been no such request, the school will attempt to make immediate contact with the parents or carers of the pupil, initially via email, in order to establish the reason for the absence. This will subsequently be followed by a telephone call if unsuccessful.

Senior pupils and students are registered during each period, and must 'card' out through the front entrance turnstiles on entry and exit at other times of the day (only applies to F9 and above). Primary children are registered in the afternoon at 1.10pm to check that they are still in school or have returned from a lunch off site. As well as these formal measures, staff will do informal checks on the class during the day, particularly if they are moving around, leaving the building or going on transport.

### 2. Procedures in the case of a child missing during the school day

If a member of staff is concerned that a pupil is missing they should:

- take a register to ensure that all the other children are present
- check with the school office to see if there is any explanation for the absence
- calmly ask other adults/pupils when they last remember seeing the child
- inform the Head of Section (if absent, the Headmaster)
- keep the pupils in their classroom(s) occupied
- the Head of Section will organise a swift search within the school, both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, cupboards, washrooms where a child might be/hide
- ask his or her friends to contact them by mobile.

### 3. If a child is still missing following a search of the premises, the following steps will be taken:

- the Head of Section (If absent Headmaster) will ring the child's parents for further checks.
- if the child is still missing, the Headmaster should contact the police (by calling 226 153 010 Foz Police Station and 116 000 or +351 217 931 617 SOS - Criança Desaparecida) to report a missing child. In most cases, there is an explanation for a missing child but it is still better to contact the police earlier rather than later.



- the Head of Operations (or in his/her absence, the Office Manager) will arrange for staff to search the rest of the school premises and grounds.
- if the child's home is within walking distance, a member of staff will be sent out on foot to the home address, to see if the child is walking home.
- the DSL will inform the Comissão de Protecção da Criança e Jovens (Commission for the Protection of children and young people) Porto Ocidental, Conjunto Habitacional das Fontainhas - Rua dos Mangericos, Edifício K - nº 45, 4000-008 Porto, Telephone number (9.30am – 5.00 pm) 226198080, Fax number 226198081
- the Headmaster will inform the Chair of Governors
- the School will cooperate fully with the Police and any safeguarding investigation by the Comissão de Protecção da Criança e Jovens

#### **4. Procedures for handing over children at the end of the school day**

At the end of the school day, the pupils are dismissed by their class teachers. They go to a parent or carer or an afterschool club or activity. Please note that up to the end of Form 2 children going to activities will be collected by an activity leader, from Form 3 and above they make their way to the activity themselves. Once the child is handed over, they are the responsibility of the parent/carer.

Staff will not hand a child over, or let them go, unless a known adult is collecting. If a pupil is being collected by anyone other than the parent/carer, the School Office is to be advised in advance by email or in writing by the parent. Senior pupils and students are permitted to leave school independently. Primary children may leave unsupervised if the school has been advised in writing by the parents/carers that they may travel home unaccompanied. Children are always fully supervised until they are collected.

#### **5. Procedures for an uncollected child**

If a child is not collected within fifteen minutes of the agreed collection time, the child is sent to the School's After-School Club where they will be safely looked after. The School will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. If there is no answer, the School will begin to call the emergency contact numbers for the child. If there is no response from any of the contact numbers called within a 2 hour period, or when the premises are closing, the DSL will contact the Comissão de Protecção da Criança e Jovens. The Comissão de Protecção da Criança e Jovens should make emergency arrangements for the child, arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and check with the Police. The child will remain, fully supervised, in the care of school staff until collected. The School will make a full written report of the incident.

#### **6. If a child goes missing during a trip or visit (including off-site school sports lessons/activities)**

If a child goes missing on a school trip or whilst participating in an off-site school sport session, the staff member in charge must:

- carry out an immediate head count to ensure that all the other children are present
- instruct an adult to search the immediate vicinity
- seek the help of the staff on-site or at the transport terminus
- ask his or her friends to contact them by mobile
- contact the Head of Section (or Headmaster) by mobile phone
- take the remaining children back to school – one member of staff is to remain at the site.
- the steps detailed in '3' above will then be followed.



## **7. When the missing child (on a trip or visit) is found**

When the missing child is found, the staff member in charge must:

- talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
- establish if there are any injuries and take appropriate action
- advise the Head of Section (Headmaster) that the child has been found
- speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on a trip or visit.

## **7. Following a missing child incident, the Headmaster will:**

- speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident
- inform the Chair of Governors
- respond to media queries as appropriate
- organise a full investigation (if appropriate involving the Comissão de Protecção da Criança e Jovens and the police) which will involve all adults concerned providing written statements. The investigation report should cover:
  - o date, time and location
  - o the purpose of the outing (if out of school)
  - o numbers of staff and children
  - o when the child was last seen
  - o how she appeared to have gone missing/what happened
  - o the length of time that the child was missing
  - o if the missing child was found or not
  - o institutions contacted
  - o contacts established (parents, carer, others)
  - o diligences made
  - o lessons for the future.

Review and Evaluation: every 3 years by SLT with recommendations to Headmaster and Board of Governors.

**Reviewed and Approved October 2021**