



Missing Pupil Policy (Prep)

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<i>This policy is reviewed annually</i>	

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1. Policy Statement and Principles

*Independent School Standards – Parts 3 and 8; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
EYFS Statutory Framework 2026*

Caterham Prep School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils. Every member of staff has a responsibility to help keep pupils safe and to take immediate action where a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established.

The School maintains appropriate registration, staffing and supervision arrangements, taking account of pupils' ages, developmental stages, individual needs, activities and the circumstances in which they are in the School's care.

Where a pupil is identified as missing, the response will be immediate, proportionate to the circumstances and informed by an assessment of risk. Particular regard will be given to the age and vulnerability of the pupil, including any SEND, medical, communication or safeguarding needs.

Where a missing pupil incident gives rise to a safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed immediately, including referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police where appropriate.

This policy should be read alongside the:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Attendance Policy;
- Supervision Policy (Prep);
- Educational Visits Policy;
- Wraparound Care Policy;
- relevant Staff Handbook procedures and risk assessments.

2. Definition and Scope

Independent School Standards – Part 3; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

For the purposes of this policy, a pupil is considered missing when their whereabouts cannot be established and they are absent from the place where they are expected to be, without a known or authorised reason.

This is distinct from a pupil who is absent from School, where their non-attendance is known or identified through registration and is managed in accordance with the Attendance Policy.

A pupil may be identified as missing in a number of ways, including:

- during or following registration;
- when reconciling pupils present with absence information;
- when a pupil does not arrive at an expected lesson, activity or location;
- during a transition between buildings, activities or areas of the School;
- during an educational visit or off-site activity;
- when another pupil or member of staff reports that a pupil cannot be located.

All staff must act promptly where there is concern that a pupil may be missing.

3. Prevention and Registration

Independent School Standards – Part 3; EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

The School seeks to minimise the risk of a pupil going missing through effective registration, supervision, communication and arrangements for arrival, departure and movement around the School.

Pupils are registered before the start of the School day and again after lunch. Absence information is maintained by the School Office and staff should be aware of pupils who are legitimately absent from lessons or activities.

Staff must follow the School's procedures for recording and communicating pupil movements, including attendance at individual music lessons, medical appointments, educational visits, activities and movement between the Prep and Senior School sites where applicable.

Pupils remain the responsibility of the School until they are collected by an authorised adult, transfer to another supervised School activity or leave independently where appropriate parental permission has been provided.

Detailed operational arrangements are set out in the Staff Handbook, registration procedures, duty arrangements and relevant risk assessments.

4. Procedure When a Pupil is Missing

Independent School Standards – Parts 3 and 8; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

If a pupil cannot be located where they are expected to be, the member of staff identifying the concern must act immediately.

Initial checks should establish, so far as practicable:

- whether the pupil was present at the previous lesson or activity;
- whether the pupil is absent legitimately;
- whether the pupil is in a toilet or other nearby area;
- whether they are attending an individual lesson or activity;
- whether they have attended the School Office or Health Centre;
- whether they have moved between the Shirley Goss and Mottram sites or to an agreed activity elsewhere on the School site;
- when and where they were last seen;
- whether another member of staff or pupil has relevant information about their whereabouts.

If these initial checks do not locate the pupil, the School Office must be informed immediately.

The Head of School (Prep), or Head of Pre-Prep for a Pre-Prep pupil, must be notified and a coordinated search commenced.

One member of staff should coordinate the response and maintain communication while available staff undertake a systematic search of the relevant buildings, grounds and immediate surrounding areas in accordance with the School's Missing Pupil Search Procedure.

Staff involved in the search should have appropriate means of communication wherever practicable.

The search should be organised so that areas are checked systematically and unnecessary duplication is avoided. Appropriate supervision of all other pupils must be maintained throughout.

The Headmaster will be informed where the pupil is not located promptly or sooner where the circumstances or level of risk require this.

5. Escalation, Parents and Police

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

The response to a missing pupil must be determined by the circumstances and level of risk. Staff must **not wait for a set period of time before escalating** where there is reason to believe that a pupil may be at immediate risk.

Factors which may indicate increased risk include the pupil's:

- age and developmental stage;
- SEND, disability, medical or communication needs;
- known emotional or mental health needs;
- vulnerability or safeguarding concerns;
- behaviour immediately before going missing;
- likely ability to keep themselves safe;
- clothing and weather conditions;
- possible access to roads, woodland, water or other hazards;
- any information suggesting that the pupil may have deliberately left the School site.

Where there is any indication that the pupil may be at immediate risk of harm, parents and the Police must be contacted without delay. Emergency services should be contacted using 999 where there is an immediate risk to life or safety.

In other circumstances, if the pupil has not been located promptly following the initial search, and in any event within 10 minutes of the search commencing, the Headmaster or senior leader coordinating the response will ensure that parents and the Police are contacted.

Parents will be kept informed of significant developments while the search continues. Where the Police become involved, staff will cooperate fully and provide relevant information about the pupil, the circumstances of their disappearance, searches already undertaken and any known risks or vulnerabilities.

When the pupil is located, the Headmaster, Head of School (Prep) and/or Head of Pre-Prep, parents and Police, where involved, will be informed promptly.

6. Early Years Foundation Stage

EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

Particular care will be taken in relation to children in Reception because of their age and developmental stage.

If a Reception child's whereabouts cannot be established, staff will take immediate action in accordance with this policy. The child's age, developmental stage, individual needs and vulnerability will be taken into account when determining the urgency and extent of the response.

Where an EYFS child is absent from School without notification from a parent/carer, or is absent for a prolonged period, the School will follow the procedures set out in the Attendance Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This will include contacting parents/carers and alternative emergency contacts and escalating any welfare or safeguarding concerns as appropriate.

Where a missing-child incident involving an EYFS child meets the statutory criteria for notification to Ofsted, the School will notify Ofsted within the required timescale. Any necessary safeguarding referrals to Children's Social Care and/or the Police will also be made.

7. After a Missing Pupil Incident

Independent School Standards – Parts 3 and 8; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Once the pupil has been located, their immediate physical and emotional welfare will be considered and appropriate support or medical attention provided where required.

A senior member of staff will sensitively discuss the incident with the pupil, taking account of their age, developmental stage and communication needs, and with their parents.

The Head of School (Prep), Head of Pre-Prep or Headmaster, as appropriate, will ensure that the circumstances are investigated.

A written incident record will normally include:

- the pupil's name;
- the date and time the pupil was identified as missing;
- where and when the pupil was last seen;

- the circumstances leading to the pupil being identified as missing;
- relevant pupils and staff present;
- the actions and searches undertaken and by whom;
- the time at which the search began and key points of escalation;
- when and how parents were contacted;
- whether and when the Police or other agencies were contacted;
- when, where and how the pupil was located;
- the pupil's condition when located and any support or medical attention provided;
- any safeguarding concerns or referrals;
- any relevant information provided by the pupil following the incident.

The investigation will consider how the incident occurred and whether there were any safeguarding, supervision, security, communication or procedural issues.

8. Recording and Monitoring

Independent School Standards – Parts 3 and 8

All missing pupil incidents will be recorded and retained in accordance with the School's record-keeping arrangements.

Following an incident, the School will consider whether any changes are required to:

- supervision or staffing arrangements;
- registration or communication procedures;
- security arrangements;
- risk assessments;
- individual pupil support or safety plans;
- staff guidance or training;
- arrangements for arrival, departure or movement around the School site.

Where appropriate, relevant information will be shared with the DSL and other senior leaders. The Head of School (Prep), supported by the Head of Pre-Prep and relevant senior leaders, will monitor incidents for patterns or recurring concerns and ensure that appropriate action is taken.

9. Monitoring and Review

Independent School Standards – Part 8

The Head of School (Prep), supported by the Head of Pre-Prep and relevant senior leaders, will monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements set out in this policy.

The policy and associated procedures will be reviewed following any significant missing pupil incident and where changes to the School site, pupil needs, statutory requirements or School practice indicate that arrangements should be reconsidered.

This policy is reviewed annually and whenever there is a significant change to relevant legislation, statutory guidance or School practice.

The policy is published on the School website and is available in hard copy or an accessible format on request.