

Missing & Absent Student Policy & Procedure

British
Guardianship



Missing & Absent Student Policy & Procedure

1. Introduction

British Guardianship's Missing & Absent Student Policy applies to all students under the age of 18 who are in our care, whether residing with a host family, travelling under our arrangements, or temporarily outside school duty of care (e.g., exeat, suspensions, half-terms).

This policy must be read **alongside the British Guardianship Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy** to ensure a consistent, robust safeguarding response across all situations.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that **any student who is missing or absent is located by the safest and fastest means possible**, risk is professionally assessed, and the correct agencies are informed without delay.

Every adult working with British Guardianship has a responsibility to safeguard and supervise children appropriately at all times.

2. Definitions (Absent vs Missing)

British Guardianship adopts the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) definitions to determine the category of concern and appropriate response:

Absent

A child or young person who is **not at a place where they are expected or required to be, and there is no apparent risk** to their safety or wellbeing.

Absent cases require **reasonable enquiries**, regular monitoring, and clear review times but **not an immediate police response**.

Missing

A child or young person **whose whereabouts cannot be established**, and where the circumstances are **out of character**, or indicate they may be:

- at **risk of harm**,
- a **victim of crime**,
- at **risk of exploitation**, or
- a **danger to themselves or others**.

Missing cases require **immediate escalation**, including notification to police. These definitions guide how British Guardianship determines urgency and the appropriate procedural pathway.

3. Prevention & Good Practice (Guidelines for Missing Students)

To minimise the likelihood of a student going missing, British Guardianship requires all schools, host families, and supervising adults to follow the guidance below:

- **Complete a risk assessment** for any outing, activity, or allowed period of independent time, in line with AEGIS requirements.
- Ensure premises are secure and prevent unauthorised persons from entering.
- Closely supervise children during outings (parks, museums, shops, transport hubs, etc.).
- Teach children what to do if separated from the group.
- Advise children who they should contact if they find themselves lost.
- Maintain an **up-to-date student profile**, including photo, accessible only to authorised safeguarding staff.

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- Identify a **clear meeting point** when arriving at any venue.
- Ensure all supervising adults understand their responsibilities as outlined in the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

4. Initial Risk Assessment

On receiving any report that a student cannot be located, the DSL or Duty Manager must undertake an **immediate dynamic risk assessment**, considering:

- Age
- Time of day
- Location last seen
- Known vulnerabilities (SEND, medical, mental health)
- Safeguarding concerns on record
- Weather and environmental risks
- History of absconding
- Potential risk of crime, exploitation, or harm

This assessment determines whether the case meets the definition of **Absent** or **Missing**, and therefore which process must be followed.

5. Process and Response – Absent Student

An **Absent** case involves **no immediate apparent risk** but still requires urgent enquiries and monitoring.

5.1 Required Actions

When a student is assessed as Absent:

1. Record the incident in the British Guardianship system.
2. Attempt contact with the student (messages, calls, emails).
3. Contact the host family, school houseparent (if applicable), Local Coordinator, and parents/agent to gather information.
4. Check travel plans, flight details, or transport bookings where relevant.
5. Review information about friends or known associates they may be with.
6. Maintain regular attempts to contact the student at appropriate intervals.

5.2 Communication

- School and parents/agents must be updated **at least every 4 hours**.
- All updates must be logged accurately.

5.3 Review Timing

After a **maximum of 6 hours**, or sooner if risk increases, the DSL must review whether the situation now meets the criteria for **Missing**. If so, escalate immediately to the Missing procedure.

6. Process and Response – Missing Student

A **Missing** classification requires **immediate escalation and police involvement**.

6.1 Police Notification (Mandatory)

Any child categorised as Missing must be reported to the police immediately:

- **999** – if the student is believed to be at immediate risk
- **101** – all other Missing cases

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Ensure you are connected to the police force **covering the location where the student went missing**.

6.2 Information to Gather for Police

The DSL / Incident Lead must gather:

- Student's full name, DOB, nationality
- Time last seen and by whom
- Known risks or vulnerabilities
- Description (clothing, appearance)
- Medical conditions
- Travel plans (authorised or not)
- Previous absences
- Family and associate contact details
- Host family and school contact details
- Social media accounts (if relevant)

6.3 Record Keeping

- Log incident in the system with ongoing updates.
- Record police incident number.
- Add all email/phone contact attempts from within the incident record.

6.4 Communication

Inform immediately (and continue regular updates):

- School
- Parents/agents
- Host family
- Local Coordinator

7. Return of the Student

When the student is located:

1. Ensure student's immediate safety and wellbeing.
2. Conduct a welfare check (physical and emotional).
3. Police will complete a "safe & well" check for Missing cases.
4. British Guardianship will conduct a return interview for Absent cases.
5. Where any allegation of abuse, harm, or exploitation is disclosed, immediately follow the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.
6. Inform all parties involved (school, parents, host family, LC) that the student has returned.
7. If a student has been Missing or Absent more than once, the DSL / Senior Management will conduct a formal review of the guardianship arrangement.

8. Media Contact

No British Guardianship staff member is permitted to make any comment to the media. All enquiries must be referred to the police Media Relations team.

9. Review of Incident

All Missing or Absent reports must be reviewed by the Senior Management Team as soon as practicable and then **daily** until the case is fully resolved. Lessons learned must be incorporated into practice immediately.

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Useful contacts

This section must be reviewed regularly to ensure that all emergency contact information remains accurate.

British Guardianship Designated Safeguarding Lead

To discuss with someone confidentially about problems you are having or worries that you might have about others please contact:

Poliane Costa

Email: polly@britishguardianship.com / Office Telephone: **+44(0) 1273 72 55 77** /

Mobile, WhatsApp: **+44(0) 7841 611 284**

British Guardianship children and family emergency 24/7 line

Mobile: **+44(0) 7841 611 284** / **+44 (0)7969 688 294**

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Coordinator

In the absence of the Designated Safeguarding Lead please contact:

Guardianship Director & Client Relations (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead):

Ms. Tannaz Fatoorehchi

Office Number: **+44 (0)1273 72 55 77** / WhatsApp Only: **+44 (0)7935 646492**

Email: tannaz@britishguardianship.com

Public services help lines

If there is a threat to life, in the case of serious injury or a serious incident requiring intervention, dial British Guardianship Emergency Line on **+44(0) 7841 611 284** or **+44 (0)7969 688294** and ask them to call **999**.

Police Emergency: 999 / Police Non-Emergency: 101 / NHS: 111

Doctor's out-of-hours service: **08450 568060**

NSPCC Hotline: **0800 800 5000**

Brighton & Hove Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB): **+44(0)1273 292 379**

Brighton and Hove Local Authority Designated Officer: LADO: **+44(0)1273 295 643**

Anti Cyber-bullying Website:

www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/

Childline

Visit: **www.childline.org.uk** / Call: **0800 1111**