ST AMBROSE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

MISSING AND UNCOLLECTED CHILD POLICY

Created: Autumn 2021

Reviewed: September 2026

Effective: 1 September 2026 | Next review: Summer 2027

This policy has been written in consultation with staff and governors of St. Ambrose Preparatory School and with due regard to the school's mission statement:

At St Ambrose we aim to provide an independent Catholic education for boys and girls of all faiths aged 3 to 11; St Ambrose is an inclusive school where the Gospel teachings and our school values are at the centre of everything that happens in our school family. At St Ambrose we strive to develop happy, fulfilled, well educated, confident and caring children who know and understand the love, joy and peace of Jesus; and to show our Faith by the way we live, showing care and consideration for each other, those around us and the environment.

Our Vision

Our Vision is to be an exemplar Edmund Rice School, with an enviable reputation amongst our peers, both as an organisation and for the services and facilities we provide, making us first choice for parents and pupils in our geographic area.

Our Ethos & Values

At St Ambrose we provide a Catholic school community in which pupils feel welcome, safe, recognised for their individuality – supported by a community of love, and affection. We strive to live the Gospel in all aspects of school life and policy, following Blessed Edmund's footsteps.

Core safeguarding principle

If a child cannot be accounted for, staff act immediately. There is no requirement to wait for a fixed period before contacting the Police. The response is determined by the child's age, vulnerability, circumstances and apparent level of risk.

1 Purpose and scope

This policy applies to all pupils at St Ambrose Preparatory School, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), before- and after-school provision operated by or on behalf of the School, clubs, transport handovers, educational visits and off-site activities. It explains the arrangements for preventing and responding to:

- a child missing from School or an outing;
- a child absent without explanation, including failure to attend on the agreed first day;
- a child who cannot be located during a transition, club, bus or care handover;
- a child who is not collected at the agreed time;
- an unexpected, unauthorised, disputed or unsafe collector;
- repeated late collection or absence that may indicate a safeguarding concern.

The welfare of the child is paramount. Action will be immediate, calm, coordinated, proportionate and recorded. The School will share information with parents and statutory agencies where necessary to locate and safeguard the child.

2 Legal and guidance framework

This policy has regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers effective from 1st September 2026; Working Together to Safeguard Children; Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2026; Children Missing Education guidance; the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024; the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014; the Equality Act 2010; UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018; and RIDDOR 2013 where applicable.

It should be read with the Child Protection and Safeguarding, Attendance, Pupil Supervision, Educational Off-Site Visits, Behaviour Management, First Aid, Medical Conditions, Health Safety & Welfare, Emergency and Critical Incident, Data Protection, Privacy Notice, Staff Code of Conduct and Complaints policies.

3 Safeguarding context

A child being absent from education on repeat occasions or for prolonged periods, going missing, attempting to leave School, or being repeatedly collected late may be a warning sign of abuse, neglect, domestic abuse, child sexual or criminal exploitation, trafficking, modern slavery, county lines, coercive control, mental-health difficulty, substance misuse in the family, FGM, forced marriage, so-called honour-based abuse or another welfare

concern. Staff will apply professional curiosity and report concerns to the DSL without delay.

The School will consider the wider circumstances around every significant incident, including the child's voice, family circumstances, SEND, disability, communication needs, attendance history, online activity, peer relationships, behavioural changes and any known safeguarding information.

4 Responsibilities

- The Governing Body approves this policy, monitors its effectiveness and receives anonymised assurance about incidents and actions.
- The Headteacher has overall responsibility for prevention, response, investigation, communication and regulatory reporting.
- The DSL leads the safeguarding response, information sharing, referrals and liaison with Police and Children's Social Care.
- The EYFS Lead ensures that EYFS procedures, ratios, key-person arrangements and parent information meet statutory requirements.
- All staff maintain active supervision, accurate registers and secure handovers; report discrepancies immediately; and follow the direction of the Headteacher, DSL or senior leader.
- Parents maintain current contact, emergency-contact, parental-responsibility, court-order and authorised-collector information, and inform School promptly of absence or collection changes.
- Pupils are taught, in an age-appropriate way, to remain with their group, follow boundaries and seek help from a trusted adult.

5 Preventive supervision and site security

- The School maintains secure boundaries, controlled doors and gates, visitor sign-in and identification arrangements, and CCTV where installed.
- Visitors use the designated entrance, report to reception, sign in and out, wear identification and remain supervised where required.
- Staff know the pupils in their care, monitor transitions and immediately challenge unexplained movement or an open or unsecured access point.
- Registers are taken and checked at the required times; club, bus, visit and after-school-care lists are maintained accurately.
- Handover is recorded whenever responsibility passes between teachers, club leaders,

bus staff or after-school-care staff.

- Staffing and supervision are adapted for age, vulnerability, SEND, disability, medical needs, behaviour, environment and activity.
- All new staff receive induction and all staff are briefed on search zones, emergency communication and the content of this policy.

6 St Ambrose daily arrangements

6.1 Before the School day

- Pupils are supervised on the main playground from 8.30am until the School day begins at 8.50am.
- In inclement weather pupils are directed to the School hall and supervised.
- Children attending the contracted breakfast provision may attend from 7.45am and remain under that provider's supervision until a recorded handover to School staff.
- Pupils arriving outside the published arrangements must report through the School Office and be signed in.

6.2 Registration and the School day

- A class register is taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.
- Parents must notify the School before the start of the day if a pupil will be absent. Unexplained absence is followed up promptly.
- Pupils leaving for appointments are signed out by an authorised adult and signed back in on return; the electronic record is updated.
- Lunchtime and activity clubs operate with named adults and registers or agreed supervision arrangements.

6.3 End of the School day

- EYFS and Key Stage 1 pupils finish at 3.00pm, and are handed directly to an authorised adult.
- Key Stage 2 pupils finish at 3.15pm, and are released in the KS2 playground to an authorised adult. Children are expected to tell their teacher/supervised adult when they can see their adult before being released.
- A pupil not collected at the expected time is brought inside and supervised outside the office; pupils do not wait alone or unsupervised on the playground.

- EYFS and KS1 pupils attending an afterschool activity are handed to the activity leader, KS2 pupils take themselves to their afterschool activity. The activity leader checks a register and identifies any missing children.
- Pupils using School transport are handed to the responsible transport or College-bus arrangement under the relevant list.
- Pupils booked into contracted after-school care are collected by the after-school care employees (in EYFS and KS1) or make their own way to the after school care building (KS2)

7 Admission and attendance registers

The School maintains its admission and attendance registers electronically, in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

The admission register contains the required pupil, parent and previous-school information. Attendance is recorded at the start of each morning session and once during the afternoon session using the statutory attendance and absence codes.

Register entries and amendments are preserved for six years from the date of entry. An amendment shows the original entry, amended entry, reason, date and person making it. Current addresses, telephone numbers, parental responsibility, emergency contacts and destination-school information are updated promptly.

8 First-day absence and unexplained absence

1. If a new pupil fails to attend on the agreed first day, inform the Headteacher and DSL without delay.
2. Check the admission information and contact the parents and emergency contacts promptly.
3. Consider whether there is any immediate safeguarding concern and whether the Police or Children's Social Care should be contacted.
4. Consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity and record all enquiries and decisions.
5. For any pupil absent without explanation, make first-day contact and follow the Attendance Policy.

Repeated or prolonged absence is reviewed by the DSL as a possible safeguarding warning sign. The School will make statutory notifications to the local authority, including where a pupil fails to attend regularly, has 10 consecutive school days of unauthorised absence,

meets the applicable sickness-return threshold, or may meet a lawful ground for deletion from the admission register. A pupil is not removed from roll merely because their whereabouts are unknown. Where deletion is being considered under regulation 9 grounds H or I, the School and local authority must complete and document joint reasonable enquiries before the pupil's name is deleted.

9 Authorised collection arrangements

On admission and whenever arrangements change, parents provide the names and contact details of authorised collectors. The School will hold at least two emergency contacts for each pupil where reasonably possible. Parents must identify any person who must not collect the child and provide relevant court orders or safeguarding information.

- One-off changes should normally be communicated to the School Office through an approved written or electronic method before collection.
- The message should identify the child, collector and, where requested, the collector's telephone number.
- A telephone instruction is accepted only where urgent and the caller's identity can be verified. The change is recorded and passed to the dismissal staff.
- The School may use an agreed password, photographic identification, a return telephone call or another proportionate check.
- An unknown person is not authorised merely because they know personal details about the child or family.
- A child will not be released to someone under 18 unless the Headteacher has approved the arrangement in advance following a risk assessment.
- If instructions conflict, a collector is unknown, or there is uncertainty about parental responsibility, the child remains safely supervised while the School verifies the position.

Parents must inform the School if they will be unavailable through their usual contact arrangements during the day or collection period. They should provide an alternative responsible contact who can make decisions and collect if necessary, particularly when travelling, working away or receiving medical treatment.

10 Unsafe, impaired, aggressive or disputed collection

If a collector appears intoxicated, impaired, aggressive, emotionally unstable or otherwise unable to provide safe care, staff will seek immediate support from the Headteacher or DSL and will not release the child where doing so creates an immediate safeguarding risk. Another authorised adult will be contacted. If the adult threatens staff, attempts to remove

the child, or the child is at immediate risk, Police will be called on 999. Children's Social Care will be consulted as appropriate.

Staff do not physically prevent a parent removing a child unless this is necessary and lawful to avert immediate harm. They do not place themselves or other children at unreasonable risk. All words, behaviour, observations, decisions and communications are recorded factually.

11 Immediate procedure if a child is missing from School

The following steps begin immediately and, where possible, simultaneously. The Headteacher, DSL or most senior leader directs and records the response.

1. Raise the alert: inform the School Office, Headteacher and DSL or most senior leader on site.
2. Account for the group: take a register or headcount, reconcile signing-out, medical, club, bus, visitor and care records, and keep all other pupils calm and safely supervised.
3. Gather information: confirm the child's identity, age, description, clothing, photograph if lawfully available, last known place and time, likely destination, medical/SEND needs, communication method and safeguarding risks.
4. Search the immediate area: classrooms, toilets, washrooms, cupboards, quiet spaces, medical room, dining and activity areas, play spaces and places a child might hide.
5. Secure and examine exits: check doors, gates, access-control information and CCTV where available; preserve relevant footage and evidence.
6. Extend the search safely: allocate named adults to defined search zones across the site and immediate grounds; maintain communication and report areas searched.
7. Ask adults and children calmly when and where the child was last seen. Do not create panic or compromise supervision.
8. Contact the Police without delay if the child is not found promptly, evidence suggests they left the site, or age, vulnerability or circumstances indicate significant risk. Call 999 in an emergency; otherwise follow Police advice.
9. Contact parents and Children's Social Care as appropriate. Do not delay Police contact while waiting for a parent to answer.
10. Maintain a time-stamped incident log, cooperate with statutory enquiries, inform the Chair of Governors and insurer where appropriate, and refer media enquiries to the Headteacher.

Important

There is no blanket 20-minute waiting period. A missing EYFS or otherwise vulnerable child, a child seen leaving the site, or any child whose circumstances indicate immediate danger requires an immediate Police call.

12 Search outside the site

Staff will not undertake unsafe or speculative searches or leave other pupils inadequately supervised. A staff member may check a specific, nearby and credible location—including a home within walking distance—only where authorised by the senior leader, the route and risk are suitable, communication is maintained and this does not delay Police involvement. Police directions take priority.

13 Missing child on an outing or educational visit

1. Stop the activity, conduct an immediate headcount and secure effective supervision of the remaining group.
2. Gather the child's description, last sighting, likely location and individual risks.
3. Search the immediate vicinity and agreed rendezvous points using named adults, without dispersing the group unsafely.
4. Alert the venue manager and activate the venue's emergency/search arrangements.
5. Contact the Police immediately if the child cannot be located or the circumstances indicate risk.
6. Inform the School emergency contact and DSL, who coordinate parent contact and statutory notifications.
7. Move the remaining group to a safe and controlled location. Return to School only when this supports safety and does not obstruct the search.
8. Preserve registers, risk assessments, EVOLVE information, messages, CCTV requests and a time-stamped log.
9. Inform Children's Social Care, Chair of Governors, insurer and relevant organisations as appropriate.

For EYFS outings, the outing-specific risk assessment, close-supervision, paediatric-first-aid and missing-child arrangements apply immediately. The Group Leader remains responsible for the visit while the School controls strategic communications and support.

14 Action when the child is found

1. Protect and reassure the child and provide first aid or medical treatment where required.
2. Inform Police, parents, DSL and other agencies involved that the child has been located.
3. Undertake an immediate welfare and safeguarding assessment. Consider whether the child experienced harm, was coerced, exploited, attempting to go home or avoiding a person or situation.
4. Do not subject the child to repeated questioning or suggest answers. Obtain only what is necessary for immediate safety and allow the DSL or Police to lead formal enquiries.
5. Preserve CCTV, messages, records, clothing or other relevant evidence.
6. The Headteacher oversees a documented investigation, obtaining written accounts and reviewing supervision, handover, staff deployment, ratios, site security, registers, risk assessments and actions.
7. Meet with parents and provide a factual account consistent with Police or safeguarding advice.
8. Record learning, update risk assessments and procedures, provide staff training and offer appropriate wellbeing support to the child, peers and staff.

15 Uncollected child procedure

A child who is not collected remains the responsibility of the School or relevant contracted provision until a safe and recorded handover is completed. The child will not be blamed or made anxious.

1. At the expected collection time, check messages, usual routines, authorised changes, club, bus and after-school-care arrangements.
2. Bring the child to a suitable indoor location (usually the school office) and ensure continuous supervision. Wherever practicable, use an adult known to the child; for EYFS, seek the key person or another familiar practitioner.
3. Contact parents using all available numbers and then each emergency contact. Record the time, number and outcome of every attempt.
4. If a parent confirms a short delay, agree an expected arrival time and continue supervision.
5. Where after-school provision is operating and has agreed to accept the child, a child who remains uncollected 15 minutes after the agreed time may transfer to it through a recorded handover, provided that the child is booked into or otherwise authorised to use that provision. Parents will be informed. Any charge is handled under published arrangements and never delays safeguarding action.

6. If an alternative person is nominated, apply all authorised-collector checks before release.

7. If no responsible adult can be contacted within 30 minutes, or earlier if concerned, inform a senior leader and the DSL.

8. If the child remains uncollected one hour after the expected time, when the premises or provision is closing, or sooner where the child's welfare requires it, contact Trafford Children's First Response on 0161 912 5125 during office hours or the Emergency Duty Team on 0161 912 2020 out of hours.

9. Call Police on 999 if there is immediate danger, attempted unsafe removal or another emergency.

10. Where reasonably practicable, two adults—one normally a senior leader—remain until the child is handed to an authorised adult or statutory agency under an agreed plan.

11. Complete the incident and safeguarding records and review whether repeated late collection indicates neglect, family stress or another need requiring early help or referral.

16 Prohibited actions for an uncollected child

- Staff must not leave the School premises to search for a parent or collector.
- Staff must not drive the child home, take the child to their own home or ask an unauthorised person to care for the child.
- A private vehicle is used only under an expressly authorised emergency plan agreed by the Headteacher and statutory agency.
- The child is not left alone, placed with an unapproved adult or required to contact unknown people themselves.
- Staff do not publicise the family circumstances or discuss the incident outside the need-to-know safeguarding process.

17 EYFS-specific requirements

- This policy and the missing-child and non-collection procedures are made available to EYFS parents and carers.
- Staffing, supervision and handover reflect the ages, needs and statutory ratio requirements of the children.
- An EYFS child is handed directly to an authorised adult or through a documented transfer to another responsible provision.
- A familiar adult or key person is involved in comforting and supporting the child wherever

practicable.

- Outings have specific risk assessments and immediate missing-child procedures, with a paediatric first aider present.
- Where a statutory notification duty applies, the School or relevant EYFS provider notifies ISI, Ofsted, or other appropriate body within the applicable statutory timescale.

17 Data protection and communications

Personal information is shared on a lawful, necessary and proportionate basis to locate and safeguard the child. The School may share a photograph, description, medical needs, contact information and relevant safeguarding factors with Police, Children's Social Care, venue staff or emergency services. Incident information is not posted on social media. Media communication is controlled by the Headteacher or authorised spokesperson.

18 Records, investigation and reporting

The incident record includes the child's details; date, times and location; staff and pupil numbers; last sighting; search zones; calls and messages; decisions and reasons; agencies contacted; how the child was found or handed over; the child's condition and explanation; parent communication; injuries or treatment; safeguarding action; and lessons learned.

The Headteacher and DSL determine whether notification is required to Police, Children's Social Care, the local authority, ISI, the EYFS regulator, Charity Commission, insurer, HSE/RIDDOR or another body. RIDDOR reporting is based on the statutory criteria and is not automatic merely because a child was missing. Records are retained under the School's safeguarding and record-retention arrangements.

19 Training, testing and monitoring

- Staff receive induction and periodic briefing on registers, collection, search zones, Police and social-care escalation, recording and communication.
- Leaders test procedures through walk-throughs, desk-top exercises or drills appropriate to the age of pupils and the site.
- Every incident and near miss is reviewed for weaknesses in supervision, staffing, access, handover, systems or training.
- The DSL monitors unexplained absence, repeated late collection, unsafe collectors and links between incidents.
- Governors receive proportionate anonymised assurance and monitor completion of actions.

This policy is reviewed at least annually and sooner following a serious incident, legal or guidance change, inspection finding, site change or identified weakness.

20 Appendix 1 — Missing child immediate action card

- RAISE THE ALERT: Office, Headteacher and DSL/senior leader.
- ACCOUNT: register/headcount; secure supervision of the group.
- INFORMATION: identity, description, last seen, vulnerabilities and likely destination.
- SEARCH: allocate and record safe search zones; check exits, access systems and CCTV.
- CALL: Police without delay if the child is not found promptly or risk is significant; contact parents and Children's Social Care as directed.
- LOG: times, people, actions, decisions and communications.
- WHEN FOUND: protect, inform, assess safeguarding, preserve evidence, investigate and review.

21 Appendix 2 — Uncollected child action card

- CHECK: messages, authorised changes, clubs, buses and care arrangements.
- CARE: bring inside; supervise continuously; use a familiar adult if possible.
- CONTACT: parents and every emergency contact; record each attempt.
- TRANSFER: after 15 minutes, use a recorded handover to after-school care where operating.
- VERIFY: any alternative collector through the approved process.
- ESCALATE: senior leader and DSL within 30 minutes or sooner if concerned.
- REFER: at one hour, closure or sooner if welfare requires, contact Trafford Children's First Response 0161 912 5125; out of hours 0161 912 2020.
- EMERGENCY: call 999 for immediate danger.
- DO NOT: leave to find parents or take the child home. Complete all records.

22 Appendix 3 — Incident record minimum fields

- child, class and date of birth;
- date, location, expected and actual handover or discovery times;
- last verified sighting and description;
- register and headcount result;
- staff, pupil and visitor numbers;
- search areas, persons and times;

- calls, agencies, advice and decision-makers;
- parents and emergency contacts attempted;
- how and where the child was found or safely handed over;
- the child's presentation, immediate comments and care;
- medical treatment and injuries;
- safeguarding assessment, referrals and notifications;
- evidence preserved, including CCTV;
- investigation findings, lessons, actions, owners and deadlines.