Child Missing in Education Policy

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1. Introduction, legislation, and guidance

This policy has been written in line with the DfE guidance 'Children Missing Education' (2016). All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have. Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation, or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment, or training) later in life.

Effective information sharing between parents/carers, schools and local authorities is essential to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

Local authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children of compulsory school age in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. Arrangements made under section 436A also play an important role in wider safeguarding duties. Local authorities should have in place arrangements for joint working and information sharing with other local authorities and agencies including schools.

This policy highlights what Physis Academy do to fulfil our responsibilities, to support Local Authorities with their duties and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Equality and Non-Discrimination

This policy has been developed with due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. The school is committed to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation in our response to children missing education

- Advancing equality of opportunity for all pupils
- Fostering good relations through inclusive practices

We recognize that certain groups of pupils with protected characteristics may be at particular risk of missing education and face specific vulnerabilities. This policy ensures that our procedures are sensitive to the needs of all pupils, regardless of their protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation).

This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2018) 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE (2015) 'Keeping children safe in education' [last updated: May 2022]
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2015) 'School attendance' [last updated: May 2022]
- The Education Act (2011)
- The Education and Inspections Act (2006)
- The Children Act (2004)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006) [Amended 2016]
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations (2005) [Amended 2021]
- The School Information (England) Regulations (2008) [Amended 2021]
- The Education (Provision of Full-time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) Regulations (2007) [Amended 2014]
- Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive (November 2024)

- Equality Act 2010

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, a "child missing education" (CME) is defined as a child or young person of compulsory school age who is not attending school, not placed in alternative provision by an LA, and who is not receiving a suitable education elsewhere. This definition also includes children who are receiving an education, but one that is not suitable; this could include children who are not receiving full-time education suitable to their needs, e.g., age, ability, aptitude, SEND.

3. Why children miss education

There are a number of reasons as to why children miss school, including the following:

- Failing to be registered at a school at the age of five
- Failing to make a successful transition
- Exclusion
- Mid-year transfer of school
- Moving into a new area

Aside from these reasons, if a child is missing from school, particularly repeatedly, this can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, such as the following:

- Abuse and neglect – including sexual abuse or exploitation and criminal exploitation
- Mental health issues – such as risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of FGM or risk of forced marriage

- Family conflict related to protected characteristics (e.g., rejection due to sexual orientation or gender identity, religious conflict)
- Discrimination, bullying, or harassment at school
- Cultural or religious pressures

4. Children at particular risk of missing education

As there could be many reasons for a child or young person to be missing from education, the Local Authority (LA) will make a judgement on a case-by-case basis. The following list indicates children and young people who are most at risk of missing education. This list is not exhaustive.

General Risk Factors

- Failure to start school at Reception entry, hence never entering a Local Authority's system
- Transfer between Local Authorities
- Cease to attend for an unknown reason and the whereabouts of the child/young person cannot be established
- Failure to complete transition at: Key Stage 1 to 2; or Key Stage 2 to 3 (primary to secondary)
- Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System
- Children living in women's refuges/escaping domestic violence or families who have to move quickly under the Police Protection Witness Scheme
- Children in homeless families, perhaps living in temporary accommodation, houses of multiple occupancy or Bed & Breakfast accommodation
- Missing children/runaways

- Children at risk of harm or neglect
- Children with long-term medical or emotional health problems
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees, or the children of asylum-seeking families
- Looked After Children
- Children from Gypsy/Roma/Traveller (GRT) background
- Young carers
- Children from transient families, i.e., children who have experienced high levels of mobility between different education providers, as they move from area to area
- Teenage mothers
- Children excluded from school
- Children in private fostering arrangements
- Children informally excluded from school and/or those placed on long-term part-time timetables
- Children taken off roll following a lengthy absence due to an extended family holiday taken in term-time or not returning to the UK*
- Young people who have come from abroad to live in the area including potentially sex trafficked young people

*This could include forced/arranged marriages

Additional Vulnerabilities Related to Protected Characteristics

The school recognizes that pupils with certain protected characteristics may face additional risks of missing education:

Gender Identity:

- Transgender or gender-questioning pupils may be at higher risk due to:

- Mental health challenges including anxiety, depression, and gender dysphoria
- Family conflict or rejection
- Bullying or discrimination at school
- Running away from home

Sexual Orientation:

- LGBTQ+ pupils may be at higher risk due to:
- Family conflict or rejection
- Mental health challenges
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Running away from home
- Lack of acceptance or support

Race and Ethnicity:

- Pupils from minoritized ethnic backgrounds may be at higher risk due to:
- Racial discrimination or harassment
- Cultural dislocation
- Immigration-related issues
- Language barriers affecting engagement
- Mistrust of authorities

Religion or Belief:

- Pupils may be at risk due to:
- Religious persecution or family conflict over beliefs
- Forced religious practices or indoctrination
- Radicalisation concerns

- Conflict between religious beliefs and other aspects of identity (e.g., sexual orientation)

Disability:

- Pupils with disabilities or SEND may be at higher risk due to:
- Mental health challenges
- Bullying or discrimination
- Difficulty accessing appropriate education
- Medical needs
- Communication barriers

Sex:

- Both boys and girls may face gender-specific risks:
- Girls: Higher risk of FGM, forced marriage, sexual exploitation, early pregnancy
- Boys: Higher risk of criminal exploitation, gang involvement
- Both: Gender-based violence, domestic abuse

Pregnancy and Maternity:

- Pregnant pupils and young mothers face specific risks including:
- Medical appointments and childcare challenges
- Stigma and social isolation
- Educational disengagement
- Mental health difficulties

Intersectionality

The school recognizes that pupils may belong to multiple vulnerable groups (e.g., LGBTQ+ pupil from a minoritized ethnic

background, disabled asylum seeker, transgender pupil from a religious family). These intersecting identities can create compounded risks and vulnerabilities that require sensitive, individualized responses.

5. Roles and responsibilities

School

- Physis Academy will enter pupils on the admissions register at the beginning of the first day on which it has been agreed by the school, or the day that the school has been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.
- In the event that a pupil fails to attend the school on the agreed or notified date, the school will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the reason for this absence and will consider notifying the LA at the earliest opportunity.
- The school will keep an accurate and up-to-date admissions register by encouraging parents/carers and social workers (where applicable) to inform them of any changes.
- The school will monitor pupils' attendance through a daily register.
- The school will inform the LA and where applicable, the Virtual Schools and Social Workers of pupils who are regularly absent from school, or who have missed 10 school days or more without permission.
- The school will notify the LA if any pupil is taken off the admission register.
- Pupils who remain on the school roll and are not necessarily missing in education, will be monitored and attendance will be addressed when it is poor and of concern.

- All staff will be aware of the school's procedures for unauthorised absence and missing from education.
- The school will ensure that all procedures are sensitive to pupils' protected characteristics and that reasonable enquiries are conducted in a culturally appropriate, non-discriminatory manner.
- The school will monitor patterns of absence by protected characteristics to identify any disproportionate impact on particular groups.

Local authorities

- Under the Education Act (1996), the LA has a duty to establish the identities of children and young people in the area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving education provision otherwise.
- The LA will provide full-time education for permanently excluded pupils.
- When it is brought to the LA's attention that a child or young person may not be receiving a suitable education, the LA will service notices on parents to assure the LA that their child is receiving such an education.
- The LA will issue School Attendance Orders to parents who fail to assure the LA that their child is receiving a suitable education, and the LA believe that the child should attend school. The LA may prosecute or fine parents/carers of school-registered children who fail to ensure their child attends school regularly.
- The LA will ensure that children and young people identified as not receiving suitable education are returned to full-time education either at the school or elsewhere.
- The LA will ensure that children or young people who return to full-time education are appropriately supported, taking into account the reasons why they missed education in the first place.

- The LA is responsible for liaising and sharing information with other agencies to support children and young people who miss education.
- The LA is responsible for referring to the LA children's social care where there is a concern for a child or young person's welfare, as well as the police if there is a reason to suspect a crime has been committed.

Parents/carers

- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their children, who are of compulsory school age, are receiving suitable full-time education.
- Parents/carers are responsible for notifying the school in writing where they will be home-schooling their child, in order for the child to be removed from the admissions register.
- Parents/carers will notify the school regarding any absences or changes to the pupil's education arrangements.
- Parents/carers are responsible for providing the school with more than one emergency contact number where possible.

6. Procedures

Physis Academy's procedures are in response to three situations:

1. A child or young person fails to attend school without good reason (unauthorised absence)
2. A child or young person leaves school premises without permission
3. A child or young person goes missing off-site while under the care or supervision of school staff

All circumstances outlined above must be reported to the Headteacher or a member of SLT and recorded as soon as is reasonably possible.

Whenever a child or young person leaves Physis Academy without permission or goes missing off-site, the DSL and/or DDSL must ensure that key individuals and agencies are informed within the timescales specified.

Where a child or young person has been involved in leaving school premises without permission or going missing off-site, new information will be recorded, as appropriate and their individual risk assessment will be reviewed and updated (where necessary) within 48 hours. Relevant information will be communicated to all staff as soon as reasonably possible.

All staff are obliged to familiarise themselves with the current risk assessment for every child and young person they have responsibility for educating, supporting, or supervising.

Equality Considerations in Procedures

When implementing these procedures, staff must be mindful of pupils' protected characteristics and ensure that:

- **Communication is accessible:** For pupils with disabilities (e.g., hearing/visual impairments, learning disabilities), communication methods will be adapted. Interpretation services will be used where needed for families with language barriers.
- **Cultural sensitivity is maintained:** When conducting reasonable enquiries, staff will be culturally sensitive and aware of potential mistrust of authorities among certain communities (e.g., asylum-seeking families, families from minoritized ethnic backgrounds).
- **Confidentiality is protected:** Where family relationships may be strained due to protected characteristics (e.g., LGBTQ+ pupil experiencing family rejection, religious conflict), staff will exercise particular care in

communications with parents/carers and may need to involve additional safeguarding support.

- **Individual vulnerabilities are recognized:** Risk assessments will explicitly consider how protected characteristics may affect a pupil's vulnerability when missing (e.g., transgender pupil at higher risk of self-harm, disabled pupil with specific medical needs, asylum-seeking pupil at risk of trafficking).
- **Responses are non-discriminatory:** Staff will avoid stereotyping or making assumptions based on protected characteristics and will ensure that all pupils receive equitable support.

Further information on our procedures can be found in the Appendix.

7. Equality and diversity considerations

Recognizing Diverse Needs and Vulnerabilities

The school recognizes that pupils with protected characteristics may face specific vulnerabilities when missing from education and require tailored responses:

Age-Specific Considerations

- **Older pupils (KS2+):** May be more able to articulate reasons; approaching age 18 may face anxieties about leaving care and transitioning to independence.
- **Developmental stage:** Responses will be adapted to pupils' developmental stage and emotional maturity.

Disability

- **Communication needs:** Pupils with communication disabilities (non-verbal, hearing/visual impairments) will

have communication methods adapted during searches, enquiries, and upon return.

- **Specific vulnerabilities:** Pupils with SEND may be more vulnerable when missing due to:
  - Difficulty understanding danger
  - Communication barriers
  - Medical needs
  - Mental health challenges
  - Higher risk of exploitation
- **Reasonable adjustments:** The school will make reasonable adjustments during searches and upon return, including:
  - Accessible communication
  - Sensory-friendly environments
  - Additional support and supervision
  - Coordination with health professionals

Gender Identity

- **Transgender and gender-questioning pupils** may be at higher risk of going missing due to:
  - Mental health challenges including gender dysphoria
  - Family conflict or rejection
  - Bullying or discrimination
  - Running away from home
- **Specific responses:**
  - Staff will be trained to recognize these vulnerabilities
  - Confidentiality will be carefully managed when contacting parents/carers if family relationships are strained

- Gender-affirming support will be provided upon return
- Safeguarding concerns will be addressed with sensitivity to gender identity

Pregnancy and Maternity

- **Pregnant pupils and young mothers** may miss education due to:
- Medical appointments
- Childcare challenges
- Perinatal mental health difficulties
- Social isolation and stigma
- **Specific responses:**
- Procedures for maintaining contact during medical appointments
- Support for return to education after maternity
- Awareness of perinatal mental health risks
- Non-judgmental, supportive approach

Race and Ethnicity

- **Pupils from minoritized ethnic backgrounds** may face specific risks including:
- Racial discrimination or harassment leading to school avoidance
- Cultural dislocation
- Immigration-related issues
- Forced marriage or FGM
- Trafficking
- **Specific responses:**

- Cultural sensitivity in all communications and enquiries
- Awareness of potential mistrust of authorities
- Language support through interpretation services
- Avoidance of racial stereotyping or over-surveillance
- Recognition of racial trauma and its impact

Religion or Belief

- **Pupils may be at risk** due to:
- Religious persecution or family conflict over beliefs
- Forced religious practices
- Radicalisation
- Conflict between religious beliefs and other aspects of identity (e.g., sexual orientation, gender identity)
- **Specific responses:**
- Cultural and religious sensitivity in enquiries and home visits
- Awareness of religious factors that may contribute to absence
- Non-judgmental approach
- Coordination with appropriate faith-based support where requested

Sex

- **Gender-specific vulnerabilities:**
- **Girls:** Higher risk of FGM, forced marriage, sexual exploitation, pregnancy-related absence
- **Boys:** Higher risk of criminal exploitation, gang involvement
- **Both:** Gender-based violence, domestic abuse

- **Specific responses:**
  - Awareness of gender-specific risks without stereotyping
  - Appropriate safeguarding responses for gender-specific concerns
  - Recognition that both boys and girls can be victims of sexual exploitation

Sexual Orientation

- **LGBTQ+ pupils** may be at higher risk of going missing due to:
  - Family conflict or rejection
  - Mental health challenges including anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation
  - Bullying, harassment, or discrimination
  - Running away from home
- **Specific responses:**
  - Staff will be trained to recognize these vulnerabilities
  - Confidentiality will be carefully managed when contacting parents/carers if family relationships are strained
  - LGBTQ+-affirming support will be provided upon return
  - Immediate safeguarding response given high mental health risks

Intersectionality

The school recognizes that pupils may hold multiple identities and face compounded vulnerabilities. For example:

- LGBTQ+ pupil from a minoritized ethnic background (facing both racism and homophobia)
- Disabled asylum seeker (facing both ableism and immigration-related risks)

- Transgender pupil from a religious family (facing conflict between gender identity and religious beliefs)

Risk assessments and responses will consider pupils' whole identities and intersecting experiences.

Avoiding Discrimination

The school will ensure that:

- **No stereotyping:** Staff will not make assumptions about pupils based on protected characteristics
- **Equitable treatment:** All pupils will receive appropriate support regardless of protected characteristics
- **Cultural competence:** Staff will be trained in cultural sensitivity and awareness of diverse needs
- **Monitoring:** Patterns of absence and responses will be monitored by protected characteristics to identify any disproportionate impact or discriminatory practices

8. Training

The safeguarding response to children and young people who go missing from education will be explained to staff during their induction. All staff will receive annual safeguarding and child protection training, including an update on the various safeguarding concern possibilities that CME could represent, and any changes to processes and staff members' role in these processes.

Equality and Diversity Training

All staff will receive training on equality, diversity, and children missing education, including:

Protected Characteristics and CME Risks:

- Understanding how protected characteristics may increase vulnerability to missing education

- Recognizing specific risks for:
  - LGBTQ+ pupils (family rejection, mental health, bullying)
  - Transgender pupils (gender dysphoria, family conflict)
  - Pupils from minoritized ethnic backgrounds (racism, cultural dislocation, trafficking)
  - Disabled pupils (communication barriers, medical needs, exploitation)
  - Pregnant pupils and young mothers (medical needs, stigma, mental health)
  - Pupils experiencing religious conflict or persecution

Cultural Competence:

- Understanding cultural differences in family structures, communication styles, and help-seeking behaviors
- Recognizing potential mistrust of authorities among certain communities
- Conducting culturally sensitive enquiries and home visits
- Working with interpretation services

LGBTQ+ Awareness:

- Understanding extremely high mental health risks for LGBTQ+ pupils
- Recognizing signs of family rejection or conflict
- Providing LGBTQ+-affirming support
- Managing confidentiality when family relationships are strained

Disability Awareness:

- Adapting communication for pupils with disabilities

- Understanding specific vulnerabilities when disabled pupils go missing
- Making reasonable adjustments during searches and upon return

Unconscious Bias:

- Recognizing unconscious bias in risk assessment and responses
- Avoiding stereotyping based on protected characteristics
- Ensuring equitable treatment for all pupils

Intersectionality:

- Understanding compounded vulnerabilities from intersecting protected characteristics
- Recognizing that pupils hold multiple identities

Specialist Training

The DSL, DDSL, and senior leaders will receive specialist training on:

- Advanced safeguarding for pupils with protected characteristics
- Cultural competence in safeguarding
- LGBTQ+ safeguarding
- Working with diverse families
- Legal duties under the Equality Act 2010

9. Working with others

Families, children, and young people moving from one LA to another can sometimes lead to a child or young person being lost in the system and consequently missing education. When a

child or young person moves, LAs will work with other LAs, regionally or nationally, to ensure this does not happen.

The LA will raise awareness of its procedures with local schools, partners and agencies working with children and families.

The school uses secure emails to allow the transfer of pupil information when a child or young person moves education setting.

Partnership with Specialist Services

The school will work with specialist services to support pupils with protected characteristics who are missing or at risk of missing education, including:

- **LGBTQ+ support organizations** (e.g., Mermaids, Stonewall, LGBT Foundation)
- **Culturally appropriate support services** for pupils from minoritized ethnic backgrounds
- **Disability and SEND services**
- **Gender identity services** for transgender pupils
- **Perinatal mental health services** for pregnant pupils and young mothers
- **Faith-based support** where appropriate and requested by pupils/families
- **Immigration and asylum services**
- **Domestic abuse services**
- **Mental health services** with expertise in diverse populations

Communication with Diverse Families

The school will ensure that communication with families is:

- **Accessible:** Using interpretation services, translated materials, and accessible formats for families with disabilities
- **Culturally appropriate:** Sensitive to cultural norms and communication styles
- **Respectful:** Recognizing diverse family structures and avoiding assumptions
- **Confidential:** Protecting pupils' privacy, particularly where family relationships may be strained

10. Safeguarding

All child protection concerns will be addressed in accordance with our 'Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy'. For the purpose of this policy, "reasonable enquiries" are defined as limited, investigative powers that the school may action to determine a child or young person's whereabouts and whether they may be in danger. In line with the Children Act 2004, the school will follow appropriate procedures when carrying out reasonable enquiries, such as making telephone calls and checking with other schools, and the DSL completing a home visit conducting discussions with neighbours, relatives, or landlords, and/or checking with other agencies to determine whether a child or young person may be at risk of harm.

NB: No member of staff should make an unaccompanied visit to a pupil's home or to speak with neighbours etc.

The DSL will record that they have completed these procedures and, if necessary, make a referral to the children's social care or police. Where the whereabouts and safety of a child is unknown, the school will notify the LA and work with the LA to continue enquiries. The school and LA will use their judgement as to what reasonable enquiries are appropriate, once all the facts of the case have been considered.

Equality Considerations in Safeguarding

When conducting reasonable enquiries and safeguarding responses, staff will:

- **Be culturally sensitive:** Recognize that some families may have mistrust of authorities due to immigration status, previous discrimination, or cultural factors. Approach enquiries with sensitivity and respect.
- **Use interpretation services:** Where families have language barriers, use professional interpretation services to ensure clear communication.
- **Adapt communication:** For pupils with disabilities or communication needs, adapt communication methods appropriately.
- **Consider confidentiality:** Where family relationships may be strained due to protected characteristics (e.g., LGBTQ+ pupil experiencing rejection, religious conflict), exercise particular care in communications and involve additional safeguarding support as needed.
- **Recognize specific risks:** Be aware of protected characteristic-related risks such as:
  - FGM, forced marriage for girls from certain ethnic/religious backgrounds
  - Honour-based violence
  - Trafficking of asylum-seeking children
  - Self-harm/suicide risk for LGBTQ+ pupils
  - Exploitation of disabled pupils
  - Radicalisation
- **Avoid stereotyping:** Do not make assumptions based on protected characteristics. Assess each situation individually.

- **Ensure equitable responses:** All pupils receive appropriate safeguarding support regardless of protected characteristics.

11. Admissions register

Physis Academy will ensure that the admissions register is always kept up to date and will encourage parents/carers and social workers (where applicable) to notify the school of any changes as they occur.

Pupils will be recorded on the admissions register at the beginning of the first day on which it has been agreed by the school, or the day that the school has been notified, as the date that the pupil will attend the school.

Once a pupil has been recorded on the admissions register, the school will notify the LA within five working days and will supply the LA with all of the details contained on the admissions register for the new pupil.

Removing a pupil from the admissions register

The school will inform the LA of any pupil who will be removed from the admission register where they:

- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within a reasonable distance of the school
- Have been certified as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither they nor their parents/carers and social worker (where applicable) has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order, and the school does not reasonably believe they will be returning at the end of that period
- Have been permanently excluded

- Have died
- Have been registered at another education setting
- Have been registered at more than one school, but have failed to attend the school and the proprietor of any other schools concerned have consented to the deletion
- Will cease to be of compulsory school age, and the relevant person has indicated the pupil will not attend the school

Physis Academy will notify the LA that a pupil is to be removed from the admissions register as soon as any of the above criteria are met, and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed.

Physis Academy will record the following information on the admissions register

- The full name and contact details of the parent/carer with whom the pupil lives
- The address where the pupil resides
- The full name and contact details of the pupil's social worker (where applicable)
- The name of the pupil's previous school and dates attended, and where the school is notified of a school move, the name of new education setting including the date when they are due to attend/first attend

12. Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, by the Headteacher or other appropriate member of the school's senior leadership team. The policy will also be approved by the school's Governing body.

Equality Monitoring

The school will monitor children missing education by protected characteristics where data is available and appropriate. This will include:

- **Patterns of absence:** Monitoring whether certain groups are disproportionately represented among pupils who are missing or at risk of missing education
- **Reasons for absence:** Analyzing whether certain protected characteristics are associated with specific reasons for missing education
- **Responses and outcomes:** Monitoring whether pupils with protected characteristics receive equitable responses and support
- **Effectiveness of procedures:** Evaluating whether procedures are effective for all pupils regardless of protected characteristics

Reporting to Governors

The school will report to governors annually on:

- Patterns of children missing education
- Any disproportionate impact on pupils with protected characteristics
- Actions taken to address disparities
- Effectiveness of equality and diversity training
- Compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty

Policy Review

Policy review will include:

- Analysis of equality monitoring data
- Consultation with pupils, staff, and families from diverse backgrounds

- Review of partnership arrangements with specialist services
- Assessment of training effectiveness
- Evaluation of whether procedures are meeting the needs of all pupils

13. Appendix

Physis Academy Child Missing in Education Procedures

The purpose of this document is to outline our response to three situations:

1. A child or young person fails to attend school without good reason (unauthorised absence)
2. A child or young person leaves school premises without permission
3. A child or young person goes missing off-site while under the care or supervision of school staff

1. A child or young person fails to attend school without good reason (unauthorised absence)

Any absence from school will be addressed in accordance with our **Attendance Policy**.

When addressing unauthorised absence, staff will:

- Consider whether protected characteristics may be contributing to absence (e.g., bullying related to race, sexual orientation, or gender identity; family conflict; mental health challenges)
- Ensure communication with families is culturally appropriate and accessible

- Provide appropriate support upon return that addresses underlying causes

2. A child or young person leaves school premises without permission

While children and young people may leave school without permission for a variety of reasons, the majority often do so on impulse and normally in response to overwhelming emotions such as anxiety, confusion, fear, frustration, and anger. All staff must adopt a pro-active approach to supervising and monitoring the location and behaviour of children and young people at all times, particularly when they appear agitated and unsettled and no child or young person must be unsupervised at any time.

Knowledge of individual children and young people is all-important in terms of the likelihood of them leaving school without permission and their influence on other more vulnerable children or young people. Information on these issues may be found in a child or young person's Learner Passport, Individual Risk Assessment or EHCP.

Equality considerations: Risk assessments will explicitly consider how protected characteristics may affect vulnerability, including:

- Mental health challenges (particularly for LGBTQ+ pupils, disabled pupils)
- Communication barriers (for pupils with disabilities)
- Cultural or religious factors
- Family conflict related to identity
- Trauma responses

If a child or young person does attempt to leave school without permission, the following considerations must always be held in mind:

- Staff should remind a child or young person in a loud, clear voice that they should not walk/run off and ask them to return to the staff/group.
- **For pupils with communication disabilities:** Staff will adapt communication methods as needed (e.g., visual cues, sign language, simplified language).
- Staff may only use a restrictive physical intervention if they have cause to believe that the child or young person is placing themselves or others at immediate and unacceptable risk and as a last resort.
- Any child or young person who leaves school premises without permission should be supervised and kept in sight at all times.
- If a child or young person has left the premises and cannot be seen, parents/carers and other responsible persons (e.g., social worker) will be informed by telephone, as soon as possible.
    - **Confidentiality consideration:** Where family relationships may be strained due to protected characteristics (e.g., LGBTQ+ pupil experiencing rejection), the DSL will assess whether parental contact is appropriate or whether additional safeguarding support is needed first.
- If the child or young person has not been located after a search of school site, Physis Academy will contact the police and parents/carers and other responsible persons (e.g., social worker) will be informed that the police have been notified. Response time to police is to be documented and kept in the school office in consultation with social worker and parent/carer.
- In supporting a child or young person off site, staff must follow at a walking pace and undertake a frequent dynamic risk assessment of the situation, taking into account the child or young person's potential response to being observed and the likelihood of them putting

themselves at greater risk e.g., near busy roads, transport hubs, waterways, or railways.

- **Specific vulnerabilities:** Staff will be particularly aware of heightened risks for certain pupils (e.g., LGBTQ+ pupils at higher risk of self-harm, disabled pupils with specific medical needs, asylum-seeking pupils at risk of trafficking).

- Staff must contact the police on **101** (or **999** in an emergency) if the welfare of the child or young person continues to be a cause for concern.

Staff involved in monitoring a child or young person off site must:

- Carry a mobile phone that is switched on and set to ring rather than silent/vibrate
- Observe, monitor, and encourage the individual to return to school (if possible)
- Be advised **not** to 'chase' children and young people near roads, junctions, rivers, or railways

If a child or young person remains unaccounted for, Physis Academy will liaise with the police, parents/carers, and other responsible persons (e.g., social worker), as appropriate.

If a child or young person returns to site with a member of Physis Academy staff, the Headteacher, parents/carers, LA and children's services (as appropriate) must be informed as soon as reasonably possible.

On returning to Physis Academy, the child and young person must be offered a positive and warm response using an Emotion Coaching approach. It is important to establish what, if any, reason there was for the behaviour in order to identify and support the child or young person with any potential difficulties they may be experiencing.

Equality considerations: The Emotion Coaching approach will be adapted for pupils with communication difficulties or autism,

recognizing cultural differences in emotional expression and trauma responses that may vary by background.

3. A child or young person goes missing off-site while under the care or supervision of school staff

Off-site visits are typically one of the most unpredictable activities we undertake with children and young people. The importance of good planning, preparation and risk assessment should never be underestimated.

Staff must maintain the highest level of vigilance and supervision at all times.

If a child or young person is believed to have 'run away' from a trip or activity, staff must act to prioritise the welfare and good management of the group. Failure to do so may provoke a large-scale incident involving greater risk-taking and more children or young people.

Unless a child or young person is directly observed leaving the area, staff must ensure thorough checks are made of the immediate vicinity including shops, toilets, playgrounds etc. If the child or young person is not located during such a search, immediate action must be taken to locate and safeguard the child.

Staff must inform the Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team as soon as possible, before conducting a search of the immediate locality. If the child or young person is located during a local search, staff must observe, monitor, and encourage the individual to return with them (if possible).

If a child or young person returns to site with a member of Physis Academy staff, the Headteacher, parents/carers, LA, and children's services (as appropriate) must be informed as soon as reasonably possible.

If the welfare of the child or young person continues to be a cause for concern e.g., their whereabouts remain unknown, or

they are observed getting on to public transport and/or leaving the area, staff must contact the police on **101** (or **999** in an emergency).

Equality considerations when pupils go missing off-site:

- Consider specific vulnerabilities related to protected characteristics (e.g., disabled pupils with medical needs, LGBTQ+ pupils at higher risk of self-harm, asylum-seeking pupils at risk of trafficking)
- Ensure communication with parents/carers is culturally appropriate and considers confidentiality where family relationships may be strained
- Adapt search strategies for pupils with disabilities (e.g., pupils with visual impairments, autistic pupils who may seek quiet spaces)
- Be aware of potential language barriers when searching public areas

On returning to Physis Academy, the child and young person must be offered a positive and warm response using an Emotion Coaching approach. It is important to establish what, if any, reason there was for the behaviour in order to identify and support the child or young person with any potential difficulties they may be experiencing.

Equality considerations for return: Ensure the Emotion Coaching approach is adapted for pupils with communication difficulties, autism, or cultural differences in emotional expression. Provide appropriate support that recognizes any protected characteristic-related factors that may have contributed to the incident.

All such incidents must be recorded on an incident form as soon as possible and this will be shared with the young person's parent/carer and social worker (where applicable).