



PEGASUS SCHOOLS, EKET, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

MISSING CHILD POLICY

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| Approved/reviewed by | |
| The Head of Schools | |
| Date of review | January 2024 |
| Date of next review | January 2025 |

Introduction

Pegasus Schools is deeply committed to prioritizing the safety of children under its care. All staff members undergo comprehensive training to understand their pivotal role in safeguarding the well-being of every child within the school premises. Our School is dedicated to implementing stringent measures to prevent children from being unaccompanied or unsupervised. Our staffing ratios are intentionally generous, ensuring continuous supervision of each child throughout their time under our care.

Recognizing the critical importance of promptly addressing any instance of a missing child, we emphasize the necessity of early detection to maximize the chances of locating the child unharmed. To achieve this, staff members will conduct periodic head counts. In the unlikely event that a staff member is unable to account for a child's whereabouts, specific actions outlined below will be initiated.

Procedure for a child going missing from the Class or School Premises

If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions during the working day:

- A headcount of students in the class shall be conducted to verify the absence and ensure that no other student is missing. At the same time, all students in the classroom shall be engaged in an organized activity to prevent panic and maintain a controlled environment.
- Staff members shall calmly and systematically interview all adults and pupils present, seeking information on the last known whereabouts of the missing child.
- Immediately upon confirming the missing child, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Facilities Manager shall be notified.
- The DSL, in coordination with the Facilities Manager, will arrange for one or more adults to conduct a thorough search of the school grounds, collaborating with the security team.
- Simultaneously, two members of staff shall inspect all areas of the school, including but not limited to behind doors, cupboards, toilets and also review CCTV records for any signs of entry or exit.

In the event that the student remains unaccounted for, the following steps should be taken:

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) shall promptly notify the Head of School, who will subsequently contact the parents of the student to inform them of the situation and the actions taken.
- Parents will be requested to promptly attend the school premises.
- The Mobil Security Team and law enforcement authorities must be alerted.
- The school shall fully cooperate with any investigative measures undertaken by the Police.
- A comprehensive record of all actions taken, leading up to the point of the student's disappearance must be documented in the incident report.
- The DSL will conduct a full investigation and report back to the Head of Schools(HOS) who will take the appropriate action. As deemed necessary, adjustments to already existing policies will be made based on the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Procedure for a child going missing on an outing

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other students are present
- One staff member will conduct a search in the immediate vicinity, but not beyond for security reasons.
- The venue manager must be contacted promptly to report the missing child and coordinate a comprehensive search within the premises.
- The senior staff leading the outing shall establish communication with the Manager FL&S, the Head Teacher, or the Principal—whichever is available at the time—to inform the Head of Schools accordingly.
- As a precautionary measure, the remaining students will be taken back to the school premises.
- The most senior member of staff on the outing will call the Police and provide them with the child's description and photograph.
- The Head of School will contact the parents of the missing child, furnishing a comprehensive account of the situation and formally requesting their presence at the school.
- The School commits to full cooperation with any police investigation, and an additional internal inquiry will be conducted by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Managing people

We acknowledge that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable.

Our staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person responsible for the safety of that child. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases. Such staff may also be understandably, the target of parental anger. Our School will always ensure that any staff under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff ;the DSL and a representative of the management committee. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our staff are not tolerated, and the police will be called.

The other students may also be sensitive to what is going on around them. Our remaining staff must be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly, but also reassure them.

In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, our staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Head of Schools will use her discretion to decide what action to take.