



MacIntyre Academies

Quest Academy

Missing Learner Policy

Version	Purpose/Change	Responsibility	Date
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Added "Principal" to responsibilities section and rephrase for clarity / removal of reference to Executive Principal / Head of School- Rephrased SLT and Staff bullet points regarding responsibility section to read clearer- Rewrote "Parent/Carer" bullet points regarding responsibility section in line with DfE guidance- Changed Academy age range to "7 and 19 (learners currently transition at 16)"- Aligned section 5 responses with examples. Added line around contacting agencies/emergency services.- Updated location for late collection	Principal This version revised by Deputy Principal (TO)	November 24

Person Responsible: Principal
Type of Policy Statutory
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Missing Learner Policy

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1. Introduction

Quest Academy, as part of MacIntyre Academies Trust, is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all learners. The safety and welfare of our learners is of the utmost importance. All staff should be aware of their responsibilities regarding learner safety, including what to do if a learner is absent from school for a period of time, if a learner goes missing from Academy supervision or when a 'collected learner' is not collected from school by their designated person or refuses to leave the site at the end of the day. This policy is so named to capture this duty in the context of our learners.

This policy lays out the procedures that should be followed in the event of either occurrence. This policy applies to all Quest Academy learners.

2. Responsibilities

Local Advisory Board (LAB):

- Monitor updated policies on a regular basis.
- Receive termly reports on safeguarding that include any missing learner incidents within Quest Academy

The Group Director/CEO:

- Hold the Principal to account in applying the policy and safeguarding children

Principal:

- Ensure all Academy staff are informed of this policy and fully understand the procedures to follow if a learner goes missing.
- Evaluate each incident involving a missing learner to identify lessons learned and implement improvements, ensuring the Academy upholds best practices.

Quest Academy Senior Leadership Team:

- Regularly review and update this policy and associated procedures to align with government guidance and best practices.

- Track and analyse instances of missing learners within Quest Academy, providing termly reports to the LAB.
- In the absence of the Principal, ensure the policy is adhered to and swift decisions are made to safeguard children as necessary.

All Staff:

- All staff must familiarise themselves with this policy and adhere to all related policies and procedures, particularly those concerning learner protection, safeguarding, risk assessment, health and safety, and educational visits and learning outside the classroom.
- Staff must ensure that attendance registers are completed accurately and promptly in line with guidelines and are either returned to the Academy office each day or completed on the designated system, as appropriate.

Third Party Provider (Including an Alternative Provider or Work Experience):

- Inform the school immediately if a child does not attend their provision as expected and without explanation.

Parents/carers:

- Notify the Academy on the first day of a child's absence due to illness or any other reason, and continue to provide daily updates for each subsequent day of absence, in line with DfE attendance requirements.
- Facilitate in-person visits by authorised staff to check on the wellbeing of learners absent from school, irrespective of the reason, to enable the Academy to meet its duty of care and safeguarding obligations.
- Ensure that the Academy holds current and accurate contact details for at least two responsible adults, including designated emergency contacts, in accordance with DfE guidance, to be used if parents/carers are unavailable.
- Understand and follow procedures for the handover and collection of learners, particularly when safeguarding or issues of parental responsibility arise, as outlined in DfE attendance and safeguarding protocols.
- Sign learners out at the Academy office when collecting them during the school day, adhering to established procedures to ensure accurate attendance records are maintained.

3. Missing Learner

3.1 Procedures aimed at reducing risk of a missing learner

Quest Academy serves learners aged 7 to 19, who transition at 16, and have additional needs related to autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) or social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) challenges. Some learners arrive at, and depart from school using local authority (LA) transport, while others are brought by parents/carers, and a smaller number travel independently. Learners also spend time in the community engaging in work experiences, enrichment activities, and various learning opportunities.

This policy outlines the general principles and procedures for staff to follow whenever a learner is considered missing. Such situations may include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to arrive for a scheduled school day or session, whether on Academy premises or during community-based activities such as Alternative Provision.
 - Leaving or absconding from a scheduled school day or session, either at the Academy or in the community.
 - Becoming separated from Academy staff and peers while out in the community.
 - Extended absences from school without reasonable explanation or contact with the Academy.
- To safeguard learners, Quest Academy implements several everyday measures, including:

If a learner is absent without prior notification, class staff will contact, or arrange for contact to be made with, the named contacts on the learner's file to determine their whereabouts as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

- The Academy ensures that parents/carers are fully informed of when the responsibility for a learner's care transfers between staff and themselves.
- Clear procedures are in place for welcoming learners to Quest Academy, including signing in and out and escorting learners to classrooms as necessary.
- Teaching and support staff closely supervise learners to ensure they reach their designated classrooms or other appropriate areas.
- Registers are marked promptly and accurately each morning and afternoon.
- When learners leave the classroom to work in other areas of the school, class teachers must maintain appropriate levels of supervision and account for all learners upon their return.
- Learners using LA transport are escorted by designated staff to their buses or taxis unless alternative arrangements have been agreed upon with parents/carers, with a formal system in place for checking them onto their transport.
- Comprehensive risk assessments, suitable staff-to-learner ratios, and staff expertise are provided for educational visits and off-site learning.
- For learners who do not have the capacity to provide consent, generic permission for educational trips is obtained at the start of the academic year, with specific permission required for trips not covered by general consent.
- School mobile phones are taken on every trip, with the relevant contact numbers recorded in the offsite risk assessment.

3.2 Procedure to be followed in the event of a learner going missing on or from the Academy premises

1. If a teacher, TA or other key adult (for example, therapist or lunchtime supervisor) suspects that a learner is missing from a lesson or activity, they must contact the nearest member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the Principal and office staff immediately. Following an assessment of the circumstances, a senior staff member will coordinate, where necessary, an initial search of the building, including classrooms, toilets, storage areas, communal areas, resource rooms, outside areas and Academy grounds.
2. The following lists should be held in the school office and/or electronically and will be checked:
 - Attendance registers
 - Offsite record (trips and visits)
 - Lists of those attending other provisions (e.g. work placements or other alternative provision)
3. Staff will count and name check all the learners present against the register.
4. A thorough check of all exits will be made, to ascertain if all relevant gates/doors were secure and there are no other ways a learner could have left the premises. If something is discovered, this needs to be drawn to the attention of senior staff immediately. Where it is in use CCTV should be quickly reviewed by a staff member with quick access e.g. facilities manager or member of SLT.
5. Senior staff will conduct a 'dynamic' risk assessment to establish whether, and when, parents/carers should be notified at the time. The Principal or next most senior member of staff on site will decide at which point the police need to be contacted, if necessary The Appendix 2 flowchart will inform this decision, please refer to it.
6. Staff must try to remember and write down a description of what the learner was wearing and any distinguishing features. A recent photo of the learner, for example their ID photo, will be provided to those searching where this is necessary.

7. Any specific special medical or learning needs relating to the missing learner should be disclosed to police or other agencies, as appropriate.
8. Senior staff will speak to all staff members and, if relevant, learners who have had contact with the missing learner that day, in order to try and build up a clear picture of the learner's movements.

3.3 Additional procedures in the event of a learner going missing while off Academy premises:

On arrival at a location a meeting point should always be established for the group in case a child becomes lost or detached from the group or peers.

1. The teacher or the allocated group leader must ensure the safety of remaining learners. At least one member of Academy staff must stay with them, which will be informed by a dynamic risk assessment. The teacher or allocated group leader must make a professional judgement at the time with respect to the size of the learner group, the needs of that group and the available staff: learner ratios.
2. One or more staff members should immediately start searching for the learner.
3. If the place/venue has a Public Address (PA) system a call should be requested to ask the learner to return to a muster/meeting point
4. Senior staff, including the Principal and/or next most senior staff member, and Designated Safeguarding Lead must be contacted immediately.
5. If the learner is not found promptly, the teacher must contact police by telephoning 999 (Please refer to appendix 2 for further guidance) Where they have done so, the teacher or allocated group leader should alert the Academy that the police have been contacted and the Academy will make arrangements to notify parents/carers, after which the procedures described above will be followed.

4. Learner not collected

This procedure outlines what should happen when a 'collected learner' i.e. one who is collected from school by a parent, carer or designated adult, is not collected. The guiding principle in dealing with any situation of this type must be to minimise distress to the learner and for him or her to remain in familiar surroundings and/or with familiar people for as long as possible.

The Academy will ensure that it is aware of all learners who are collected by a parent, carer or designated adult, if they are not collected by LA transport and do not travel to and from school independently.

The following general principles should be adhered to by all parties:

- Parents/carers who know they are going to be late must inform the main office in advance.
- On occasions when a learner is due to be collected by someone other than their parent/carers or normally authorised person (e.g. when all of the above are unexpectedly unavailable), parents/carers must advise how to verify the identity of the person who is to collect the learner. This will normally be through the use of a pre-determined password if the adult is not known to the school.

In the event of a 'collected learner' not being collected at the end of the day, the following procedures will be activated:

- If a provided Taxi fails to arrive, this will be escalated to the Special Needs Transport Provider/manager for the child's local authority and family will be kept updated.
- If a learner is not collected promptly by a family member without explanation, and regardless, if that time exceeds 15 minutes, a member of staff will call the parent/carers or designated adult and use any other emergency contact details available in order to determine the nature and length of delay in collection. If contacts go to voicemail/ answerphone, staff members should leave messages giving their name and the Academy telephone number and requesting a

prompt return call. If the taxi is late and a learner will not arrive at home at the normal time the school will contact home to make them aware of the situation

- If there is a known risk around the collecting adult e.g. risk of mental health crisis or self-harm the Academy will inform the front door service and request a safe and well check immediately.
- While waiting to be collected, the learner will be supervised by a member of staff who will offer them as much support and reassurance as is necessary.
- Learners awaiting collection will be taken to the front office café (or other safe place) where they will be supervised by Academy staff.
- If a learner has not been collected within the 30 minutes following agreed collection time (without explanation or contact), the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed and a decision taken as to whether an advice call to Social Services needs to be called where the child has an allocated worker.
- If all attempts within this period to contact a parent/carer, designated person or emergency contact fail then the DSL or other senior staff member should inform the Integrated front door services /allocated social worker of the situation without delay and ask that arrangements are made for the child as soon as possible, to avoid undue distress.
- The duty social worker should take ownership of the situation and decide what happens next, including whether the police need to be involved in helping to trace the parent/carer of the learner. The learner will not leave the premises with anyone other than those named on the Registration Form or in their file, unless alternative arrangements have been made and a pre-determined password is in place or unless Social Care or the Police direct the school to hand the child to an agreed adult.
- The Academy will ensure that there are at least two members of staff present whilst waiting for the parent/carer to collect the learner in order to safeguard the child and staff.
- Under normal circumstances, staff should not search for the parent/carer or take the learner home. However, in exceptional situations, if the parent/carer or another responsible adult has been contacted but is unable to come to the school for a valid and approved reason, the school may escort the learner home with the permission of the Principal or, in their absence, the next most senior colleague. This action must be in line with the MAT Driving at Work Policy and involve a minimum of two staff members. The staff-to-learner ratio will be determined by the size of the vehicle and the number of exits, based on a dynamic risk assessment considering the specific circumstances of the day. As a general guideline, a minimum ratio of 3:5 is recommended.
- In the event that transporting the learner somewhere is agreed to be necessary, this must be in line with the MAT Driving at Work Policy.
- Continual incidents of late collection will be recorded and discussed with parents/carers at the earliest opportunity and should be reported to the Front Door or allocated worker if they cause concern.

In an extremely rare event a child or young person may be transported in a staff members car, with a minimum of two staff members present for the entirety of the journey. Where this may (rarely) occur, it must be with the prior permission of the Executive Principal/Principal and in each instance, this must be reported to the Group Director.

5. If a Child refuses to go home from school:

A child may refuse to go home for a number of reasons, including but not limited to:

- **A safeguarding concern** they are worried about in the home or community, such as abuse, neglect, or exposure to harmful situations.

- **Anxiety about potential consequences at home**, due to an incident at home or school that could lead to punishment or conflict.
- For children on the **Autism Spectrum**, the child may be struggling with the transition from school to home for reasons they may or may not be able to communicate, such as sensory overload or changes in routine.
- **An unresolved conflict** earlier in the day, whether with peers or staff, that the child is unable to process, making it difficult for them to leave without assistance. It is helpful to check with class staff to understand any issues that may need addressing.
- If the child is travelling in a **shared vehicle**, they may have concerns about another passenger, whether due to a past experience, conflict, or fear. This should be checked to ensure their safety and comfort.
- **Medical or health concerns**, such as feeling unwell or experiencing a condition (e.g., anxiety, fatigue, or other physical ailments) that makes the child reluctant to return home.

In response we may need to consider:

Safeguarding concerns:

- *Response:* If a child expresses concerns about their safety at home or in the community, staff will listen carefully and treat the situation with utmost seriousness. We will follow safeguarding procedures, ensuring that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is informed and that appropriate actions are taken to address the child's concerns. We will work collaboratively with external agencies if necessary to ensure the child's safety.

Anxiety about consequences at home:

- *Response:* For children worried about potential consequences at home, staff will provide a calm, supportive environment where the child can express their feelings. We will work with the child to explore their concerns and offer reassurance. If appropriate, we may contact the parent/carer to clarify the situation and help manage the child's anxiety. This may involve coordinating a plan to address any concerns before the child goes home.

Struggling with transition (particularly for children on the Autism Spectrum):

- *Response:* We understand that transitions can be particularly challenging for children with ASC. If the child is struggling with the transition to home, staff will use their knowledge of the child's individual needs to offer support. Visual schedules, clear communication, and a gradual transition process may be used. If the child is unable to communicate their reasons, staff will observe and assess their non-verbal cues and provide comfort through a familiar routine or sensory support strategies.

Unresolved conflict during the day:

- *Response:* If a conflict has occurred during the day, staff will work with the child to de-escalate the situation and resolve any lingering issues. We will encourage open communication with the child, using restorative practices to help them express their feelings. Class staff will be consulted to gain insight into the conflict and ensure the child's emotional needs are addressed before they leave for home. We may also offer a safe space for the child to calm down if needed.

Concerns about other travellers in a shared vehicle:

- *Response:* If the child has concerns about another passenger in a shared vehicle, staff will listen to their worries and assess the situation. We will ensure the child feels safe and supported, and if necessary, we will make adjustments to travel arrangements, such as assigning a different seat or ensuring an appropriate adult supervision level. Staff will communicate with parents/carers to ensure that the child's concerns are fully addressed.

Medical or health concerns:

- *Response:* If the child is refusing to go home due to feeling unwell, staff will assess the child's physical and emotional state to determine whether they require medical attention. If the child's health is a concern, we will contact parents/carers to discuss the next steps. In cases of medical or mental health distress, we will ensure the child receives appropriate care and support in line with their individual healthcare plan.

The Academy will contact appropriate external agencies/emergency services, where appropriate and if necessary for all of the above, but not limited to the above. Each scenario will be appropriately dynamically risk assessed and the Academy Principal/ Senior Leader/s will operate within the child's best interest and in line with **MAT/Academy policy and procedure**.

6. Learners who do not attend school for a prolonged period of time**Where learners are absent for a period of time:**

Parents/Carers must:

- Call the school on each day of absence and provide a doctor's note/evidence of seeking medical advice where absence is over 5 day, unless the child has a known long term or critical health issue e.g. recovering from surgery.
- Make every attempt to support their child to attend school every day when they are well.
- Inform the school if they begin to spot early warning signs of school refusal or absence that might manifest as low mood or other anxiety-based behaviour so that early help can be initiated.

The academy will:

- Monitor patterns of absence for all children and agree thresholds of response for absent learners based on their circumstance and history.
- Maintain close contact with families to check on the progress of learners who need to return to school.
- Ensure that a DSL or other named colleague carries out a safe and well check within every 10 school days to ensure the learner is safe and does not show signs of abuse or neglect.
- Wherever possible safe and well checks should be done in person, but where this is not possible e.g. risk of communicable disease, this should be done virtually to ensure that the child is seen on screen wherever possible and school should consider providing a device for this purpose if a significant absence is expected.
- Refer to third party organisations persistent issues of concern around attendance
- Immediately refer any case to the integrated front door or allocated worker, if there is any concern or suggestion of abuse or neglect for a child not attending and follow the safeguarding policy in this regard.
- Follow the Warwickshire 'Children Missing Education Protocol for Warwickshire Learners' (appendix 1)

7. Related Policies and Procedures:

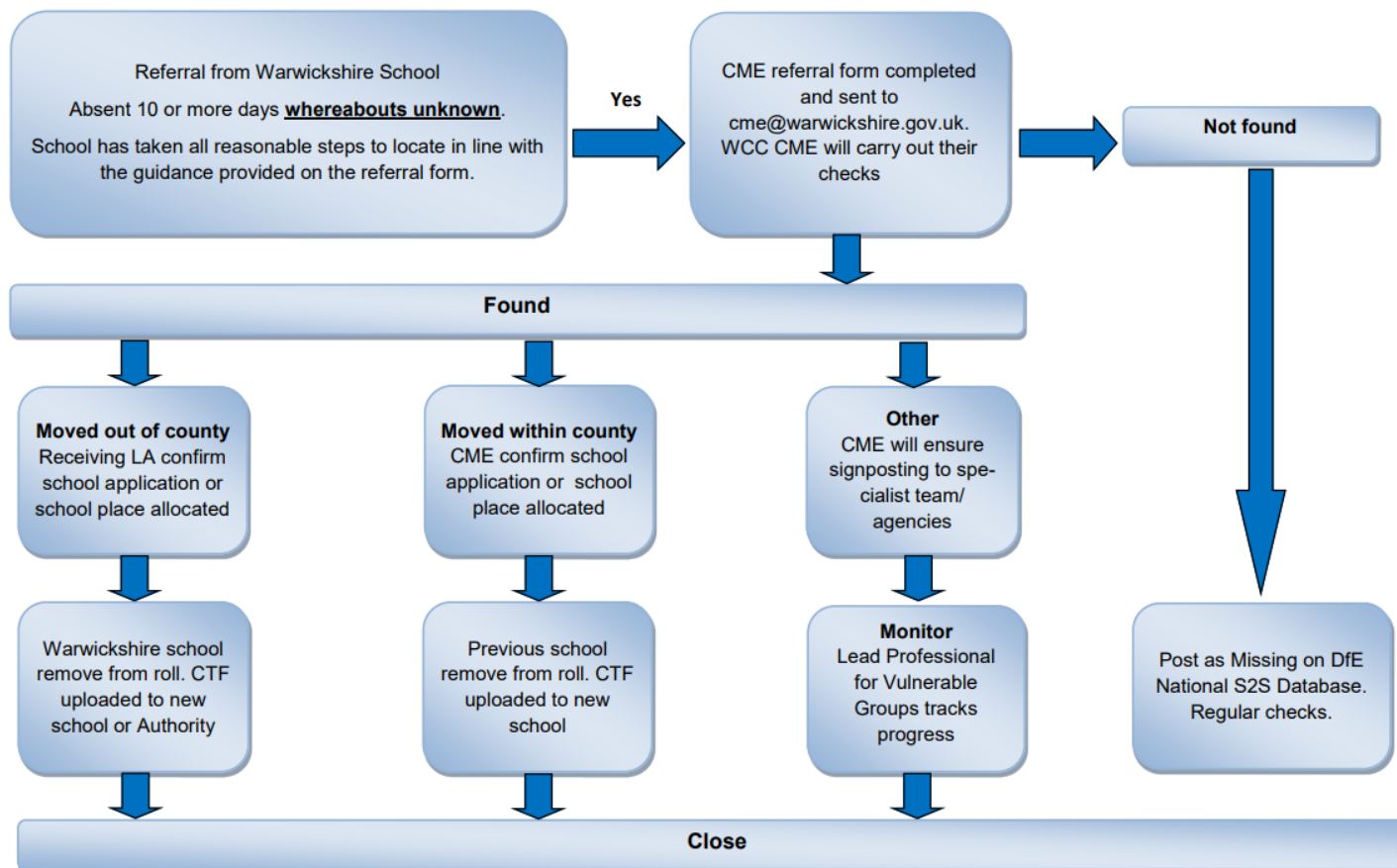
- Quest Safeguarding Policy
- Quest Health & Safety Policy
- Quest Risk Assessment Policy
- Quest Off-site Visits Policy

- MAT Driving at Work Policy

Appendix 1 – Warwickshire Child Missing in Education Protocol

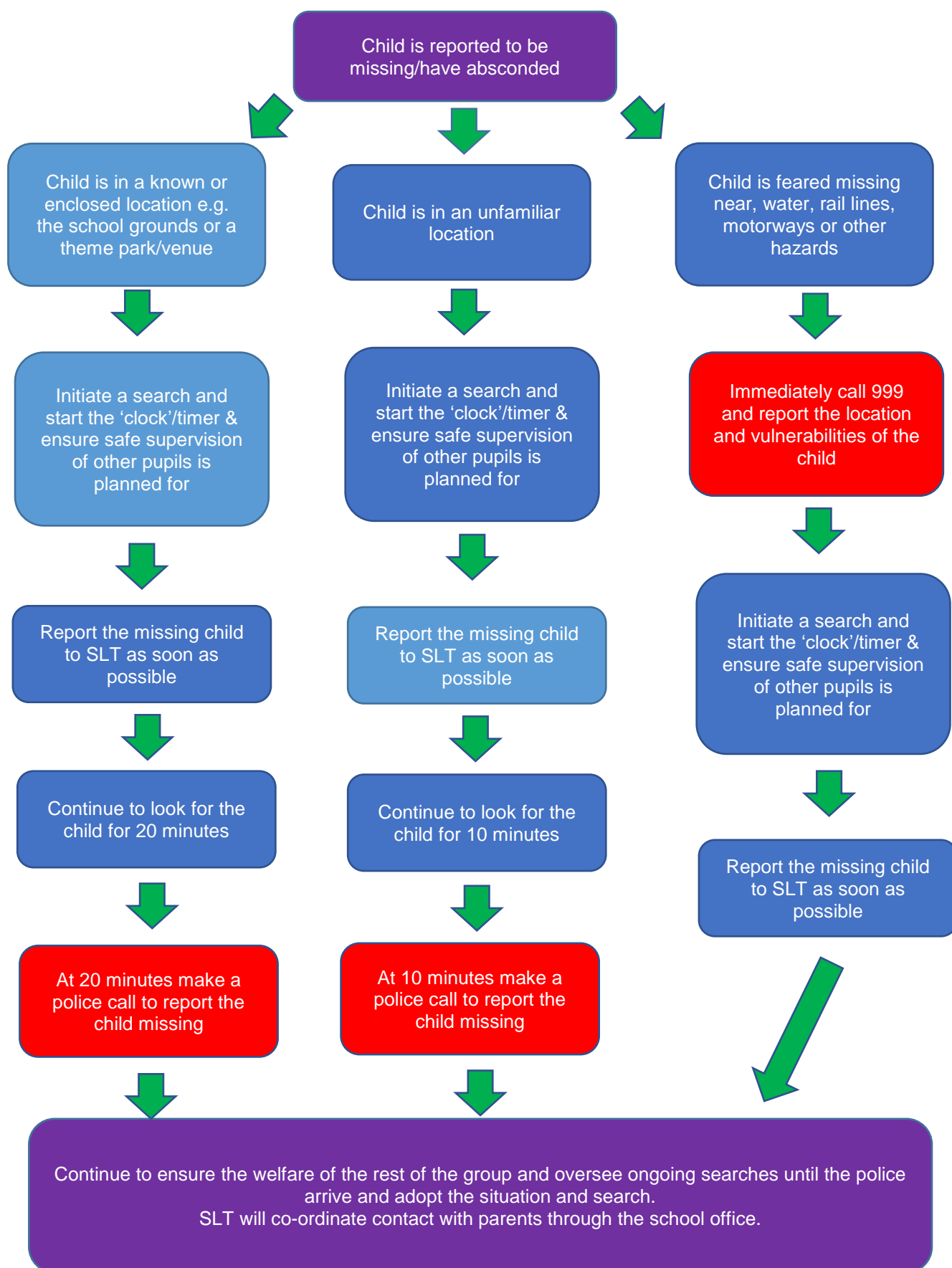
www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrenmissingeducation T. 01926 736323

Children Missing Education Protocol for Warwickshire Pupils



Please Note: Where it is identified that a child may have been off rolled, the previous school will be required to place this child back onto their roll immediately.

Appendix 2 – Academy Escalation Protocol for a Missing Child during the school day



Version	Purpose/Change	Responsibility	Date
4	New section added: (6) If a child refuses to go home Roles updated throughout Updated to align to MAT Driving at Work Policy throughout	Principal	November 22