BRYMORE ACADEMY

MISSING STUDENT POLICY

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Date: October 2025	
Approved by Local Advisory Board:	
Review date: October 2026	
Signature of Chair of Governors	**Signature of Headteacher**

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MISSING FROM HOME AND CARE POLICY

Brymore Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and requires all staff to act in the best interests of our pupils at all times.

1. **Introduction**

   For the purpose of this policy, Brymore Academy has adopted the term 'missing' to describe a child who is absent from their home or boarding accommodation without permission for any length of time where their age, experience, background or ability make this a concern.

   This includes circumstances where:
   - There is identified or imminent risk of the child being exposed to significant harm.
   - The child poses a risk of significant harm to others.
   - The absence is out of character or unusual behaviour.
   - There are indications that the child has already come to harm.
   - The child is not expected to return within reasonable time limits, is not staying at the homes of others known to them or cannot be easily located.

   Missing is not considered the same as 'unauthorised absence', which occurs when a student is absent for a short period of time and/or their whereabouts is known, or thought to be known but unconfirmed; and after a thorough risk assessment and consideration of their care plan, the absence does not raise concern for their immediate safety or that of anyone else. Children who are 'unauthorised absence' should not be reported to the Police and must be the subject of a continuous risk assessment review process while they remain absent. If there is evidence of any of the 'missing' circumstances outlined above being present *or* the child has not returned or been located within **ONE** hour they should be re-categorised as missing. The issue of 'unauthorised absence' is addressed in section 5.4 of this policy document.

2. **Risks, Causes and Consequences**

   Running away is a clear risk factor making young people vulnerable to negative outcomes, both immediately and later in their adult lives. Abuse, exploitation, and risk to life are the most concerning of all dangers that children face. Other immediate risks include becoming a victim or perpetrator of crime and violence, grooming, alcohol /substance misuse, sleeping rough, hunger, thirst, fear, loneliness, accidental death, avoidable self-harm and involvement in gang activity. The risks faced by young people are the same regardless of the duration, frequency or number of runaway incidents. However, younger children and those who runaway more often are more likely to face serious, long-term difficulties including:

   - Loss of potential due to lack of Academy attendance;
   - No means of support or legitimate income - leading to high risk/illegal activities;
   - Possible involvement in criminal activities including prostitution;
   - Drug and alcohol problems;

- Homelessness;
- Illness and disease; and
- Mental health problems.

Running away can be symptomatic of wider problems in a student's life, but whatever the reason, children who decide to run away are unhappy, vulnerable and in danger. Research shows that the main causes may be broadly classified into two inter-related categories: push and pull factors.

Push Factors
Push factors are those circumstances which make remaining at home or in placement dangerous, distressing or unworkable. Examples include:
- Family conflict and domestic violence;
- Long term abuse or maltreatment;
- Grooming, exploitation and teenage pregnancy;
- Relationship problems including arguments, conflicts or bullying;
- Drug and alcohol abuse (parents/carers or child);
- Mental health problems (parents/carers or child).

Where family life is dysfunctional, young people may see running away from a difficult situation to be a positive step towards taking control of an otherwise intolerable situation.

Evidence suggests that children in care homes are three times more likely to runaway than other children. Young people are often unhappy or are influenced by others and do so to fit in with the group. Sometimes young people just feel so fed up that they run away without having particular reasons and without thinking things through at all.

Other reasons may include:
- Inconsistent or ineffective boundaries and expectations;
- Feeling that they are in the wrong placement;
- Being treated as part of a group, rather than an individual;
- Feeling they have no one to talk to or not feeling 'listened to';
- Alleviating boredom - some young people do 'run for fun'; or
- Simply wanting to get away from the expectations, pressure or people they live with 24/7.

Pull factors
Some young people fall in to patterns of going missing when they meet people who show them the attention or affection that they crave. This is a phenomenon widely exploited by individuals seeking to groom young people for sexual exploitation or child trafficking. Such behaviour illustrates the influence of 'pull factors' which induce young people to leave their home or placement. Other pull factors include:

- Running to be near friends or family - especially when a student is in care and there are problems in contact arrangements;

- Young people who seek to exercise control over their lives when they have no power or influence over important decisions such as contact, placement and future plans;
- Individuals may also runaway in order to enjoy some freedom and independence.

The early identification of issues in a child's life, including a first missing incident, provides an opportunity to prevent further risk-taking behaviour and harm. Where root causes are not resolved, the underlying issues continue to grow with the danger that they can spiral out of control.

3. **Roles and Responsibilities**

The designated senior member of staff with overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Policy at Brymore Academy is the **Headteacher.** In the absence of both the **Headteacher** *and* the **Deputy Headteacher**, the **Head of Boarding** will adopt the role of Designated Person.

The role of the **Designated Person** is to:
- Ensure that all pupils, staff, parents and local authorities are aware of Brymore Academy's Policy;
- Take a lead role in managing missing-from-school incidents in accordance with local protocols and Brymore's policies;
- Ensure effective recording, reporting and information-sharing procedures approved within this document are implemented;
- Offer advice, guidance and support to senior staff in circumstances where they may be responding to incidents;
- Co-ordinate and/or host multi-disciplinary meetings in response to incidents e.g. a multi-agency risk management, strategy or planning meeting;
- Monitor, analyse and report on the levels and frequency of incidents to Brymore Academy's Leadership Team, Safeguarding Team and other interested parties, as appropriate;
- Provide advice, guidance and support to staff involved in / affected by incidents;
- Provide advice, guidance and support to pupils involved in / affected by incidents;
- Liaise with Brymore Academy's Safeguarding Team about all safeguarding concerns, as soon as reasonably possible (and in any event within 24 hours of the concern being reported).

It is the responsibility of **all professional staff** to familiarise themselves with the procedures approved within this document; and to report and record any suspicions or concerns to a senior member of staff.

4. **Brymore Procedures**

4.1 **Missing from Primary Term time residence - Brymore Academy**

While Brymore acknowledges that young people may run away for a variety of reasons; experience suggests that the majority of our pupils often do so on impulse. This coupled with their propensity for greater risk-taking

behaviours and lack the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary keep them safe increases the probability of harm to an unacceptable level.

It is imperative that all Brymore staff adopt a pro-active approach to supervising and always monitoring the location and behaviour of young people, particularly within boarding, trips off site and when young people are unsettled. Knowledge of individual young people is all-important in terms of the likelihood of running away and their influence on other more vulnerable children. Information on these issues may be found through a number of sources including a student's pupil profiles, Risk Assessment, Behaviour Management Plan and PSP's.

If a student does attempt to run away the staff response should be influenced by a number of factors, including:

- the age, ability and understanding of student(s) involved;
- the frame of mind, vulnerability and perceived risk to the individual and others;
- location and circumstances of the incident; and
- the number/experience of staff and young people present.

During the Academy day (8.45am - 3.45pm), a senior member of staff (SLT) must be notified either directly or via reception (Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or the Assistant Head Teacher should be notified.)

During Boarding Hours (3.45pm - 8.45am) The Head of Boarding and Deputy Head of Boarding with the students House Parent must be contacted immediately. On being notified of an alleged incident the HOB or DHOB will investigate and then follow the procedure outlined in **Appendix 2.**

Runaway from an Outside Visit/Academy Transport
Outside visits are typically one of the least structured and most unpredictable activities we undertake with young people. Thus, the importance of good planning, preparation and risk assessment should never be underestimated. Staff should also maintain the highest level of vigilance and supervision possible at all times. If a student is believed to have run away from an Academy trip or transport it is important that staff 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 young people. Irrespective of the circumstances, it is essential that senior staff are informed as soon as possible.

On being notified of an alleged incident Senior Staff should establish the facts and follow the procedure outlined in **Appendix 2**.

5. **Return Procedure**

When the student is located, their return to Brymore should be managed by senior staff in order to minimise disruption to other young people and Brymore's protocols followed.

While it may be tempting to label a student as 'the problem', running away should be seen as an indicator of underlying problems which may need further intervention. Where issues external to the placement are trigger factors in a student going missing, staff will need to continue to offer them warm and consistent care when they return. In this instance, it would be counterproductive and detrimental to the student's wellbeing to use their absence as a reason for disengaging from positive and constructive relationships.

Given the significant risks faced by young people who go missing it is critically important that they are given the opportunity to explain why they have runaway so that a plan can be developed with input from the student to reduce the risk.

Irrespective of the circumstances a student's concerns must be taken seriously and addressed where appropriate. The need for safe and reliable care may well be particularly significant for a student who faces pressure to leave their placement as a result of circumstances beyond the control of their carers. In these circumstances, it will be even more important that the child's care plan is kept up to date and includes a very clear strategy to reduce the pressure on the child to leave - with explicit actions for professionals to take in situations where they are absent from their placements.

Interviewing a student on their return from a missing episode is necessary to understand why they went missing or ran away in the first place and will enable appropriate support to be put in place, reducing the occurrence of repeat incidents. There are two stages to the process, the Safe and Well Check and the Return Interview. These are known by a variety of names, but for the purpose of this guidance they will be referred to as such.

6. **Reporting and Recording Incidents**

Whenever a child goes missing from Brymore Academy the Designated Person must ensure that the following individuals and agencies are informed within the timescales specified in this document.

- The senior member of staff leading the search must ensure that the 'missing pupil / person form' (Appendix 1) is completed and handed to police is required.

Appendix 1

Brymore Academy

Missing Pupil/Person Report Form

[Please attach photograph to top right hand corner of the first page of this report]

Missing Pupil	
Full Name including any middle name(s)	
Preferred (Christian) Name	
Male/Female	
Boarding House / House Parent	
Boarding House Contact No	
Home Address	
Date of Birth	
Current Age	
Mobile Number	
Parent/Guardian Information	
Parent/Guardian Contact No	
Country in which Parents reside	
Address	
Address 2 (If applicable)	
Physical Description	
Height	
Build	
Ethnic Appearance	
Eye Colour	
Hair Colour and Style	
Glasses/Contact lenses?	
Distinctive features i.e. Birth Marks	

Clothing	
Please supply as much information as possible regarding the colour, style, fit and brand of:-	
Top/Sweater/Shirt/T Shirt	
Coat/Jacket	
Trousers/shorts/skirt	
Shoes/Trainers/Boots	
Headwear	
Gloves/Scarf	
Other clothing	
Ethnic Origin	
Please tick the following boxes that apply or best describe the missing pupil	
Colour	
White	
Non White	
Unknown	
Ethnic Appearance	
White European	
Dark European	
African Caribbean	
Asian	
Oriental	
Arab	
Unknown	
Identification	
Valid Passport? The Overseas House Parent holds copies of passports of all international students	
Passport Number?	
Expiry Date	
Country of Issue	
Location of Passport	
Medication	
Does the missing pupil have any medical conditions?	
Do they take regular medication (including short term if known)?	
Do they have their medication with them?	

Most Recent Contact	
What are the circumstances of this person going missing?	
Where were they last seen?	
At what time were they last seen?	
With whom were they last seen?	
In what temperament were they when last they were seen?	
Classification of Risk	
At the time of completing this report, please mark ONE of the following three boxes	
Low Risk There is no apparent risk to the pupil or the public	
Medium Risk The risk posed is likely to place the pupil in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others	
High Risk The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the pupil may be in danger through their own vulnerability or may have been the victim of a serious crime	

Other Factors

Is there any history or circumstances that suggest the pupil is likely to cause self-harm?	
Is there any suggestion that the pupil may be the subject of a crime in progress i.e. abduction?	
Is the pupil particularly vulnerable (ie due to their age)?	
Has the pupil been the subject of bullying?	
Have they previously disappeared and been exposed to harm?	
Where should the pupil have been going?	
Are there any indications to suggest that preparations have been made in advance of their disappearance?	

Transport

Does the pupil have a driving licence?	
Do they have access to a car, motorbike or other vehicle?	
Details of next scheduled flight (if known/applicable)	

Other Information

Please note any additional information you feel may be of use during the investigation	
Name/Position of Person Completing Report	
Signature	
Time	
Date	

Appendix 2

<u>Missing Student procedure and responsibilities</u>

Unless a student is directly observed leaving site ensure thorough checks are made of the following areas:

1) Check all exeat boards and contact House Parent and Matrons / Farm / Gardens to gather any relevant information.
2) Attempt to contact the student via their mobile phone.
3) Speak and gather information from close friends / dorm mates
4) Search the students boarding house first (then remaining boarding houses), including bathrooms and dormitories (under beds and in wardrobes)

   - Academy buildings including Dining Room, Kitchen, Meeting Room, Classrooms etc.
   - Other site buildings/areas including Vehicles, Sports Hall, Playing Field, Farm, Gardens

If the student is located on site, this would be considered **'out of bounds'** and should be recorded and reported as such.

If the student is not located during a site search, immediate and urgent actions must be undertaken in order to locate and safeguard the child.

5) **Senior member** of staff to contact (or designate to a member of staff) the local police (111) and individuals parents.

6) Senior member of staff to organise and coordinate (with a designated point of contact) a local search covering nearby roads and villages. Staff involved in a search should:
   - Carry a mobile phone that is switched on and set to ring rather than silent/vibrate
   - Possess and carry their Staff ID Card
   - Be advised NOT to 'chase' young people near roads or junctions
   - Individuals searching should do so in pairs.

7) If the student is located during a local search, staff should endeavour to observe and if possible apprehend the individual and return them to site.

8) Following the student's return to site the Senior member of staff is to contact Parents/Carers and Police providing the relevant information.

Following notification of the incident and failure to locate the individual(s) an Officer of Somerset's Police Force may visit site to gather relevant information including personal details and a photograph.

1) The senior member of staff should ensure the Pupil Missing Form has been completed and passed to the police and continue to act as the point of contact until the individual has been located and returned.

On returning to Brymore, the student should be offered a positive and warm response. It is also important to establish what if any motive there was for the behaviour in order identify and address any potential difficulties the student may be experiencing, thus minimising the risk of future incidents. The student should also be offered both a 'Safe and Welfare Check' by the Police and a 'Return Interview' by an independent person.