



**OXFORD
International
College**

A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

MISSING STUDENTS POLICY

POLICY INTENDED FOR:	Staff
CATEGORY:	Safeguarding
POLICY IMPLEMENTED BY:	Principal
POLICY MONITORED BY:	Deputy Principal Pastoral, DSL
REVIEWED BY:	Principal
CONSULTATION WITH:	Deputy Principal Pastoral, DSL
REVIEW DATES:	August 2024 August 2025
FUTURE REVIEW:	August 2026

The Three Pillars

The three pillars of Oxford International College (OIC) are:

- Academic Excellence
- Personal Development
- Career and University Pathways

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AIM

OIC is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. As such, it is the college policy to actively investigate, and provide effective support and interventions, to students who are reported as 'missing' or who have taken leave without appropriate permissions.

Additionally, we will work to reduce the incidence of students going missing and the risks associated with young people who go missing.

This policy is consistent with the legal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of students as described in section 175 of the Education Act 2002, Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2025, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and DfE guidance Children Missing Education 2016.

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a student going missing in future.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for all staff, including volunteers, who work at the college about the college approach to managing incidents of missing students and students who take leave without permission.

It should be remembered that all our students are international and that in our context international students are a vulnerable group, who are often isolated from their friends and family who may be thousands of miles away. International students may have an imperfect command of English and/or be unfamiliar with British customs. As such, information requests from the families of international students should be dealt with particularly sympathetically; as persons may not appreciate the provisions of the Data Protection Act, or the College position on confidentiality.

RESPONSIBILITY

Ultimate responsibility for this policy and procedure lies with the Principal. The College has a legal responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its students, staff and visitors and aims to provide a healthy and safe environment that promotes the welfare of all.

All staff and students have a legal responsibility to take reasonable care for their own safety and for that of others.

All members of staff including volunteers, but specifically those in the boarding and pastoral teams, must be aware of the policy, procedures, and sanctions applicable to incidences of missing students or students who take leave without permission and apply them accordingly.

MITIGATION AND MONITORING

Academic, Attendance Officers, Boarding and all other staff work closely together to monitor and mitigate against cases of students going missing.

The risk of students going missing is monitored and mitigated through:

- Clear expectations of sign in and registration detailed to the students and reiterated consistently by all staff throughout the year.
- The importance of staff knowing where students are at all times being made clear to all students regardless of age.
- Clear induction to the context and specific risks of Oxford as a city centre as well as travel beyond Oxford.
- Clear understanding by all staff of the importance of prompt, accurate and efficient registration to reduce the time in which students may be unaccounted for.
- Clear exeat policy which students, staff, parents and guardians understand the importance of.
- Efficient and accurate sign in and out procedures of all sites that are consistently used and monitored by staff.
- Follow up with students via the behaviour policy for any students who are not following the expectations outlined by school policy.

Attendance officers will monitor daily absence reports. Any student who has had unauthorised null attendance for two consecutive days, will have a Missing Student note raised on CPOMS and the Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL), Deputy DSL, the Principal, Vice Principal Pastoral and Director of Boarding will be notified by e-mail. The relevant subsequent missing student protocols will be followed.

THRESHOLDS

There are three thresholds which allow for different procedures to be adopted in the case of missing students and students who are absent without leave. The three thresholds are under 16s, under 18s (including Over 18s living in the same boarding house) and over 18s living in the College 18+ accommodation or independently. In most cases staff will be dealing with students who are absent without proper authorisation.

Cases in which students are determined to be 'missing' are rare, however, all staff at Oxford International College are trained to be conscious that 'it could happen here' and to be mindful of this in their practice.

In order to ascertain which procedure should be followed when a student is missing or absent without permission, the senior person coordinating the college response should determine the age of the student and assess the risk. Staff should be aware that they do not need to wait until the threshold to report any students they have concerns about.

A number of contextual factors will be taken into account, including:

- Is the student despondent or mentally or physically disabled?
- How old is the student?
- Is the student experiencing academic, personal, or financial problems?

- Has the student disappeared before?
- Does the student have a known drug and/or alcohol problem?
- Has the student received any threats or warnings?
- What was the student's lifestyle? Does the student have a criminal record?
- Did the student or perpetrator leave a note?
- Possible threat factors: time of day; darkness; weather conditions; known local concerns.

OVER 18S LIVING IN 18+ ACCOMMODATION OR INDEPENDENTLY

For the purposes of this policy an over 18 student living in 18+ accommodation or independently is defined as missing when they have been absent for more than 48 hours without proper authorisation or notification and where all other avenues of information gathering about their location and well-being have been exhausted. Students living in independent accommodation are defined as missing if they have been absent from college for 2 consecutive days and there has been no response to calls and emails.

Staff will review contextual factors and should not wait for 48 hours to start mitigating actions if there are concerns.

These students are adults, and have the right to be treated as such. Students who are over 18 have the right to privacy. Their parents, guardians, next of kin, members of staff or fellow students do not have an automatic right to know their whereabouts. Indeed, to reveal an over 18 student's whereabouts to any of these parties, without the permission of the student concerned, may well be a breach of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that came into effect in the UK on 25 May 2018.

It is important to remember that some students do not wish to have contact with their immediate family for personal reasons; as adults, this position must be respected. It is a serious matter to disclose personal details of a student to a third party, even if it is an over 18 student's next of kin.

Personal details should only be disclosed with the permission of the Principal, Deputy Principal Pastoral or Director of Boarding. It is important to remember that any person who decides to breach confidentiality must be able to justify their action in terms of the prevention of serious harm, or a genuine and reasonable belief that serious harm to the student might be prevented by such disclosure.

UNDER 18S (INCLUDING OVER 18S LIVING IN THE SAME BOARDING HOUSE)

For the purposes of this policy an under 18 student (including over 18s living in the same boarding house) is defined as missing where they fail to return to the Boarding House at curfew time, including on the day the student is expected back from an exeat, or if living in independent accommodation, are absent from College for 2 consecutive days with no reply received from their parent/guardian stating that they are aware of their whereabouts.

For students in independent accommodation the parent/guardian should be contacted directly if there has been no explanation of the absence by the end of morning on the first day of absence.

UNDER 16S

For the purposes of this policy an under 16 student is missing when they do not appear at their required times of registration during the College teaching day or curfew times after the end of the College teaching day, including on the day the student is expected back from an exeat, or if living in Independent Accommodation, are absent from College for 2 consecutive days with no reply received from their parent/guardian stating that they are aware of their whereabouts.

For students in independent accommodation the parent/guardian should be contacted directly as soon as possible (and at the latest by the end of the morning on the first day of absence) if there has been no explanation of the absence.

ALL STUDENTS: GENERAL PROCEDURE UPON DISCOVERY THAT A STUDENT IS MISSING

The safety of the student is paramount. The absence of a student from the College for a prolonged period, or an extremely anxious enquiry from a friend or relative, may give rise to concerns about the student's safety.

These concerns may be particularly acute if it is known that the student is suffering from a health problem. It is essential that the member of staff dealing with the enquiry checks with all relevant sources of information to ensure that they have a full picture of the circumstances before escalating to senior management or any third parties, such as the police. Since the control of information is vital, a designated person should be identified, regulate the flow of information to appropriate individuals and/or agencies bearing in mind the statutory obligations outlined above.

OIC recognises that whilst the statutory timelines are longer, specifically for our older students, internally we ask that all students are accounted for within a 30 minute window and missing student steps should be followed as outlines below after that point.

The first step must always be to confirm that the student is missing using the thresholds laid out above. Having confirmed that a student is missing, all other avenues for information gathering about their location and well-being should be exhausted, if not already. Investigate available sources of information such as:

- Acquiring information through ISAMS to determine last time seen in residence, personal contact details, authorised absences, check exeat system etc.
- The student file (to determine whether confidential information has been stored on file) and other relevant information, e.g. health issues, etc.
- Speak to the Deputy Principal Pastoral, Director of Boarding, DSL, Boarding Managers, House Parents, Maintenance Staff, etc.
- Obtain a photograph (from ISAMS) and familiarise yourself as to what the student looks like.
- Ask all staff on duty in the Boarding House if they know any reason for absence.
- Contact the student via teams via call or using the 'urgent' chat function.
- Obtain the student or friend's number and make direct contact if possible.
- If appropriate ask friends to try to make contact using phone or social media as available.
- Ask other students if they are aware of any reason for the absence - though their information should only be taken as a guide to be followed up, and certainly not as the only evidence. Obtain mobile phone numbers to make direct contact if possible.
- Begin a search of the Boarding House in other rooms, as it may be that the student is with a friend and has not told anyone.
- If appropriate visit private residence if student is in independent accommodation.

- Ask duty staff in other areas, to check their areas and ask their students for any information (i.e. for them to do what you have done within the House).
- Check other areas of the college, e.g. prayer room, Common room, IT room, etc.

If none of this produces any information and all avenues of information have been reasonably exhausted, then the on-call Designated Senior Lead should then decide to enquire/inform the parents or guardians of the missing student (if they are not already aware as they may be, particularly for students in independent accommodation) and/or inform the police. The on-call Designated Senior Lead will also determine who is to make contact.

The member of staff designated as leading the response should maintain all notes, records, and recordings of telephone conversations on CPOMs.

REPORTING A STUDENT MISSING TO THE POLICE

Once all the above avenues has been exhausted, the decision will be made by the designated lead member of staff (usually SLT or DSL on call) to inform the police.

When reporting a student missing the police will ask questions. The questions may be as follows so please ensure you have these details at hand when speaking to the police:

- All personal details known to you, including their full name, date of birth, address.
- Any details relating to the disappearance; when you or others last had contact with the individual, what they were wearing when they disappeared and any other details relating to possible reasons behind their disappearance.
- Any factors that might put the student at risk. This might be age, physical or mental health issues or perhaps the individual may have received bad news or been in emotional distress.

The police may ask for various personal items belonging to the missing individual. This may include mobile phones, diaries and laptop computers. The police may also want to visit the accommodation and carry out a routine search and ask for a picture of the missing student.

IN THE EVENT THAT A 'MISSING' STUDENT RETURNS TO COLLEGE

If/when the student returns, Boarding Staff must telephone the relevant member of the SLT at most appropriate time, e.g., if student returns at 3am, inform the relevant member of the SLT at 9am the following morning, but this is very much at the discretion of the SLT staff member. The police should be informed as soon as the student returns.

When the student returns an interview should be completed, documenting where the student has been, who they have been staying with, reasons for being absent, etc.

Where appropriate, and taking into account the welfare and wellbeing state of the individual student, sanctions may be applied in line with the College's behavioural policy.

Staff must maintain all notes, records, and recordings of conversations and telephone calls.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Staff cannot and should not promise total confidentiality. All staff must follow our Confidentiality Policy.

FOLLOW-ON PROCEDURES

Based on the return interview, students will usually be required to speak to a member of the pastoral/safeguarding team regarding their being missing. This team will consider what support the student requires upon returning to the college in accordance with the 'Working Together' guidance. Follow up will be in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and the Student Behaviour Policy, as well as any guidance from local agencies.

Completion of the 'missing' student procedures is onerous. Such cases usually arise out-of-hours and typically require a very labour-intensive approach. The college reserves the right to recover unnecessary costs from students or their parents. As such, House Parents must outline the procedures for exeat and the consequences of being absent without leave during the students' induction.

STUDENTS MISSING FROM EDUCATION

In addition to following this policy for unexplained absences reaching the defined threshold, OIC is obliged to notify the local authority when a CSA student fails to attend college regularly or is absent without leave for more than 10 college days (continuous). Similarly in the case of sponsored students on a Visa, the College will need to notify UKVI when the student is absent without leave for more than 10 college days (continuous). In such cases, students will have their sponsorship withdrawn meaning that their visa will be curtailed. Our Attendance Policy details our processes for monitoring and following up student attendance.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be evaluated and reviewed annually. It may also be reviewed in the light of new legislation or any incident that may relate to this policy.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about Missing Students at OIC please speak with the Deputy Principal Pastoral or DSL.

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