Missing Child Procedure Policy 2027

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Policy Responsibility: **Sam Gibbs (Principal)**
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Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): ***Sam Gibbs***
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL): ***Jess Eaton***
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PERFORMERS THEATRE COMPANY

INTRODUCTION

This procedure should be read alongside the Performers Theatre Company Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Child Collection Policy and Health and Safety Policy.

Performers Theatre Company is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in our care. Whilst every reasonable measure is taken to supervise students appropriately, there may be occasions where a child or young person cannot be located during a session, rehearsal, performance, event or trip.

A missing child incident must always be treated seriously.

Staff should remain calm, act promptly and follow this procedure without delay. The safety of the child is the priority at all times.

At Performers Theatre Company, we combine strong relationships with clear, consistent expectations to ensure all students are safe.

"We are kind, but we are not negotiable when it comes to safety."

DEFINITION OF A MISSING CHILD

For the purpose of this procedure, a child or young person will be considered missing if:

- Their whereabouts are unknown.
- They are absent from their expected location without explanation.
- They cannot be located after reasonable and immediate checks have been completed.
- Staff have concerns for their immediate safety or welfare.

This procedure applies to all activities organised, delivered or supervised by Performers Theatre Company, including classes, rehearsals, performances, productions, examinations, trips, workshops, festivals and other organised events.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

If a child is believed to be missing:

Step 1 - Remain Calm
The staff member identifying the concern should remain calm and immediately notify:
- The Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Sam Gibbs.
- The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), Jess Eaton, if the DSL is unavailable.

Where neither the DSL nor DDSL is immediately available, the most senior member of staff present must coordinate the response and contact emergency services where necessary.

Attempts to contact the safeguarding leads must not delay urgent action.

Staff should not assume the child has gone home, moved to another area or is with another group without confirmation.

Step 2 - Conduct Immediate Checks
Staff should immediately check:
- Toilets and changing areas, observing appropriate privacy and safeguarding arrangements.
- Waiting areas.
- Practice rooms and performance spaces.
- Outdoor areas.
- Reception areas.
- Any known locations the child may have accessed.

Staff must also:
- Check the attendance register or relevant sign-in record.
- Establish when and where the child was last seen.
- Check whether the child has been collected by an authorised adult.
- Check whether the child has formal permission to travel independently, in accordance with the Child Collection Policy.

The child's friends, siblings or group members may be asked if they know the child's whereabouts.

A headcount should be completed where appropriate.

Step 3 - Coordinate a Structured Search

The DSL, DDSL or designated senior member of staff will coordinate a structured search of the venue or site.

Staff should:
- Search designated areas systematically.
- Remain in communication with the search coordinator.
- Ensure remaining students continue to be supervised appropriately.
- Avoid creating unnecessary alarm amongst students or attendees.
- Inform relevant venue staff where appropriate.

The search should be conducted promptly and thoroughly.

Staff must not leave other children unsupervised in order to assist with the search.

Where the circumstances indicate immediate danger, the search must not delay contacting emergency services.

ESCALATION PROCEDURE

If a child cannot be located following immediate checks, the DSL or senior member of staff must promptly assess the circumstances and contact the police without delay where the child's whereabouts remain unknown or there are concerns for their safety.

Staff must not wait for a fixed period before contacting the police.

Where there is an immediate risk of harm, call **999**.

Parents/Carers
The child's parent or carer must be contacted promptly.

Information obtained should include:
- Whether the child may have left the venue.
- Any known destinations.
- Relevant medical information.
- Any additional safeguarding concerns.

Contacting parents or carers must not delay emergency action or police notification where required.

Police Notification
If the child remains unaccounted for following immediate checks, or there are concerns regarding their safety, vulnerability or welfare, the police must be contacted without delay.

Call 999 where there is immediate danger or an emergency.

Staff should provide:
- Child's name.
- Age.

- Physical description.
- Clothing worn.
- Last known location.
- Time last seen.
- Any relevant medical or safeguarding information.
- Details of searches and checks already completed.

The decision to contact the police should always err on the side of caution.

Staff must follow any instructions provided by the police or emergency services.

DURING EVENTS, PERFORMANCES, TRIPS AND OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

Where a child or young person goes missing during an event, performance, trip, workshop, festival or any activity away from the usual teaching environment:

- The Principal (DSL), DDSL or designated senior member of staff must be informed immediately.
- Staff and volunteers will be deployed to conduct a coordinated search of designated areas.
- Venue staff, security personnel or event management teams will be informed where appropriate.
- Exits and access points may be monitored where practical and lawful.
- Parents/carers will be informed promptly.
- Police will be contacted without delay if the child cannot be located following immediate checks or there are concerns regarding their safety or welfare.
- The designated chaperone or group leader must check the attendance register and account for all other children while the search is coordinated.
- Staff must ensure that the supervision of other children is maintained throughout the incident.

Care must be taken not to disclose unnecessary personal information when communicating with members of the public. The welfare of the child remains the primary consideration at all times.

WHEN THE CHILD IS FOUND

Once the child has been located:

- The DSL or senior member of staff will immediately assess the child's welfare.
- The circumstances surrounding the incident will be established.
- Parents/carers will be informed immediately if they have not already been notified.
- Appropriate support will be provided to the child.
- Any police, venue staff or external agencies involved in the search must be informed that the child has been located.
- Any necessary medical assistance must be arranged.

The child must not be reprimanded or questioned in a manner that causes unnecessary distress. Staff should establish the circumstances calmly and sensitively.

Where safeguarding concerns exist, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and external agencies may be consulted where necessary.

The child must not be released to an unauthorised person following the incident.

RECORDING AND REPORTING

Every missing child incident must be recorded.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure:

- A Safeguarding Concern / Incident Report Form is completed.
- The timeline of events is documented.
- Actions taken are recorded.
- Any conversations with parents, police or external agencies are recorded.
- Any lessons learned are identified.
- The time the child was first identified as missing is recorded.
- The time the child was located is recorded.
- The times of contact with parents, police and other relevant agencies are recorded.

Records must be factual, accurate and completed as soon as reasonably practicable.

Records will be stored securely in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and GDPR and Data Protection Policy.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All Staff

All staff have a responsibility to:

- Remain vigilant.
- Report concerns immediately.
- Follow this procedure.
- Assist with searches when directed.
- Continue supervising other children appropriately.
- Act immediately where a child is at risk, even if a safeguarding lead is not available.

Designated Safeguarding Lead - Sam Gibbs

The DSL is responsible for:

- Coordinating the response, venue staff and event personnel.
- Assessing safeguarding risks.
- Liaising with parents/carers.
- Contacting external agencies where required.
- Maintaining accurate records.
- Reviewing incidents and identifying improvements.
- Managing communications.
- Ensuring appropriate follow-up actions are completed.

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead - Jess Eaton

The DDSL will support the response and assume safeguarding coordination responsibilities where the DSL is unavailable.

The DDSL will ensure that appropriate action is taken, relevant individuals are informed and safeguarding records are completed.

Designated Senior Member of Staff

Where neither the DSL nor DDSL is immediately available, the most senior member of staff present must coordinate the immediate response.

This includes:

- Ensuring immediate checks and searches are undertaken.
- Maintaining appropriate supervision of other children.
- Contacting emergency services where necessary.
- Informing parents or carers as appropriate.
- Notifying the DSL or DDSL as soon as possible.

- Ensuring the incident is documented and handed over for safeguarding review.

The absence of a safeguarding lead must never delay urgent action.

REVIEW FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

Following any missing child incident, the Principal (DSL) will review:

- How the incident occurred.
- The effectiveness of the response.
- Any safeguarding concerns identified.
- Whether procedures require amendment.
- Whether supervision, attendance or collection arrangements need to be strengthened.
- Whether relevant risk assessments require updating.

The aim of any review is to improve practice and reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

Relevant lessons learned will be communicated to staff where appropriate, while maintaining confidentiality.

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

This procedure should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Child Collection Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- GDPR and Data Protection Policy.
- Core Risk Assessment.
- Event Risk Assessments Policy.
- Student Code of Conduct.