

OXBRIDGE GUARDIANS

## ABSENT OR MISSING STUDENT POLICY

This policy is designed to give all staff, host families and schools a clear framework of action in the case of an absent or missing student. This is to minimise risk to the child and to ensure they are located in the quickest and safest way possible.

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Date Approved: 17/08/2018  
Date Reviewed: 17/08/2019  
Next Review: 17/08/2020

Related Documents:  
Safeguarding and Child Protection  
Policy  
Anti-Radicalisation Policy  
Bullying and E-Safety Policy

# Oxbridge Guardians

## Absent or Missing Child or Young Person Policy

### Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Safeguarding Statement .....                               | 3  |
| Policy Aims .....  | 3  |
| Policy Background .....                                    | 4  |
| Definitions .....  | 5  |
| Absent .....   | 5  |
| Missing Person .....                                       | 5  |
| Prevention.....  | 5  |
| Procedure to follow upon report of an absent student ..... | 6  |
| Stage 1.....   | 6  |
| Stage 2.....   | 6  |
| Stage 3.....   | 7  |
| Stage 4.....   | 8  |
| Stage 5.....   | 8  |
| Stage 6.....   | 8  |
| Procedure to follow upon report of a missing student ..... | 8  |
| Stage 1.....   | 8  |
| Stage 2.....   | 8  |
| Stage 3.....   | 8  |
| Stage 4.....   | 9  |
| Stage 5.....   | 9  |
| Contact with the Press and Media.....                      | 10 |
| Procedure once the Child or Young Person is found .....    | 10 |

## Safeguarding Statement

Oxbridge Guardians is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, homestays and any individual working with the organisation to share this commitment. Every young person in the care of Oxbridge Guardians should feel safe and protected from any form of abuse or neglect.

Oxbridge Guardians believe that:

- Guardians and Homestays can contribute to the prevention of abuse.
- All children have the right to be protected from harm.
- Children need support which matches their individual needs, including those who may have experienced abuse.
- Children need to be safe and feel safe in school and when staying with their guardian or homestay.

## Policy Aims

- This policy is designed to give all members of the Oxbridge Guardians team a clear list of guidelines in case of an absent or missing child or young person.
- The purpose of the policy is to help locate the child or young person by the quickest and safest means possible and return them to an approved location.
- Oxbridge Guardians will respond appropriately to reports of unauthorised absence and missing children and young people without delay. After each report, Oxbridge Guardians will assess and update if necessary the procedure to minimise any future risk.
- When a child or young person is absent or missing they may be at risk from all forms of serious harm including abuse, exploitation, radicalisation and trafficking. The Oxbridge Guardians Safeguarding and Child Protection clearly states our commitment to protect children and young people from these risks.
- In any case where there is potential that the child or young person may have been trafficked, exploited, radicalised or involved in any form of criminal activity Oxbridge Guardians will immediately contact the Police and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- In accordance with the National Policing Improvement Agency, 'Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2013' this policy will help determine whether a student is absent or missing.
- The policy provides a model and framework for response and dealing with incidents dependent on the risk posed, and encourages partnership working with other agencies to reduce the number of recorded incidents of missing or absent people.

## Policy Background

Oxbridge Guardians will fulfil local and national responsibilities as laid out in the following documents:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education – Statutory guidance for schools and colleges, September 2016  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/550511/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550511/Keeping_children_safe_in_education.pdf)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children, March 2015 \(Statutory guidance\)](#)
- [Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care – January 2014](#)
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused – March 2015
- [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/419604/What\\_to\\_do\\_if\\_you\\_re\\_worried\\_a\\_child\\_is\\_being\\_abused.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What_to_do_if_you_re_worried_a_child_is_being_abused.pdf)
- [Children missing education – statutory guidance for local authorities – September 2016](#)
- HSE Health & Safety Executive: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) information line: 0845 345 0055
- 5 Step to Risk Assessment leaflet available to download from:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm)
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA): [www.rospa.com](http://www.rospa.com)
- Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2013:  
<http://library.college.police.uk/docs/college-of-policing/Interim-Missing-Persons-Guidance-2013.pdf>
- ACPO (2009). Collection of Missing Persons Data: A code of practice for the Police Service on collecting and sharing data in missing persons with public authorities:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/243597/9787777146872.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/243597/9787777146872.pdf)
- ACPO Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (2nd Edition):  
<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/>
- Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012). Briefing for the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education, on the emerging findings of the Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, with a special focus on children in care:  
[https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Accelerated\\_Report\\_for\\_the\\_Secretary\\_of\\_State\\_for\\_Education.pdf](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Accelerated_Report_for_the_Secretary_of_State_for_Education.pdf)

## Definitions

**Absent:** “A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.”

**Missing Person:** “Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.”

The `absent` category should comprise cases in which people are not presently where they are supposed to be and there is no apparent risk. `Absent` cases should not be ignored, and must be monitored over periods of time with consideration given to escalating to `missing` if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk.

## Prevention

In order to minimise the risk of children and young people going missing whilst under the care of Oxbridge Guardians (for example at half term, exeat or during a suspension/expulsion) we undertake to put the following measure in place as far as is practical:

- Ensure premises that children and young people in our care are staying at when not at school (for example when staying with a Homestay) are secure and take steps to prevent unauthorised persons entering these premises.
- Ensure that children and young people are appropriately supervised according to their age when visiting unfamiliar areas.
- Assessing a child and young person’s stage of development to ensure the required level of supervision is in place.
- Educating children and young people in our care about how to keep safe.
- Advise children and young people about what to do if they find themselves lost.
- With appropriate parental consent, have an up-to-date photograph of each child and young person under Oxbridge Guardians’ care.

## Procedure to follow upon report of an absent student

The Director, Helen Wu, has ultimate responsibility for overseeing the report of any unauthorised absence or missing student.

### **Director – Helen Wu**

From UK: 07515 494045 (English and Mandarin)

International: + 44 7515 494 045 (English and Mandarin)

*Alternatively*

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead – Stephanie Gilbert**

From UK: 07837778298 (English only)

International: + 44 7837778298 (English only)

The senior member of staff on duty at the time of the report is responsible for ensuring the completion of all the necessary stages of the following procedure upon the report of an unauthorised absence or missing student.

It is important to remain calm and to follow the appropriate steps without delay.

### **Stage 1**

Complete the 'Absent or Missing Student Risk Assessment' (paper version available Appendix 1) (<https://podio.com/webforms/20205240/1376094>) to determine if the child or young person is absent or missing. The absence of a child or young person together with full notes of any decision taken must be recorded in their file.

### **Stage 2**

If it is decided that the child or young person is absent then the senior member of staff should ensure the following is carried out:

- If appropriate, review the flight and airport transfer details by communicating with the airline and/or airport and also the transfer company assigned to deliver or collect the child or young person.
- Try to contact the child or young person by phone (leave a message if no answer), text, email and social media. This must be repeated every 20 minutes.
- Make contact with the child or young person's School to collate any relevant information about their whereabouts. Explain that Oxbridge Guardians will be responsible for leading the search and ask that the School work with you to manage the situation. If appropriate, you may wish to request that the School organises a search of the grounds and the child or young person's bedroom. You may also wish to ask the School to speak with the friends of the child or young person to see if they have any information about their whereabouts.
- Make contact with the child or young person's parent(s) to collate any relevant information

about their whereabouts.

- Make contact with the child or young person's agent (if appropriate) to collate any relevant information about their whereabouts.
- If appropriate, request that the Homestay conduct a search of the house and garden. It may also be appropriate to ask the Homestay to conduct a search of the immediate local area.
- Review information held on the Oxbridge Guardians database about the child or young person to ascertain if there is any further relevant information about their possible whereabouts. E.g. any external clubs etc. they may belong to.
- Every hour the absent student risk assessment should be reassessed by a senior staff member (DSL or ADSL) to monitor the status of the absence, and whether to escalate this to 'missing'. This escalation would only be put into place after consideration of outside factors (previous conduct, contact with parents/school/host family, informal communication). The DSL or ADSL will continue to monitor if the situation is escalated.

### Stage 3

Any member of Oxbridge Guardians staff or Homestay team may report a child or young person as absent or missing to the police if there is a genuine concern for their immediate safety. Following a risk assessment the local police force will record a report of absent or missing if there are grounds to do so. In cases of missing children or young people, the police will work cooperatively with Children's Social Care staff during the enquiry. In order to make a police report the following information will be asked:

- Where you are and where the missing person was last seen.
- Who is the missing person's next of kin.
- A detailed description of the missing person, including age, sex and as much information about their clothing as possible. N.B. the Oxbridge Guardians office will hold a copy of the child or young person's recent photograph which can be e-mailed to the police.
- The circumstances of the incident, including anything that may have triggered the disappearance,
- How long the missing person has been missing, where they were last seen, if there was an argument.
- Who is looking for the child or young person, where were they last seen, do they have a mobile with them, what is the number.
- The police may also ask more detailed questions, all information about the child or young person can be found in the Oxbridge Guardians' electronic database or in the individual hard copy file.

**Stage 4**

The senior member of staff handling the incident must inform the parent(s) of any report made to the police. The parent(s) should be updated every 3 hours with any developments. The senior member of staff should ensure that they are contactable at all times. If possible they should have access to a landline and a mobile telephone number and use one for outgoing and one for incoming calls.

**Stage 5**

The senior member of staff handling the incident must inform the child or young person's school of any report made to the police, as the school may remain with the overall duty of care. The school should be updated every 3 hours with any developments.

**Stage 6**

All unauthorised Absence and Missing Student reports must be reviewed daily until the incident is resolved.

## **Procedure to follow upon report of a missing student**

Oxbridge Guardians Director, Helen Wu has ultimate responsibility for overseeing the report of any unauthorised absence or missing student.

The senior member of staff on duty at the time of the report is responsible for ensuring the completion of all the necessary stages of the following procedure upon the report of an unauthorised absence or missing student.

It is important to remain calm and to follow the appropriate steps without delay.

**Stage 1**

Complete an Oxbridge Guardians 'Absent or Missing Student Risk Assessment' to determine if the child or young person is absent or missing.

**Stage 2**

If it is decided that the child or young person is missing, it should be immediately reported to the police by telephoning either 101 or 999.

If it is known that there is an immediate danger to the child or young person then 999 should be called in order to receive an emergency response.

**Stage 3**

The senior member of staff handling the incident will ensure that the following information is gathered for the initial police report. All information about the child or young person can be found in the Oxbridge Guardians electronic database or in the individual hard copy file.

- What is the name, date of birth and nationality of the child or young person?
- What does the child or young person look like and what were they last seen wearing?
- When were they last seen and who were they with?
- What is the specific concern for the child or young person?



- Is the child or young person likely to be subjected to crime, become a victim of abuse or at risk of sexual exploitation?
- Is the child or young person likely to attempt suicide?
- Is the child or young person likely to pose a danger to other people?
- What actions have been completed so far to locate the child or young person?
- What are the contact details for the child or young person's family?
- Who are the child or young person's known associates, what are their telephone numbers and addresses?
- What is the child or young persons' Homestay's address?
- What are the details of the child or young person's social media accounts or who might know these details?
- Does the child or young person have a previous history or absconding/absenteeism and what were the circumstances?
- Are there any factors that could increase the risk to the child or young person that you or others are aware of at this stage?

It is very possible that the police will ask more questions than listed as they will try to ascertain as much information as possible. As much information as possible must be given to the police.

#### **Stage 4**

The incident must be recorded in the child or young person's file and must be reviewed daily until the incident is resolved.

#### **Stage 5**

The senior member of staff handling the incident must inform the parent(s) and school of any report made to the police and if they have any contact with the child or young person, they must contact 999 immediately and also make Oxbridge Guardians aware of any developments.

## Contact with the Press and Media

The police are responsible for advising the press and media regarding children or young people who are reported as missing. The decision to publicise these matters will always be made in consultation with the parents who have to give their signed consent before the media are able to circulate the details. As such, no member of Oxbridge Guardians should release any details to the press or media and must refer any contact from them directly to the relevant police force. If in doubt please direct all queries to the Director and make no comment at all.

## Procedure once the Child or Young Person is found

The police are responsible for ensuring that the child or young person that has been reported as missing has been returned safe and well, and has an opportunity to disclose any relevant issues in the return interview.

Where a student has been reported as absent to the police they will not be given a return interview. In such cases, Oxbridge Guardians' Director, Helen Wu will conduct a return interview with the child or young person and will discuss and record their reasons for absence.

If there is a suggestion that the child or young person has been the victim or perpetrator of crime, consideration must be given to securing evidence by police including forensic examination. This should also include securing clothing and delaying washing/bathing in relevant cases. Staff and Homestays must remember that all necessary permissions must be obtained from the child or young person's parents and/or those with parental responsibility. The priority is to recognise that the welfare of the child or young person is paramount and careful consideration must be given to the potential effects of such procedures of the child or young person.

If there has been an allegation of abuse toward the student, the Local Authority Child Protection Service must be contacted immediately and the Oxbridge Guardians Designated Safeguarding Lead informed.

Any persons informed that the child or young person was absent or missing must be contacted immediately and be advised of their return.

If a child or young person has been absent or missing on more than one occasion Oxbridge Guardians' Director, Helen Wu will consult with the child or young persons' parents and a formal review of the guardianship level required must be assessed.

**Appendix 1 – paper copy of Missing Student Risk Assessment. Please note that if you are reporting a student missing you should firstly contact the DSL or Director.**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Date  |  |
| Reported By   |  |
| Full Name of Child/Young Person   |  |
| Absent or Missing (If contact is not made with student within 1 hour of initial report, student to be treated as missing)   |  |
| Details of Contact Attempts (Every 20 minutes by phone, text, email and social media - please record all communication)   |  |
| Date & Time student absent/missing - start  |  |
| Date & Time student absent/missing - end  |  |
| Gender  |  |
| School  |  |
| Host Family   |  |
| What are the circumstances in which the child/young person is absent/missing. Please note as much information as possible   |  |
| History: Has this student been absent/missing before?   |  |
| When and where was the child/young person last seen?  |  |
| Where is the child/young person supposed to be currently?   |  |
| What was the temperament of the child/young person when last seen?  |  |
| Does the child/young person have any medical conditions or take any medication? If so, do they have their medication with them?   |  |
| Other Factors contributing to risk calculation  |  |
| Level of Risk presented   |  |
| total time student absent/missing   |  |
| Physical Description (Height, Build, Ethnicity, Eye colour, Hair Colour & Style, Glasses/Contact Lenses, Distinctive Features)  |  |
| Please supply as much information as possible about what the child/young person was last seen wearing (Top/Sweater/Shirt/T-Shirt, Coat/Jacket. Trousers/Shorts/Skirt, Shoes/Trainers/Boots, |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Headwear/Gloves/Scarf, Other identifiable clothing)                                       |  |
| Action Taken (Reported to DSL)  |  |
| DSL/Director Report on Outcome/Further Action Taken (Parents/School/Authorities/Airports) |  |