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Aims of this policy

- To ensure that robust procedures are in place to minimise the risk of a learner going missing from Alpha Training sites at Hawthorn Farm and Alpha Hair Design.
- To establish safeguards so that a learners absence from the training site (or off-site activity) is quickly identified.
- To outline a procedure for staff to follow in the event of a learner being or going missing, including the notification of parents and outside agencies.

Police terminology: 'absent' and 'missing'

The police use the terms 'absent' and 'missing'. An absent child is one who is not at a place where they are expected or required to be. A missing child is anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be the subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another. It will be fairly common for a child to be absent and then found soon after; it will be more rare for a child to be missing.

Safeguarding: a missing child is a child at risk

If a learner is absent or missing, the Designated Senior Lead (DSL) should always be informed. The DSL is Michelle Howdle, Managing Director. An incident of a missing learner is an important safeguarding concern as a missing child is a child at risk. A learner may be lost by accident or may go missing deliberately (i.e. runaways), for example, due to bullying or abuse. A missing child may be drawn into dangerous situations, activities and even exploitation.

Procedure for a learner absent/missing

When a learner is noted as absent from where they are supposed to be, the first priority will be to conduct a search of the area, particularly likely places the learner may be. Actions might include, but are not limited to, the following.

- If the learner attempts to run away, off site, attempts should be made to follow the learner from a safe distance and encourage them, in a non-threatening way to stay where they are.
- Consult other available staff and ask whether they know where the learner may be (they may have a legitimate and known reason to be absent).
- Check of email records.
- Seek guidance from the DSL, Michelle Howdle or, in their absence, Hayley Boden, phoning them if they are off-site.
- Take a register to see whether any other learners are absent (may be significant if two friends are both absent).
- Search likely locations.
- It may help the search if other learners remain in the classroom or located in a central place;

this may also make more members of staff available.

- Contact the school and parents and explain the situation, ask whether they know where the learner is. (Do so calmly, remembering that they may panic or, alternatively, have collected the learner without notifying staff, in which case they need to be calmly reminded of protocol, ideally by the DSL.
- If the learner is found, the DSL should interview them calmly and investigate their whereabouts and whether they were at risk; the learners school and parents will be informed.
- If, after consulting all available staff, school, learners and parents/carers the learner is still absent, they should be considered missing and the police contacted.

When the learner is found

This procedure should be followed:

- all parties involved in the search should be notified (including parents, School staff, police);
- if possible, two members of staff should talk to the learner;
- remain calm and do not express shock, dismay, anger or any other strong emotions;
- remember that the learner may be unaware of the panic they have caused; alternatively, they may have been through a distressing experience and be in need of support (e.g. from staff, parents, independent listener or external agencies such as the NSPCC);
- the rest of the group are reassured by the staff;
- safety guidance is issued to the group to avoid a recurrence;
- the events should be recorded, particularly any residual concerns that may have some future relevance.

Contacting the police

If the learner remains missing, then the school should be informed immediately and a call should be made to the Police at this stage: failure to contact them may prove costly. The following information should be made available:

- the learners name, age and date of birth;
- an up-to-date photograph obtained from the school;
- a physical description: height, appearance, clothes, distinguishing features;
- any disability, learning difficulty or SEN;
- the learners home address and telephone number;
- any relevant context (e.g. comments made by the learner that may indicate state of mind/ whereabouts);
- any suspicion/evidence of crime or wrongdoing.

If the learner is found after the police have been notified, it is important to tell the police.