



St. Columbas Catholic Primary School

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"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10 : 10)



First-day Calling Procedures

(School's Safeguarding response to children who are absent from school and missing education)

Nationally, there have been three recent cases that have come to our attention which highlight the need for more robust emergency contacts and first-day calling procedures. These cases emphasise that such procedures are not only important for children who the school may consider 'vulnerable' but are actually important for all children as their absence in itself may be indicative that they have become vulnerable. The cases are summarised below for context:

- A mum died from an epileptic seizure while bathing her children aged 3 and 4. The next morning the school phoned home immediately after checking registers, no answer and so continued ringing through the contact list until they had an answer. A family member went straight to the house and found mum had died, but the children were safe.
- A dad died from natural causes, Mum was working away from home, and the children were 2 and 4. In the morning Mum rang dad, no answer, but assumed he was doing the school run and continued with her working day. The school noted the absence of the 4 year old. They started first day calling 2 hours after registration and rang dad only, leaving a message. They did not ring anyone else on the contact list. They repeated the call to Dad at 3.40. Mum rang home at the end of her working day and now worried rang another school mum. Grandmother went to the home and could not gain access because of a key in the lock inside. The Police gained entry at 8pm; the children had been alone with their deceased Dad all day.
- A mum died. School made a call to her when the child was not at school; the contact list was not used. No further calls were made. A letter was sent to the parent 3 days later. Eventually the house was entered 5 days later. The child, age 6 or 7 had also died. The child was non-verbal and had SEN.

Children who are absent from school, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so-called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. It is important the school's response to children missing from education supports identifying such abuse and helps prevent the risk of them going missing in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where going missing from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

Further information and support, including information schools **must** provide to the local authority when removing a child from the school roll at standard and non-standard transition points, can be found in the DfE statutory guidance: [Children Missing Education](#). It is important that staff are aware of their school's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures.

In order to ensure that schools have appropriate procedures in place **which must be shared with staff**, below is our 'first day calling procedure' (School's safeguarding response to children who are absent from school and missing education).

It is imperative that schools also consider what arrangements have been made when children have been placed in Alternative Provision around Emergency Contacts and First-Day Calling Procedures. In the context of a child being absent without contact from parent please consider the following:

- Who is responsible for following up an absent child?
- Are the Emergency Contacts shared – when/how?
- Would the same first-day calling procedure be followed and by whom?
- Does the school accurately record the attendance of children in Alternative Provision?

First-Day Calling Procedure

(School's safeguarding response to children who are absent from education)

Primary Schools

1. Registers saved.
2. Late children checked against registers if recorded separately.
3. Absence calls listened to/attendance emails checked.
4. First day text sent to first name on contact list within half an hour of school start time asking for response.
5. If no response to text start calling first name on contact list within 45 minutes of school start time.
6. Ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted.
7. Alert Head teacher/DSL that this child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time.
8. If no reply send second text and email to first and second contacts on list.
9. Home visit made if possible/appropriate by school or other agency involved.
10. Contact Police (using the **101** number) and LA Children Missing from Education Officer if all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the absent child.

