



First-day Calling Procedures and Emergency Contact Form

(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 a model 'first day calling procedure' (School's safeguarding response to children who are absent from school and missing education) along with an **example** Emergency Contact form which asks for key information. It is recommended that schools review their current procedures and consider adopting these recommendations where appropriate. This is an **example** emergency contact form that does not need to be used in its entirety if suggested information can be added into current forms/templates/pupil management information systems.

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?

It should be noted that these procedures must **NOT** be confused with the procedures to follow when children go missing whilst under the care of school staff. Further guidance and [model missing child procedures](#) can be found on the KAHub. Reference should also be made to the School's Attendance Policy.

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.

There is an expectation with the secondary procedure that the child may be in more of a position to access help if required, and also that due to the volume of children within a secondary school a more realistic procedure needs to be in place for dealing with a greater number of pupils.

First-Day Calling Procedure

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

Secondary 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 an hour of school start time asking for response.
5. If no reply send second text and email to first contact on list stating that the child is absent and the school are unaware of their whereabouts, given no response to first text or email.
6. Alert Head teacher/DSL that this child is absent and no response has been received.
7. Home visit made if possible/appropriate by school or other agency involved.
8. If no response by the end of the day, ring down contact list until reply is received stating that this child has not been in school all day and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence if no response/explanation from parent is received.
9. If known also try child's own phone number.
10. If child does not present in school on second day, there has been no contact received from any of the contacts and the child's whereabouts are unknown, contact Police (using the **101** number) and LA Children Missing from Education Officer.

Sample Emergency Contact Form

Child's Details			
Child's Surname		Child's Forename	
Date of Birth		Year Group	
Address			
Child's Phone Number (If have own phone)			
Adult(s) at this address			
Sibling within school		Sibling's Year Group	
Sibling within school		Sibling's Year Group	
Sibling within school		Sibling's Year Group	

Contact Details (Please include at least one contact that does not live at the same address as the child)					
Name		Relationship to Child			
Address					
Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)		Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)		Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)	
Primary Contact Number					
Additional Number					
Additional Number					
Email Address					

Contact Details					
Name		Relationship to Child			
Address					
Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)		Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)		Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)	
Primary Contact Number					
Additional Number					

Additional Number					
Email Address					
Contact Details					
Name			Relationship to Child		
Address					
Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)		Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)		Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)	
Primary Contact Number					
Additional Number					
Additional Number					
Email Address					

Contact Details of Key Professionals (Delete if not required) <i>(e.g. for child who is CP or CLA– Social Worker/Virtual School, or YOT Worker)</i>					
Name			Relationship to Child		
Primary Contact Number					
Additional Number					
Additional Number					
Email Address					

Name			Relationship to Child		
Primary Contact Number					
Additional Number					
Additional Number					
Email Address					

Date Form Completed:					
Date Received in School:					