The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Missing Child Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Missing Child Policy	**Version**	V1
Issue date	08 May 2026	**Next review**	08 May 2027
Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

A pupil who leaves the building without permission is communicating something. PACE underpins our response — finding the pupil safely first, then being curious about what was happening for them:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Scope

This policy covers a pupil who: cannot be located on the school premises during the school day; leaves the school premises during the school day without permission; or becomes separated from a school group on an off-site visit.

4. Prevention

Prevention sits in the relational climate. Pupils who feel known and held are less likely to leave without permission. In addition, the school: maintains secure entry and exit points proportionate to the age and needs of pupils; reviews flight-risk indicators in pupil profiles; and trains staff in early de-escalation.

5. On-site missing child procedure

Where a pupil cannot be located on the premises:

- Step 1 — the staff member raises the alarm with the office and the Headteacher or DSL.
- Step 2 — a planned search is conducted of the building, grounds and immediate vicinity, using a pre-agreed grid.
- Step 3 — if the pupil is not found within 15 minutes, parents/carers are contacted and the police are notified.
- Step 4 — the search continues; a record is kept of who has been deployed where.
- Step 5 — once the pupil is found, a debrief takes place with the pupil (when regulated), the family, the staff team and — if attended — the police.

6. Off-site missing child procedure

On educational visits, an immediate head count is taken every time the group moves and at agreed checkpoints. Where a pupil is missing: the group secures the remaining pupils with at least one named adult; the trip leader and a named second adult conduct an immediate local search; the school is informed; if the pupil is not found within 10 minutes, the police are called and the family is informed.

7. Records and learning

Every missing-child incident is recorded and reviewed by the Headteacher and DSL. Patterns by individual pupil, time of day, lesson, transition or trigger are used to refine prevention.

8. Children Missing in Education

Children Missing in Education — that is, children of compulsory school age not on a school roll or otherwise receiving suitable education — are addressed under the Attendance Policy and through liaison with the local authority.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.