

# Missing Student Protocol and Responding to Door Alarms

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In order to ensure a safe learning environment, it is important that all staff members are familiar with the **Missing Student Protocol and the Response to Door Alarms Document** which provide guidance on the steps that must be taken when a student is reported lost or missing, and when a door alarm is activated. Both documents describe when it is appropriate to activate these protocols. In addition, the elementary school staff should be familiar with the protocol that must be followed when an elementary school student is observed leaving the school building or school grounds without authorization.

## Using the Missing Student Protocol

This protocol must immediately be followed when a student has been reported missing, the student's whereabouts cannot be confirmed, and there is concern for the student's safety or well-being. Schools must be prepared to initiate a soft-lockdown AND assign staff to secure the exit doors in an effort to prevent the student from leaving the building.

The Missing Student Protocol is not always an appropriate response and therefore should not be activated for every situation where a child leaves class or a school building without authorization (i.e. cutting), as the DOE has existing procedures to address these situations. Regardless of whether the protocol is activated, parents must be informed whenever a student leaves a school building without authorization.

In determining whether to activate the protocol, the following shall apply:

The protocol must be activated if the whereabouts of the following students cannot be immediately confirmed:

- All students in Grades K-5
- Any student who has a known physical or emotional condition, or a cognitive disability which interferes with his or her ability to travel independently and interact with the community

In all other situations, schools must consider a number of relevant factors in determining whether the situation requires the activation of the protocol, including:

- Whether the student has a prior history of leaving the building
- Whether the student is dealing with a crisis/trauma or is otherwise vulnerable
- Whether the student's parent has informed the school of a prior commitment or appointment that requires the student to leave early
- Whether the age and/or maturity of the student is a cause for concern regarding the student's well-being

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THE FOLLOWING STEPS MUST BE TAKEN IF IT IS DETERMINED THAT THE MISSING STUDENT PROTOCOL SHOULD BE ACTIVATED

## If it is confirmed that the student has exited the building:

Immediately call 911 (including transit police), and notify the Principal/Designee, Emergency Information Center (EIC), and the Borough Safety Director (BSD). Provide a clear description of the student, to include the information below:

- Height and approximate weight
- Ethnicity
- Complexion and hair color
- Attire and any distinguishing features
- Verbal or non-verbal
- Languages spoken

In addition, it should also be noted where the child was last observed.

Notify the School Safety Agent (SSA) in the building so that the Borough Command and School Safety Division can activate their protocols.

Immediately monitor the video surveillance system (if applicable) including perimeter cameras.

Notify the parent.

Review the Blue Card to identify any relatives listed who may live near the school. This information may be relevant in locating the missing student.

Activate the Building Response Team (BRT) and open the Command Post and gather all relevant information necessary to work with first responders and law enforcement (description of the student, blue card information, photograph (if available). If applicable, review the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) to determine what additional supports are required.

When the parent arrives at the school, escort the parent to the Command Post so that the parent may discuss the incident with school officials and law enforcement. Where applicable, have the parent coordinator accompany the parent in order to provide additional support to the family. A representative of the school crisis team should also report to the Command Post to provide support to the family.

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**If it cannot be confirmed that the student has exited the building:**

Notify the Principal/Designee and the School Safety Agent.

Provide a clear description of the student, including where the child was last observed. Include the information below in the description:

- Height and approximate weight
- Ethnicity
- Complexion and hair color
- Attire and any distinguishing features
- Verbal or non-verbal
- Languages spoken

Activate the BRT, and open the Command Post. Provide all BRT members, School Safety Agents, Shelter-In staff, and floor searchers, a description of the student, and if available, a photograph of the student. If applicable, review the student's IEP to determine what additional supports are required.

Immediately monitor the video surveillance system (if applicable) including perimeter cameras.

Initiate a soft lock-down and assign Shelter- In staff to secure the exit doors. Use the following language: "Attention, this is a soft lock-down. Take proper action. All staff, we are looking for (use the name and description you have). If you know where this student is, please call extension (insert the phone extension to call)."

If the student is observed on the camera system, immediately deploy search staff to the location where the student was observed. This includes areas outside of the school building.

Inside the building, all rooms and offices, including restrooms and access to the basement must be searched.

After an initial sweep of the building, if the student has not been located, immediately call 911 (including transit police), EIC, and the Borough Safety Director.

If available, provide law enforcement with a photograph of the missing student.

Notify the parent of the student and continue searching the building.

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Review the Blue Card to identify any relatives listed who may live near the school. This information may be relevant in locating the missing student.

When the parent arrives at the school, escort the parent to the Command Post so the parent may discuss the incident with school officials and law enforcement. Where applicable, have the parent coordinator accompany the parent in order to provide additional support to the family. A representative of the school crisis team should also report to the Command Post to provide support to the family.

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## Follow-up steps for all students:

Schools are required to use appropriate guidance and other interventions to respond to all students who leave class or a school building without authorization, regardless of whether the protocol is activated.

Schools must enter **ALL** incidents into the [Online Occurrence Reporting System \(OORS\)](#) and provide updates as needed.

In **ALL** incidents where a student leaves the building without authorization, schools must review existing building protocols with the student and other students where appropriate to prevent recurrence of similar behavior.

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## DOOR ALARM RESPONSE PLAN

All schools must create a building specific response plan that can be utilized together with the door alarm response protocol to respond when a door alarm has been activated. The guidance below is designed to support school leaders and staff members in developing their building specific response plans and when responding to an activated door alarm. A template for the Door Alarm Response Plan can be found in the School Safety Plan.

Every adult in the building has some responsibility when a door alarm is heard. All staff must receive training that outlines how the alarms operate, the required maintenance, what to do when any adult in the building hears a door alarm, and when to use other emergency response actions including the General Response Protocols and the Missing Student Protocols.

- Door Alarm training and the development of a Door Alarm Response Plan for each school building must be completed before students report for their first day of the school term.
- Training must also be conducted during summer school so that all staff are aware of building specific procedures on summer co-locations.
- Responses by staff are different if you are with or without students when a door alarm is activated.
- Staff assigned the responsibility of responding to activated door alarms (including School Safety Agents) must have a key that is distributed by the principal.
- An effective response plan is based on regular collaboration and communication between all staff, including SSAs.
- SSAs will respond to incidents and work closely with school staff to address issues. Regarding door alarms, School Safety Agents will visually inspect the doors and the alarms while on routine patrol. When an alarm is activated, they will respond to the location and immediately investigate the cause so that proper action can be taken. School Safety Agents are issued keys to the alarms so that if they are the first one to respond to an alarm, they can turn it off while investigating as the alarm sound can be disruptive.
- The SSA is not part of the regular door alarm test and should not be part of the building specific door alarm deactivation procedures for alarms that will be temporarily deactivated throughout the school day.

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## DOOR ALARM RESPONSE PROTOCOL

### THE FOLLOWING STEPS MUST BE TAKEN WHEN A DOOR ALARM IS ACTIVATED

- All adults who are NOT supervising students must do the following when they hear an activated door alarm:
  - Immediately report to the door where the alarm has been activated to observe conditions and to determine the possible cause of the alarm (i.e. staff or students observed in stairwell, student running from scene in the hallway, door propped open).
  - Immediately call the appropriate office and/or main desk to report the specific location of the door alarm that was activated and share any observations.
  - If the person who hears the door alarm is someone in possession of a two-way radio (e.g. administrator, dean, security school aide) or if a School Safety Agent (SSA) is present, immediately use the radio to report the specific location of the door alarm that was activated to other staff with radios so that everyone can respond with accurate information.
- For all adults who ARE supervising students when they hear an activated door alarm:
  - Immediately call the appropriate office and/or main desk and report the specific location of the door alarm that was activated.
  - Immediately look outside the classroom window and/or look outside the classroom door in an effort to observe anything that may provide additional information such as a staff member/ student(s) walking away from the door.
  - Report observations to the staff members and/or SSAs who respond to the door alarm.

If the door alarm was activated and the cause for the alarm is believed to be the result of an intruder or a missing student, the General Response Protocols and/or Missing Student Protocols must be activated, as appropriate, based on the specific information in each incident.

## PROTOCOL FOR WHEN AN ELEMENTARY STUDENT IS OBSERVED LEAVING A SCHOOL BUILDING OR SCHOOL GROUNDS WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION:

When an elementary school student leaves a school building or school grounds without authorization, it is an inherently dangerous situation and immediate steps must be taken to ensure the student's safe return to school. The following procedures must be followed when a staff member observes an elementary school student leave the school building or school grounds without authorization.

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Please note that these procedures **DO NOT** replace the Missing Student Protocol, which sets forth the procedures to be followed when a student is reported missing and the student's whereabouts cannot be confirmed or the Door Alarm Protocol, which sets forth the procedures for when a door alarm is activated. These protocols must be followed as appropriate.

## For Staff NOT Supervising Students:

1. A staff member who sees an elementary student leaving the school building or school grounds without authorization and who is NOT supervising students must immediately follow the student unless there is a School Safety Agent (SSA) in the staff member's immediate vicinity who can be informed of the student's unauthorized departure. In such cases, the SSA will pursue the student. The staff member must immediately notify 911 and the principal/designee by radio or cell phone, if available. The principal/designee will activate the Missing Student Protocol when it is confirmed the student exited the building and the student is not immediately secured by the SSA.
2. If an SSA is not in the immediate vicinity of a staff member, the staff member must immediately follow the student (as long as he/she is not supervising students). As soon as it is possible and will not interfere with locating the student, the staff member must notify 911 and the principal/designee by radio or cell phone, if available. All reasonable steps must be taken to reach the student without risking bodily injury to the staff member or the student.
3. If the staff member is able to reach the student, he/she must take appropriate steps to safely return the student to school and notify the principal/designee that he/she will be returning to the school with the student. If the student refuses to return to the school and/or the staff member is unable to safely return the student without additional support, the staff member must remain with the student and contact 911 and then notify the principal/designee.
4. If the staff member loses sight of the student, he/she must immediately notify 911 and provide the information below, where possible, and then immediately notify the principal/designee who will activate the Missing Student Protocol:
  - Location and direction where the student was last observed
  - Height and approximate weight
  - Ethnicity
  - Complexion and hair color
  - Attire and distinguishing features
  - Whether the student is verbal
  - Languages spoken

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## For Staff Members Supervising Students:

1. A staff member who sees an elementary student leaving the school building or school grounds without authorization and who is supervising students, must immediately inform any staff member that is nearby to follow the student unless there is a School Safety Agent (SSA) in the staff member's immediate vicinity who can be informed of the student's unauthorized departure. In such cases, the SSA will pursue the student. The staff member must immediately notify 911 and the principal/designee who will activate the Missing Student Protocol, when it is confirmed that the student exited the building and cannot be returned by the SSA.
2. If there is not an SSA or another adult in the staff member's immediate vicinity, the staff member must immediately notify 911 by radio or cell phone, if available and provide the following information below, where possible:
  - Location and direction where the student was last observed
  - Height and approximate weight
  - Ethnicity
  - Complexion and hair color
  - Attire and distinguishing features
  - Whether the student is verbal
  - Languages spoken

In addition, the staff member must immediately notify the principal/designee and the Missing Student Protocol will be activated