Absconding Policy

Clipstone Brook Lower School

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1. Introduction

Guidance on dealing with children who abscond

Under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in common law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school-led activities.

The purpose of this **guidance** document is to provide a framework regarding procedures for dealing with pupils who abscond.

2. Definition.

To abscond is to 'leave without permission.'

Internal Absconding External Absconding

Internal absconding - where the pupil leaves the responsible person's care without permission but remains on the school site.	External absconding - where a pupil leaves the school site without permission.
Where a pupil leaves a lesson without permission but remains on the school site.	Where a pupil leaves an offsite provision without permission. E.g. curriculum swimming, alternate education provision, etc.
Where a pupil leaves a club run on behalf of the school without permission but remains on the site.	Where a pupil leaves a defined area or supervision of the responsible adult without permission. E.g. when undertaking fieldwork or on an educational visit.
Where a pupil leaves extended services provision without permission but remains on the site.	Where a pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission, E.g. transport between split sites, to and from specialist provision.

3. Control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

The school should consider the following measures to prevent a child from absconding from the site. These are suggested control measures.

Site Security

The site has a secure perimeter and gates that can be locked.

Gates/doors should be secured outside the school's drop-off and pick-up times.

Unsecured gates should be locked during break times if there is a significant risk of absconding.

Doors into the school should be locked from the outside with key-coded access or similar.

There may be a need to have high bolts/closures on doors/gates to restrict unauthorised egress by younger pupils.

Early Years classrooms should have double-handled egress points.

Fire doors may have high-level bolts/closures if there is a significant risk of absconding. There must always be someone in the room who can unlock the door while pupils are present.

Adequate supervision

Adequate supervision will be dependent on several factors, including

- Age of the pupils
- Ability of the pupils,
- The number of pupils
- Activities being undertaken
- Pupil behaviour
- Site layout and security
- Specific identified risks, e.g., pupils with a history of absconding, public rights of way through school grounds, building work, etc.
- Schools should mark on a plan of the school where supervisors should be placed.
- Regular head counts should take place throughout the school day.
- Ensure a robust system is in place for pupils to be handed over to their parents(all year groups).
- Ensure there is a transparent system for pupils who need to leave the school grounds with permission during the school day, for example, lunch times and medical appointments.
- Ensure a transparent system for handing pupils over to before/after school clubs.

Information to pupils

- School rules and expectations are reinforced throughout the school year.
- There is a clear and consistent reward and consequence system in school.

Individual Pupil Risk Assessments.

Where there is a foreseeable risk of absconding, this should be included in a child's risk assessment. This should detail the individual control measures required to reduce the risk of absconding.

A Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) should be drawn up for a child who absconds and shared with the parent/guardian.

External visits/sites.

On an educational visit, the security of the venue/location should be assessed, and supervision levels should be altered accordingly.

Ensure that robust systems are in place so each group has specified members and leaders and that regular head counts occur throughout the visit.

In planning an educational visit, the risks of absconding must be assessed, mainly when known absconders are in attendance. This should include transport.

Communication between the groups and robust emergency procedures should be in place.

4. Actions to be taken in the event of a child absconding.

- Notify a member of SLT/ Family Worker/ (note, if SLT is unavailable, senior key stage teachers must be immediately informed.) This system must **NOT** place the remaining pupils at risk.
- Staff to collect a two-way radio and SLT will direct an informal search, based on information available from adults and children who have reported the absconsion.
- Channel 5 to be used to keep contact until the child is located.
- SLT to confirm 'stand down'.

A procedure for securing and systematically searching the site in case a child absconds, and their whereabouts are unknown:

- The office staff will notify the parents/carers.
- The police will be contacted if a child is known to have left the school site (this does not mean outside of the school grounds, including the car park) or if they cannot be found.
- Follow-up actions are to be taken once a child has been found.

The systems above should cover educational visits and transport where relevant.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to use reasonable physical interventions to prevent a child from putting themselves at risk. Please see the school's physical intervention policy, which provides more details.

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steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school-led activities.

Where a pupil, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation, the following procedures should be followed:

- Member of staff to inform the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, or Family Worker (note, if SLT is unavailable, senior key stage teachers must be immediately informed).
- **"On Call"** members organise a search of buildings and places the pupil may have gone to.
- Staff to collect 2 way radios from the office and check radios are set to Channel 5.
- If the pupil is not found, all available staff should complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the grounds' perimeter.
- The school office is to phone the police when areas have been thoroughly checked if the child is not found.
- The school office will contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation.

Consideration will be given to whether the search should be extended beyond the school perimeter. This decision will be based on the staff's knowledge of the child, the risk levels, and what action is in the child's best interests.

Any staff who leaves the school grounds takes a mobile phone to contact the school.

Once a pupil has been found, the lead member "on call" will use their professional judgment to outline the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need. In addition, the BSP (Behaviour Support Plan) and the child's risk assessment may need updating should they have one, or creating .

· A written report of the incident will be filed via CPOMS.

· A member of SLT will brief the police and parents.

Where a pupil attempts or is seen leaving the school premises without authorisation, the following procedures should be followed:

- The school office will contact the pupil's parents/carers.
- Staff must follow the pupil to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school using strategies laid out in the BSP, should the child have one.
- If a pupil is deemed a high risk to themselves or others, then staff should adhere to the Physical Restraint policy if appropriate.

At all times, staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the pupil to leave the immediate vicinity of the school. It may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.

If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school: (Please note this is termed as beyond the school's top gate.)

- The school office and SLT members (others, see above) must be contacted immediately, and the lead “on call” person will direct the course of action.
- Staff will follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance if in view.
- The SLT lead (or others) may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact the school.
- If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil/s they must contact the school office, giving details of their location and the clothes the pupil wears.

Suppose the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds (at the top of the car park) and is no longer visible:

- In that case, the SLT (or others) will decide how to take matters further, which will take into account the age of the pupil, the prevailing weather conditions, the nature of the incident that led to the pupil absconding, the pupil’s previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes.

Suppose the pupil returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed as soon as possible.

Upon his or their return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil must be seen by the SLT to discuss the reasons for absconding in detail. At this point, a decision will be made regarding the appropriateness of further actions. A written report will be filed on CPOMS under SAFEGUARDING.

School Procedure if a child is missing/absconds:

Staff member informs SLT / Office/ Family Worker that pupil is possibly missing/absconding.



Staff check pupil location / if the pupil is still on premises by
Asking other available staff.
Staff check the last known location, known hiding points / calm down areas/areas pupil may regularly go to if absconding.
Staff members man any points of easy exit from school as soon as possible, while others sweep the building/grounds systematically.



If a Pupil is found on the grounds/premises

Determine whether a pupil deliberately absconded or if a pupil accidentally lost/misplaced their bearings.



The pupil/ parent will discuss the incident with the SLT (or key stage leader on duty) with the family worker. This will involve investigating the incident, determining how it happened, and any lessons to be learned. Prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk assessments to reflect any changes.



If a pupil is seen leaving the school premises (at the top of the gate)
A person 'on call" co-ordinates the search and follows the child if it is safe to do so.



Staff inform parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact. Staff informs the police if the child has left the school's enclosed grounds (this does not include the carpark).



The pupil will discuss the incident with the SLT/ Family Worker (Key Stage Leader if the SLT is not on site). If a pupil refuses to return to school beyond the staff car park, keep watch from a discrete distance (if applicable). Call parents within the timeframe. Investigate the incident, determine how it happened, and any lessons to be learned. Prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk assessments to reflect any changes.



If a pupil is not found on the premises (at the top of the gate and beyond the staff carpark):



The Office staff informs parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact. The Office informs the police.



If the pupil is found- parents, pupil, and police (if appropriate) attend school to discuss the matter. This should be done as soon as possible. **Investigate the incident**- determine how it happened and any lessons to be learned. Where possible, take action to prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk assessments to reflect any changes.



Suppose the pupil is **not** found. Maintain contact with the police and follow up on the matter once the child is seen as per previous processes. Advice and support from other professionals will be sought to prevent further reoccurrence of the incident.