



### Children Who Abscond From School Policy

DATE	REVIEW DATE	COORDINATOR	NOMINATED GOVERNOR
May 2025	May 2026	Emma Gilbert	Dave Madden, Chair of Governors

The purpose of this non-statutory policy is to set out clearly for all stakeholders, the process that will take place should a child abscond from school.

We actively work to provide a secure, safe environment, a school where children want to come to enjoy learning with others as part of a caring community. We recognise that it is highly unlikely that a child will try to abscond from our school but this policy is written to ensure we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

#### **To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.**

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.

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

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#### **Pupils who abscond before the end of the registration period**

Schools are required to register their pupils at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. This should take place within a period, of not less than 15 minutes, set aside when the register is open.

If a pupil absconds from the school during the period of registration, the class register should show the pupil as being absent. Should the pupil return to school after the end of the registration period, the class register should be amended to indicate a late arrival. It is good practice when a pupil absconds in these circumstances for the school to make every effort to advise the parents/carers.

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#### **Pupils who abscond after registration**

Once a pupil has been registered as present, the registration period has ended and the class register closed, the school is "in loco parentis". Should a pupil abscond after the end of the registration period, the school, technically, remains "in loco parentis". Every attempt should be made to contact the parents/carers to advise them that their child has absconded from school.

#### **When parents/carers are contacted, it should be made clear that the responsibility for their child is being passed back to them.**

Contact with parents/carers should be by telephone in the first instance.

In all circumstances, it is advisable to record details of attempts to establish contact. If the parents/carers are contacted, the attendance register should be amended to show unauthorised absence.

If the parents/carers cannot be contacted, the attendance register should remain unamended. At this stage the school may wish to contact the local police to seek assistance. However, the responsibility for the pupil remains with the school until such time contact is made with the parents/carers.

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## Pupils who abscond from school but remain in the school grounds

In general circumstances school staff should not pursue the child or try to force the child back into school, if the child remains out of school then the school will contact the parents/carers to assist. **When parents/carers are contacted, it should be made clear that the responsibility for the pupil is being passed back to them.**

However, there may be circumstances where school staff will need to use their judgement, knowledge of the pupil and assessment of the pupil's safety in deciding what to do.

A pupil's age, vulnerability and other factors need to be taken into account. For example, it may be dangerous to let a particular pupil wander about the school grounds. The demeanour of the pupil will need to be taken into account. If the pupil is upset or angry, care must be given to how they are approached. The size of the pupil will also be important in judging whether to try to approach them. The gender of the pupil may indicate a particular member of staff as being more appropriate to deal with the situation.

In all cases, staff should not place themselves in situations of potential danger.

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## Pupils who return to school after absconding

Most pupils who abscond will do so as a result of a specific incident which may have taken place either at school, at home or on the way to school. For those pupils who return to school either by their own choice, with parental support or following intervention by a member of staff, thought should be given to their welfare. They are likely to be in need of support, understanding and perhaps some time apart from their peers.

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## Parents/carers responsibilities

Parents/carers of pupils are responsible for supporting the work of the school. They are responsible for encouraging their children to keep to all school procedures and policies.

Once school has informed the parents that their child has absconded, parents and carers are responsible for actively supporting the school with the subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming to school to help secure the safety of the child after they have absconded as well as meeting with the head teacher in order to agree subsequent actions.

**When parents/carers are contacted, it should be understood that the responsibility for their child is being passed back to them.**

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## Children's responsibilities

Children are expected to follow the school and classroom rules, showing respect for the rights and needs of all adults and other children in our school community.

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## Monitoring and evaluation

Each incident will be recorded monitored and evaluated (see Appendix A). If not completed by the headteacher then they will be informed by the member of staff completing the form.

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## Procedures

If a pupil is suspected of leaving the school site without permission:

1. The member of staff will alert the headteacher or (in their absence) the deputising teacher as soon as possible. If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the headteacher/deputising teacher will make a decision as to how to take matters further which will take into account the age of the student, the prevailing weather conditions, the nature of the incident which led to the pupil absconding, the pupil's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes.
2. If there is no doubt that the pupil has absconded, the school will contact the police as an emergency situation and/or the pupil's parent to inform them depending on the situation. Staff will not chase or follow the pupil as this could lead to the pupil wandering further afield, acting impetuously or causing a traffic accident.
3. If the child is within an easy distance of the school, staff are not to engage in conversation as the child might be in a distressed state and unable to act in a controlled manner. This would mean there is still the potential for traffic accidents.
4. If the child appears to be missing but there is no evidence that they have left the site, a quick but thorough search of the site should be conducted before the parents and/or police are informed.
5. If the pupil returns of their own volition, parents and (if necessary) the police will be informed. Upon their return to school, and when the student is calm, the student must be seen by a member of school staff so that the reasons for absconding may be discussed in detail. At this point a decision will be made as to the appropriateness of further actions. A written report will be filed on the incident.
6. If possible the pupil who has absconded should be brought back to school the same day. The parent, child and head teacher will then discuss the issues and any consequences. This policy will be discussed. An agreement will be written, giving details of the incident and agreed actions. See appendix A.
7. If the child absconds for a second time in the same academic year, the head teacher may consider a fixed term exclusion. If the head teacher/deputising teacher is aware that a pupil is not acting emotionally but has left the school grounds (e.g. by mistake), the above procedures may be adapted.

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Appendix A

## **Incident and Agreement following a pupil absconding from school**

To be completed by the head teacher or deputising teacher.

Child:

Date:

Signed:

Record of incident:

Following this incident the following has happened/been agreed:

**Parental Agreement regarding the Absconding Policy  
(To be completed by the parent or carer)**

I understand that it is always unacceptable for my child to leave the school site without permission and a repeated action of this nature might result in the school following exclusion procedures.

I understand that the following actions have been agreed in order to help my child be happy and safe in school.

I know my child needs to keep to the school rules and not leave the school grounds without permission.

I understand that there are agreed actions for all parties involved.

For my/our part, I/we will support this agreement supporting the work of the school. I/we are responsible for encouraging our child to keep to all school procedures and policies.

If my/our child/children leaves the site and we are informed we understand that responsibility for my/our child is passed back to us.

I/we are responsible for actively supporting the school with the subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming to school to help secure the safety of our child after they have absconded as well as meeting with the head teacher in order to agree subsequent actions.

Parent/carers names of .....

1.

2.

Signed:

Date: