



Child Missing or Absconding from School Policy

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

This policy is written to guide staff in the event of a student going missing on the premises, going missing outside of the school or having absconded.

Staff are reminded to read the following school policies and practice guidelines in conjunction with this policy –

- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Individual Risk Assessment
- Safeguarding Policy

On the School Premises

A register of students will be completed each morning and afternoon. It is the responsibility of the senior leader on site to be able to account for the whereabouts of every student.

Upon discovering a student is missing on site, an immediate search is to be made of the school buildings with all available staff. This search should not exceed ten minutes. Any usual hiding places for that student should be searched. If the student is a known absconder this should have been recorded in their individual risk assessment and should include any known hiding places for that student. Staff should then regroup and extend the search to include the school grounds.

This should not exceed a further fifteen minutes.

If at this stage the student has not been located the senior leader should:

1. Organise all available staff to search the immediate local community. Staff must take potential dangers into account and not put themselves at risk.
2. Make a phone call to the police giving a clear description of the student and clothing being worn.
3. Contact the parents of the student who is missing.
4. Not leave the premises but remain on site to co-ordinate the search, answer phone calls and provide photos and information. The police may want to visit the school.
5. Ensure that there are adequate staff left in the building to deal with other contingencies. When searching the local community on foot, remember that you may be vulnerable (use a car and take a mobile phone).
6. Following the incident, ensure appropriate documents are completed as soon as possible – e.g. an incident record.
7. Arrange a meeting to discuss the circumstances of the incident and the effectiveness of the current procedures. A review must take place of the student's individual risk assessment.
8. Keep all colleagues informed.

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Off School Premises

Students involved in an outing are entered into 'off site' sheets in reception. When going off-site staff are to take their ID badges.

All staff on visits out should ensure they have a fully charged mobile phone with them.

A 'head count' of the students should be made at regular intervals and always before a vehicle leaves a venue. If a student is discovered as missing, then a search (not exceeding ten minutes) of the immediate area is undertaken by all available members of staff, ensuring that all other students continue to be appropriately supervised.

If the missing student is not located, then:

1. A staff member should notify the most senior leader at the school and act on any instructions given.
2. The senior leader will notify the police and provide them with as precise a description of the student as possible, the last known whereabouts of the student and any other details they may require.
3. Notify, if appropriate, the venue that is being visited and ask them to initiate their lost child protocols.
4. The senior leader will notify the student's parents and keep them updated as necessary. The member of staff initiating the search should remain in situ until the police or assistance from school arrives in case the missing student should return or be found. In such stressful circumstances it is important that staff remain as calm and collected as possible.

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Absconding

A student is considered to have 'absconded' if they intentionally / knowingly leave the school site or the immediate area of an off-site activity without permission.

If a student absconds then:

- Where possible, a member of staff should follow the student at a safe distance and/or respond in line with guidance from the student's individual risk assessment.
- A senior leader at school must immediately be informed of the situation.
- Where possible, the member of staff following the student should remain in contact with either the main group or the senior leader at school via a mobile phone.
- The senior leader will then, if appropriate, allocate further staff members to go and collect the student and return them either to the venue or to school.
- The senior leader will also inform the student's parents and keep them updated as necessary.

If a student absconds and is then deemed to be 'missing', procedures will follow those outlined previously for a student missing off-site.

It is important that following an incident the issues that arise are addressed and staff should:

- Review the individual risk assessment for the student involved.
- Review the student's support plan and risk assessment
- Where appropriate, talk through the incident with the student involved. Ensure that a record is kept of the discussion held with the student.
- Complete an incident form.
- Keep all colleagues informed and discuss the incident in staff meetings.
- Review procedures for the individual every half term to ensure appropriate control measures are in place and that all staff are fully informed.
- Inform Governors every term about any incidents of absconding.

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