

Path 4

Absconding Policy

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Introduction

Article 3 The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

Article 28 Every child has the right to an education

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 students. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that students are safe and remain within the care of the school/centre at all times throughout the school day and during school-led activities. The purpose of this guidance document is to provide a framework for schools to develop their individual policy and procedures for dealing with students who abscond.

Definition

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.

Internal Absconding	External Absconding
Where a student leaves the care of the responsible person without permission but remains on the school site. (Leaving the building without permission)	Where a student leaves the school site without permission. (Absconding from school grounds)
Where a student leaves a lesson without permission but remains in the school building. (Leaving the room without permission)	Where a student leaves an offsite provision without permission, e.g., curriculum swimming, alternative education provision, etc. (Absconding off-site)
	Where a student leaves a defined area or supervision of the responsible adult without permission, e.g., when undertaking fieldwork or on an educational visit. (Absconding off-site)
	Where a student leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission (Absconding from transport)

Control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

Site security

- The site should have a secure perimeter and gates, which can be locked if necessary. Gates/doors should be closed outside of the stated drop off and pick up times.
- Unsecured gates should be locked during break times if there is a significant risk of absconding.
- Doors into school should be locked from the outside with maglocks and a fob system in place.

Effective supervision

Effective supervision is dependent on a number of factors including:

- Age of the students
- Ability of the students
- Number of the students
- Activities being undertaken
- Pupil behaviour
- Site layout and security
- Specifically identified risks e.g. students with history of absconding, public rights of way through school grounds, building work, etc.

Information to students.

- School rules and expectations are clearly displayed and reinforced throughout the school year.
- There is a clear and consistent system in school which covers absconding

Students Individual Risk Assessments.

- Where there is a foreseeable risk of absconding, there should be an ISRA in place.
- The IPRA should clearly detail the individual control measures required to reduce the risk of absconding

External visits/sites.

- On an Educational Visit the security of the venue/location should be assessed and supervision levels altered accordingly.
- Ensure that there are robust systems in place so that each group has specified members and leaders, and regular head counts occur throughout the visit.
- In the planning for an educational visit the risks of absconding must be clearly assessed, particularly in the case where known absconders are in attendance. This should include transport.
- Communication between the groups and robust emergency procedures should be place.
- When using staff cars to transport known absconders the RA should specifically refer to the risk of absconding.

Procedures for Absconding Students

Where a student, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation, and was not seen leaving, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Member of staff to inform a member of SLT, DSL and main office.
2. Main office to check CCTV
3. Head of Centre or member of SLT organises search of buildings and known places that the student may have gone to.
4. If the student is not found, then all available staff to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
 - School office to phone the police when area has been fully checked if the child is not found.
 - School office to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation.
5. Consideration will be given to whether the search should be extended beyond the school perimeter. This decision will be based on:
 - Staff's knowledge of the child and on the levels of risk, and on what action is in the child's best interests.
 - Any information regarding where the child has absconded to.
 - Who the child might be with.
6. Any staff (this must be a minimum of 2) who leave the school grounds need to take a mobile phone to contact school.
7. Once a student has been found then the lead SLT member will use their professional judgement to outline the response towards the student and the support the student will need in the future.
8. A written report will be recorded on CPOMS. Member of SLT to brief police and parents.

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

1. Staff must follow the student to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the student to stay in the school.
2. The student is to be reminded, if appropriate, that if they leave the school site and go out of staff sight the police and their parents/ carers will be informed.
3. If a student is deemed to be a high risk to themselves or other people, then staff should adhere to the Positive Handling Policy with reference to holding the student, if appropriate.
4. At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the student to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the student to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.

5. If the student has left the immediate vicinity of the school, the DSL, Head of Centre or SLT members must be contacted immediately and the lead person will direct the course of action.
6. Staff (minimum of 2) will follow the student and engage in a local search, following the student at a safe distance if in view.
7. The SLT lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.
8. The SLT lead will contact the student's parents/carers and the police.

If the student is younger and/or of higher risk as noted on their Personal Plan, a member of staff may follow ensuring they have a mobile phone and informing the senior member of staff on site.

Upon his or her return to school, and when the student is calm, the student must be seen by the SLT 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.

An Individual student Risk Assessment to be completed/added to detailing post incident learning and steps to reduce the risk of this happening again.

Appendix 1 - **Procedure if a student is missing or absconds**

Reporting staff member informs SLT that a student has absconded

Staff check location of student / if student still on premises by

- Asking office staff to check CCTV
- Staff check last known location, known hiding points / calm down areas / areas student may regularly go to if absconding

