



Absconding Policy and Procedures

**Updated: September 2025
Next Review: September 2026**

Absconding Policy and Procedures

The purpose of this 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. While it is highly unlikely that a child will attempt to abscond, this policy ensures we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

Our approach is to work positively with children and families to prevent children leaving school without permission, and to implement strategies that reduce risk and promote pupil well-being.

Definition

To abscond is to *leave the school site or school-led activity without permission*.

Legal Duties

Under **Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** and in **common law**, schools and education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils.

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

In line with safeguarding expectations, schools must act as a **“prudent parent”** would when caring for a child (in loco parentis).

This policy should be read alongside the following:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Attendance Policy

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.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher are responsible for all decisions made when a child absconds from school.

The class teacher and the teaching assistant are responsible for caring for the child (until the child leaves the premises). They will be responsible for seeking additional help if this is felt to be necessary.

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 he / she has absconded as well as meeting with the Headteacher in order to agree subsequent actions and strategies.

Preventative Measures

- Risk assessments for pupils with known history of absconding.
- Enhanced supervision plans and use of safe spaces where appropriate.
- Communication with parents and multi-agency partners (e.g., Early Help, SEND services) where absconding is a repeated concern.

Procedures

Where a pupil, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation (i.e. not in class / where they are expected to be, but suspected to still be in the school grounds) the following procedures should be followed:

Member of staff to inform Headteacher or Deputy Headteachers, and main office. The quickest way to do this is through using the class telephone. Office staff to review CCTV to support with the search and maintain contact with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.

Headteacher and/or Deputy Headteacher organise a search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.

If the pupil is not found then all available staff to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds. Staff are saying the pupils name and encouraging them to return or if not parents and the police will have to be called.

If the child is not found, school office to contact parents/carers and police 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 staff's knowledge of the child and on the levels of risk, and on what action is in the child's best interests.

Any staff who leave school grounds to take mobile phone to contact school.

Once a pupil has been found then the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will use their professional judgement to outline the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future. This will also be discussed with the child's parents.

A written report will be filed on the incident on My Concerns.

Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher to brief police and parents.

N.B. If the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher are not immediately available, then other members of the Senior Leadership Team are to be involved as above, until the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher are available.

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

Staff must follow the pupil to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school.

If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to himself or other people then staff should adhere to the Behaviour Policy with reference to use of reasonable force, if appropriate.

At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the pupil to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and 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, the school office, Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher (other member of SLT if they are not immediately available) must be contacted immediately and 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.

Additional staff may be requested to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.

The Head Teacher or Deputy Headteacher (or other member of SLT if they are not immediately available) will notify the office to contact the pupil's parents/carers and the police.

If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil they must contact the school office giving details of their location and the clothes which the pupil is wearing.

If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the Head Teacher or Deputy Headteacher (or other member of SLT if they are not immediately available) will make a decision as to how to take matters further which will take into account the age of the pupil, 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. If the pupil returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed as soon as possible.

Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil must be seen by a trusted member of 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 on My Concerns.

Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher to brief police and parents.

Follow-Up

- Headteacher/Deputy to debrief parents and police.
- Pupil to be supported through a **Restorative / Reintegration Meeting**.
- Agreement forms completed:
 - Appendix A: School Agreement
 - Appendix B: Parental Agreement
 - Appendix C: Pupil Agreement
- Strategies reviewed regularly and risk assessment updated.

Monitoring & Review

- All absconding incidents are reported to Governors
- Policy reviewed annually or sooner if statutory guidance changes.

Appendix A

Agreement following a pupil absconding from school

(to be completed by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher and attached to appendix B and C)

Child: _____ Date: _____

Record of incident:

An agreement has been reached following this absconding incident. Actions have been agreed in order to help this pupil feel happy and safe in school (Appendices A, B and C). School will support this agreement by:

Signed: _____ (Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher)

*Copy to be scanned and added to My Concerns
Appendix B*

Parental Agreement

(to be completed by the parent or carer)

I have read the record of the absconding incident (Appendix A). I wish to make the following comments relating to the incident (optional):

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 (see below). For my part, I will support this agreement by:

Signed: _____ (Parent)

Date:

Copy to be scanned and added to My Concerns

Appendix C

Pupil Agreement

(to be completed by the pupil or by an adult on behalf of the pupil)

I have read or listened to the record of the absconding incident (Appendix A). I wish to make the following comment about the incident (optional):

I understand that it is always unacceptable for me 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 me to be happy and safe in school. I know I need to keep to the school rules and not leave the school grounds without permission. I understand that there are actions too for the school and my parents (listed below). I will support this agreement by:

Signed: _____ (Pupil)

Copy to be scanned and added to My Concerns