



# Lever Park

Part of Bolton Impact Trust

## Absconding Policy

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## 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 –

Safeguarding Policy

Behaviour Policy

Individual Risk Assessments (if applicable)

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.

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.

It is important for Lever Park as a school to maintain a caring, welcoming ethos which establishes a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. Accordingly, we must take reasonable steps, through their pupil management and staff-training programme, to minimise the likelihood of positive handling becoming necessary in the case of one or more pupils absconding.

## PROCEDURES

**Where a pupil marked present, is found to be absent from school without authorisation the following safeguarding procedures must be followed:**

1. Member of staff to inform Academy Lead, member of SLT, designated staff and main office.
2. Academy Lead or member of SLT organises search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.
3. 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.
4. School office must phone the police when area has been fully checked if the child is not found.
5. School office to immediately contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation when the Police have been informed. Always keep parents updated.
6. 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,

any active risk assessment and on what action is in the child's best interests. Liaise with the police at all times.

7. Any staff who leave school grounds must take a mobile phone to contact school. Staff should where possible leave the site accompanied by another member of staff.

8. Once a pupil has been found then the lead SLT member will use their professional judgement to outline the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future.

9. A report on CPOMS must be filed on the incident.

10. Member of SLT must brief police and parents.

**Where a pupil attempts or is seen to be leaving the school premises without authorisation the following procedures must 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. De-escalation techniques must be attempted. In such stressful circumstances it is important that staff remain as calm as possible and follow procedures. (See Appendix 1)

3. If a student is deemed to be a high risk to themselves or other people then staff should adhere to the Positive Handling Strategies as per CPI training.

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 pupil to panic, possibly putting them at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.

5. If the student has left the immediate vicinity of the school the Academy Lead or SLT members must be contacted immediately and the lead person will direct the course of action.

6. Staff 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. If the searching staff lose sight of, or are concerned for the safety of the student or themselves, they must contact the school office giving current details of their location and the clothes which the student is wearing.

9. The SLT or designated staff must contact the Police and student's parents/carers immediately. These phone calls must be made concurrently.

10. If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and are no longer visible then the SLT 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.

11. If the student returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed as soon as possible.

12. Upon his or her return to school, and when the student is calm, the student should be seen by the SLT so that the reasons for absconding may be discussed in detail if this is appropriate. At this point a decision will be made as to the appropriateness of further actions.

13. A report on CPOMS must be filed on the incident.

14. It is important that following an incident the issues that arise are addressed and staff must:

- Consider an individual risk assessment for the student involved. If there is a second incident within an academic year then a risk assessment must be completed.
- Where appropriate, talk through the incident with the student and parents involved. Ensure that a record is kept of the discussion held with the student and parents.
- Complete an incident on CPOMS which can be actioned by the staff member completing the follow up meeting.
- 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.

## INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

What happens if you / your child / goes missing?

**What is meant by “missing”?** You will be considered missing if members of staff do not know where you are.

**What is meant by “absconding”?** You have absconded if you deliberately go off site or from where you should be without telling a member of staff or without a member of staff giving you permission.

**What will happen if you go missing?** The people looking after you have a responsibility to know where you are and to make sure you are safe. If you are ‘missing’ they will speak to your friends, teachers and family to see if they can help. If there is concern for your safety then staff will need to search for clues as to where you are. The Police may be informed that you are missing and they and the school staff will look for you.

**What happens if you can’t be found?** A meeting will be held between the school and the Police to plan how to search for you. Your name, description and a photograph will be given to the Police in order to help them with their search.

**What happens when you are found?** You will be returned to a safe place and will be asked about the reasons for you going missing. This is to try and find out if anything is troubling you and to see if anyone can help. You do not have to run away to talk to someone. If you want to talk to someone outside of school, this can be arranged. You may also be visited by a Police Officer who will check that you are back. This is called a “Safe and Well Check”. You will be able to speak to the Police Officer without any member of staff present if you wish to do so.

**Will anything else happen?** If you are injured or unwell then you will be checked by a Doctor or Nurse. Your teacher or mentor will want to talk to you about going missing. If you have deliberately run away (absconded) then the people responsible for your safety will meet to discuss ways in which such incidents can be prevented by looking at the reasons for your actions.

Remember - You have the right to use a telephone to talk to someone. If you are worried about something or just want to talk, the school counsellor or nurse may be available.

The national ChildLine number is 0800 1111.

## Appendix 1

### De-escalation and Positive Handling

We aim to create safe and secure school environments where violence, threatening behaviour or abuse to any member of the community is able to be managed in a therapeutic way to maintain the child's dignity whilst keeping staff and other pupils safe.

We take seriously all acts of violence and aggression against anyone and we will do everything reasonably practicable to reduce risk.

We expect all parents/carers and other visitors to behave in a reasonable and acceptable manner towards all staff.

We expect all staff to behave professionally at all times and when confronted with difficult situations to attempt to defuse them.

**At all times our collective aim should be to seek to reduce the necessity for physical intervention as, depending on the type of restrictive practice used, serious physical injury and psychological harm can occur. Psychological harm may include trauma, fear, shame, anxiety, depression and loss of dignity.**

**As a result, physical intervention at Lever Park is avoided unless completely necessary.**

### De-escalation strategies

Below are a range of strategies that could be employed, if the situation allows it, in order to prevent the situation from escalating:

- Don't try to reason
- Do not pursue
- Offer a safe space
- Wait
- Use silence and allow the child to regulate
- Avoid making demands
- Don't yell over a screaming child
- Validate their feelings, not their actions
- Respect personal space
- Give time for reflection
- Be aware of your body language
- Be non-judgemental
- Use a distraction
- Decrease stimulation
- Use a calming tone
- Breathing exercises

### What 4 things should you consider before using a physical intervention?

For the intervention to be justified there must be a belief that Injury or Damage is likely in the Predictable Future; The intervention must be Immediately Necessary; The actions or

interventions taken must be a Last Resort; Any force or intervention used must be the Minimum Necessary to achieve the objective.

### **Emergency Seclusion**

Emergency seclusion is the supervised containment of a person in a room, which may be locked, or equipment is used to prevent it being opened, to protect others from significant harm. This would include staff or a person blocking the exit with their body or ANY item

This is an extreme form of restraint. Staff are NOT permitted to use seclusion because the child/young person becomes aggressive, for not complying with rules, as a punishment or any other reason.

### **MAPA Decision – Making Matrix**

Staff are trained to undertake a risk assessment regarding physical risk behaviour in order to support their critical decision making during a crisis event.

Developing critical decision making enables staff to remain in control of their own emotions and behaviour in order to make appropriate judgements about the necessary action required.

Staff are trained to determine the necessary physical interventions and the level of restriction that may be appropriate to keep people safe making decisions objectively rather than subjectively.

The MAPA Decision Making Matrix is a tool which staff use to reach objective critical decisions about risk.

**Risk:** The chance that an event or behaviour may occur Everyday life involves some degree of risk which can be viewed along a continuum from lower risk to higher risk.

When reaching a decision about risk, it is important that we objectively consider two key variables;

**Likelihood:** The chance an event or behaviour may occur. This is viewed along a continuum from unlikely to likely.

**Outcome:** The severity of harm if the event or behaviour does occur. Outcome can be viewed along a continuum from low-severity to high severity.

### **When can reasonable force be used?**

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent children from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In the school, force can be used for two main purposes – to control children or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgment of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.