

## **INTRODUCTION**

This policy applies to all schools within the Multi Academy Trust. This version has been personalised to make it relevant specifically to Congleton High School.

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'.

We actively work to provide a secure, safe environment in our school, so that we are a place where children want to come to enjoy learning with others as part of a caring community. We recognise that this it is highly unlikely that a child will try to abscond from our school, but this policy is written to ensure that we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur. We follow Cheshire East's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from lessons and/or school, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future. <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school-attendance/children-missing-education.aspx>

We also ensure that we are rigorous in our attendance procedures; these are outlined in our attendance policy. Where a child's destination is unknown when they have left our school site, we ensure we carry out all necessary checks and refer them as CME using the appropriate form so that they can be followed up on. Staff are aware of the potential harm that can happen to a child who is missing from education and the importance of rigour around our attendance procedures to reduce this as a threat to our children's safety.

The school maintains a secure environment and exits are restricted throughout the normal school day for safeguarding purposes. These restrictions do not affect the ability to exit the school in an emergency. There are very clear procedures for children to sign out and leave school site for example for medical appointments.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Headteacher (or Deputy/Leadership team in the Headteacher's absence) is responsible for decisions made when a child absconds from school. A child's safety and wellbeing are the priority.

All staff are responsible for seeking additional help for a student at risk of absconding if this is felt necessary.

Parents, guardians and carers are responsible for supporting the work of the school. They are responsible for encouraging their children to follow school policies and procedures. Once a parent<sup>1</sup> has

been notified that their child has absconded, they are responsible for actively supporting the school with subsequent procedures and actions.

## **PROCEDURES**

If the school suspects a student of leaving the school site without permission:

1. The staff member will alert the senior member of staff on rota who will arrange for the site to be checked. At this stage, the senior member of staff will be informed if the absconding child is at particularly high risk or more vulnerable because of additional factors such as their SEND or Looked After status. This will then determine who is informed and how quickly others are involved.
2. If the senior member of staff cannot locate the student but there is no evidence that they left the site, parents will be informed that their child is absent from lesson.
3. If the senior member of staff cannot locate the student and it is felt there is a possibility they have left the school site, parents will be informed and the school will engage their support to help locate their child to ensure that the student is safe. In the case of a Looked after Child (LAC), or Previously Looked after Child (PLAC) the school will ensure that the social worker/external agencies are informed although this could be through the carer by agreement.
4. If attempts to locate the student have been unsuccessful, in the case of a LAC, the school will inform the police via their non-emergency number, 101. If the student is not a LAC but there are concerns about their emotional state at the time of absconding, the school will inform the police via their non-emergency number, 101. If the school has serious concerns that the student is at immediate risk of danger to themselves or others, the school will contact the police via their emergency number, 999.
5. Under normal circumstances, staff will not follow or chase a student once they have left the school site unless it is believed that the risk to the student is greater by not doing so.
6. Staff will take care when engaging in conversation with the student initially, if they are in an emotional state, and will follow guidance on any specific procedures with regard to that particular child, i.e. a RAMP or SEND documents (including Educational Health Care Plans).
7. If the student returns of their own volition, the school will inform parents (and the police if appropriate).
8. If possible, the student who has absconded should be brought back to school the same day.
9. When the student is back in school and in an appropriately calm state, a relevant member of staff will address any issues that may have prompted the student to leave school site and will discuss consequences, as appropriate.
10. If the student continues to abscond from school, appropriate consequences will be issued; these will be in line with the school's Positive Schooling Policy. A risk assessment will also be put in place at this point and will involve parents and carers as appropriate.
11. Where the school has concerns about the child, advice should be sought from CHECS or appropriate outside agencies such as SCIES, particularly if there is a pattern of absconding behaviour or if there are contextual concerns around the child, such as CSE. A CSE screening tool will be completed at this stage and submitted to CHECS.

12. All children who abscond should then have the incident recorded onto the CPOMS (safeguarding online system) by the member of staff who has reported the incident.

### **STATUTORY GUIDANCE**

This policy takes into account the statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care 2020-2022.

[https://www.proceduresonline.com/LimitedCMS\\_centrally\\_managed\\_content/pancheshire/shared\\_files/pan\\_cheshire\\_missing\\_from\\_home.pdf](https://www.proceduresonline.com/LimitedCMS_centrally_managed_content/pancheshire/shared_files/pan_cheshire_missing_from_home.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this policy, the term 'parent' refers to any person with day to day responsibility for a student in school.

<b>Written/Prepared by: Lucy Darling</b>	<b>Date: April 2021</b>
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