

Child Absconding/Missing Child Policy



This policy will be reviewed on an annual cycle

Person responsible for the Policy:	Headteacher, DSL, Attendance Lead
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1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out the procedures to be followed if a pupil goes missing, absconds, or leaves the school site without permission during the school day, educational visits, or school activities. The safety and wellbeing of every child is our highest priority. The school is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent children from leaving supervision and to responding immediately and effectively should an incident occur.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect pupils from harm.
- Ensure a swift and coordinated response when a child is missing.
- Clarify staff responsibilities.
- Support safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- Meet statutory safeguarding duties.
- Ensure children are safeguarded when needing to leave school, whether they return after their appointment or not, during the day.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils.
- All school staff.
- Volunteers.
- Supply staff.
- Educational visits and off-site activities.

4. Definition

A child is considered to have absconded or gone missing when:

- Their whereabouts are unknown.
- They leave supervision without permission.
- They leave the school site unsupervised.
- They cannot be located after reasonable checks.

5. Preventative Measures

The school will take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of absconding by:

- Maintaining secure boundaries and gates.
- Registering pupils promptly.
- Supervising pupils appropriately during lessons, breaks, and transitions.
- Conducting regular headcounts.
- Completing risk assessments for pupils identified as vulnerable.

- Sharing relevant safeguarding information with staff.
- Ensuring visitors follow signing-in procedures.
- Teaching pupils about safety and school expectations.

Additional support plans may be implemented for pupils with:

- SEND.
- SEMH needs.
- Trauma-related behaviours.
- Known absconding risks.

6. Immediate Response Procedure

Step 1 – Initial Checks

If a child is discovered missing:

1. Remain calm.
2. Inform the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.
3. Conduct an immediate search of:
 - o Classrooms.
 - o Toilets.
 - o Shared areas.
 - o Playground and outdoor spaces.
 - o Medical room.
 - o Intervention rooms.
4. Check registers and signing-out records.
5. Ask staff and pupils discreetly for information.

Step 2 – Escalation

If the child is not located within 10 minutes, or sooner if risk is high:

- The Headteacher or DSL will assess the level of risk.
- Parents/carers will be informed.
- Police will be contacted by dialling 999 if:
 - o The child is vulnerable.
 - o The child is believed to have left the site.
 - o There is immediate concern for safety.
 - o The child is very young.
 - o Weather or environmental risks are significant.

Information shared with police should include:

- Child's full name.
- Description and clothing.
- Photograph if available.
- Time and place last seen.
- Known risks or triggers.

- Medical or communication needs.

Step 3 – Staff Deployment

Where appropriate:

- Staff may search the immediate local area.
- Staff must remain contactable.
- Staff should not place themselves at risk.
- One member of staff must remain at school to coordinate communication.

7. If the Child is Found

When the child is located:

1. Ensure the child is safe and supervised.
2. Provide reassurance and emotional support.
3. Inform parents/carers immediately.
4. Inform police if they were involved.
5. Assess whether medical attention is required.
6. Record the incident fully.
7. Conduct a debrief with relevant staff.
8. Review risk assessments and support plans.

The response to the child should remain supportive and non-confrontational.

8. Recording and Reporting

All incidents must be recorded, including:

- Date and time.
- Location last seen.
- Staff involved.
- Actions taken.
- Time parents and police informed.
- Outcome.
- Follow-up actions.

Incidents should be logged in accordance with safeguarding and behaviour recording procedures.

Serious incidents may require notification to:

- The Local Authority.
- Governors.
- Safeguarding partners.

9. Risk Assessment

Individual risk assessments should be considered for pupils who:

- Have previously absconded.
- Present significant emotional or behavioural needs.
- Have communication difficulties.

- Are at risk of exploitation or harm.

Control measures may include:

- Increased supervision.
- Safe spaces.
- Key adult support.
- Transition planning.
- Parent partnership arrangements.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher

- Ensure implementation of this policy.
- Lead incident management.
- Liaise with external agencies.
- Ensure records are completed.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Assess safeguarding risks.
- Coordinate safeguarding responses.
- Support staff and families.
- Maintain safeguarding records.

Attendance Lead

- Ensure attendance code is updated in Arbor – lates/leaving early/medicals

Staff

- Supervise pupils appropriately.
- Follow procedures immediately.
- Ensure registers are completed am registers by 9.00 am and pm register by 1.30pm
- Report concerns promptly.
- Participate in reviews and risk management.

11. Educational Visits

For off-site visits:

- Risk assessments must address missing child procedures.
- Pupils must understand boundaries and expectations.
- Headcounts should be frequent.
- Emergency contact details must be carried by staff.

If a child goes missing during a visit:

1. Inform the visit leader immediately.
2. Conduct a rapid search.
3. Contact venue security if applicable.
4. Inform school leadership.
5. Contact police and parents where necessary.

12. Safeguarding Considerations

Any incident of absconding may indicate underlying safeguarding concerns, including:

- Neglect.
- Emotional distress.
- Bullying.
- Exploitation.
- Mental health needs.
- Domestic abuse.

All incidents should therefore be considered within safeguarding procedures.

13. Training

Staff will receive:

- Safeguarding training.
- Awareness of this policy.
- Guidance on supervision and site security.
- Procedures for responding to missing child incidents.

14. Related Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- SEND Policy
- Attendance Policy