

# St Martins Absconding from School Policy



**Shaw  
Education  
Trust**

**Date of Policy: Autumn 2022**

**To be reviewed: Summer term 2023**

Aim: We actively work to provide a secure, safe environment, a school where children want to come to enjoy learning with others as part of our school community. The purpose of this non-statutory 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.

Once a pupil has been registered as present the school is "in loco parentis". Should a child abscond from school every attempt should be made to contact the parents/carers to advise them that their child has absconded from school. When parents/carers are contacted, it should be made clear that the responsibility for their child is being passed back to them.

### **Procedure should a student abscond from school.**

Contact with parents/carers should be made as a priority, this will generally be done by telephone. It is advisable to record details of attempts to establish contact if the initial phone call is not answered or initial form of contact is not responded to. Once the parents/carers are contacted, the attendance register should be amended to show unauthorised absence with a note stating that the student has absconded and is no longer on the school premises.

If the parents/carers cannot be contacted, it may be appropriate to contact the police. This decision will be made by a member of SLT based on knowledge of the child and individual circumstances. The responsibility for the pupil remains with the school until this has been handed over to parents/carers or to the police.

Should a pupil abscond from school a dynamic risk assessment will need to take place. School staff should not pursue the pupil or try to force her/him back into school. A member of SLT should be contacted immediately and the decision relating to whether or not to pursue a student will be made by them. Staff will not chase or follow the pupil, without support and instruction from a member of SLT as this could lead to the pupil wandering further afield, acting impetuously or causing a traffic accident. Members of SLT will use their judgement, knowledge of the pupil and assessment of the pupil's safety in deciding what to do. A pupil's age, vulnerability and other factors, such as the demeanour of the student, will to be taken into account.

In all cases, staff should avoid placing themselves in situations of potential danger; awareness of the schools duty of care to all staff must be considered alongside a duty of care to the student.

### **Pupils who return to school after absconding.**

Most pupils who abscond will do so as a result of a specific incident which may have taken place either at school, at home or on the way to school. For those pupils who

return to school either by their own choice, with parental support or following intervention by a member of staff, they are likely to be in need of support, understanding and perhaps some time to reflect and allow for positive discussion, including future alternative courses of action.

### **Pupils who abscond from school but remain within the school grounds.**

Positive behaviour support plans should be followed to ensure that staff respond to this in an appropriate way as a negative behaviour incident. Whilst on school grounds the student should be observed by a member(s) of staff at an appropriate distance to the situation and the student. SLT should be made aware of the situation and will support as required and as appropriate.

### **Parent & Carers.**

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 engaging in discussions with the SLT in order to agree subsequent actions.

### **Monitoring and evaluation.**

Each incident will be recorded monitored and evaluated. Individual Risk assessments and positive behaviour support plans will be created and/or modified as this is now considered to be a foreseen risk.

### **Horizons.**

This policy and the protocols within it apply to the school setting and Horizons. Although Horizons is a post 16 offsite setting the expectations remain the same as the school setting.

### **Equality Statement.**

At St Martins School we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the school, irrespective of race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and age (for staff only). We will adhere to the legal definitions of these protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. We aim to develop and maintain a culture of inclusion and diversity, in which all those connected with the school feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in school life.

Catherine Cheung October 2022.