

St Nicholas School

Absconding Child Policy Statement



St. Nicholas School Canterbury

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Governing Body Committee	FGB
SLT responsibility	Stephen King
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Absconding Child Policy Statement (linking to Policies for Health & Safety and Positive Behaviour Support)

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1. Introduction - To abscond is to 'leave without permission'

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. 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 / centre at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.

Absconding is when a pupil goes beyond the fenced boundaries of the school without permission. Many of our pupils have difficulties managing their anxiety, and will often seek to abscond as a result. Other pupils may abscond for attention. In any circumstance, due to the vulnerable nature of our pupils, the absconding policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that pupils are safeguarded at all times. The absconding policy will also be followed if a pupil absconds during on off-site activity / trip.

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. We recognise that it is highly unlikely that a child will try to abscond from our school but this policy is written to ensure we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur. It is our goal to work positively with children and families in order to prevent children leaving school without permission and work together to support and implement strategies.

Things to consider when following this policy

- 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 positive handling, 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 a pupil is deemed to be at risk of absconding, a risk assessment should be completed and shared with staff working with that pupil.

2. Definitions

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.

Internal Absconding	External Absconding
Internal absconding - where a pupil leaves the care of the responsible person / class without permission but remains on the school site.	External absconding - where a pupil leaves the school site during the day or from a school event or booked club / activity and leaves the school site without permission.
Where a pupil leaves a lesson without permission but remains on the school site.	Where a pupil leaves an offsite provision without permission. e.g. Curriculum provision managed by another organisation.
Where a pupil leaves an out-of-hours school event without permission and remains on the school site.	Where a pupil leaves a defined area or supervision of the responsible adult without permission. e.g. when undertaking an educational visit or activity (inc. booked provisions, trips, swimming, residential visit).

Where a pupil leaves a club managed on behalf of the school or an extended services provision held within school without permission and remain on the school site.	Where a pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission. e.g. transport to and from school trips/provisions or home-school transportation
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3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Head Teacher, the Deputy Head Teacher (DSL / H&S Officer) or the on-call SLT members are responsible for all decisions made when a child absconds from school.

The class teacher and the teaching assistants 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. They will seek to follow the pupil if / when they leave the classroom, area, location or school site.

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 Head Teacher in order to agree subsequent actions and strategies.

4. Control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

In order to prevent a child from absconding from the site, the school has considered the following measures:

Site security

- a. The site has a secure perimeter, with gates which are locked during the school day.
- b. The main exits / fire exits from the building are secured by mag locks (which only release during an emergency evacuation or using a staff key fob / master key).
- c. There may be high bolts/closures on doors classroom to restrict unauthorised egress by younger pupils or those with more significant needs from being able to exit the class onto the playground.
- d. Some classes have double handled egress points or high thumb locks.
- e. Fire doors may have high level bolts/closures on them if there is a significant risk of absconding. These are recorded in the Fire Risk Assessment and there must always be someone in the room who can unlock the door whilst pupils are present.
- f. All satellite provisions have secured sites and magnetically controlled door exits, where there is an ability to leave the school site from on egress point.

Effective supervision

- g. Effective supervision is dependant on a number of factors including

- i. Age of the pupils
 - ii. Ability of the pupils
 - iii. Number of the pupils
 - iv. Activities being undertaken
 - v. Pupil behaviour
 - vi. Site layout and security
 - vii. Specific identified risks e.g. pupils with history of absconding, public rights of way through school grounds, building work, etc.
- h. There is a clear system in place for pupils who need to leave the school grounds with permission during the school day and pupils, under these circumstances, are only allowed to leave school early with an authorised adult.
- i. There is a clear system for handing pupils over to before / after school clubs and the beginning / end of the school day.

Information to pupils.

- j. There are clear and consistent reward and sanctions system in school and within each class.

Individual Pupil Risk Assessments / Personal Support Plans.

- k. Where there is a foreseeable risk of absconding, this is included with the individual pupils' Personal Support Plans.
- l. Pupils may, due to personal safety, require the use of a PROACT-SCIPr-UK to maintain safety / prevent absconding, if deemed necessary.

External visits/sites.

- m. Absconding is an explicit risk, named on all single visit / recurring off-site risk assessments. Pupils who have a known absconding risk will have their personal support plan taken into consideration alongside the visit / venue risk assessments.
- n. On an Educational Visit the security of the venue/location should be assessed and supervision levels altered accordingly in advance, and with a sweep on arrival.
- o. There are robust systems in place so that each group has specified members and leaders, and regular head counts occur throughout a visit.
- p. In the planning for an educational visit the risks of absconding must be clearly assessed, particularly in the case where known absconders are in attendance. This should include transport.
- q. Regular head counts should take place throughout the visit. Supervising staff should be allocated a group of pupils / be responsible for their care & supervision.
- r. If on a residential visit the risks and supervision needs are even high / more acute.
- s. Robust emergency procedures should be place for every off-site visit, including communication between groups, where appropriate.
- t. When using school minibus vehicles, the seating arrangements should take into account the risk of absconding.
- u. When using staff cars to transport known absconders the RA should specifically refer to the risk of absconding, with pupils sitting in the rear of the vehicle with child-locks applied, where appropriate.

5. Actions to be taken in the event of a child absconding.

Procedures

1) **Absconding from class / group (within school):**

- a) Registers are taken every morning between 9.15 and 9.30 following arrival to school. Any absentees are followed up by phone call. A further register is taken in the afternoon once groups have returned from lunch.
- b) It is the responsibility of the staff in each class to account for the whereabouts of their pupils. Pupils are supervised at all times.
- c) Upon discovering a pupil is missing the school reception will be contacted immediately who will announce the missing child's status over the school tannoy system; the SLT will be informed who will lead a sweep of the school. An immediate search is undertaken by all school staff (nearby) looking in and around the school / their area and in any usual haunts (for the specific child). The search will not exceed 10 minutes.
- d) If they cannot be found, it must be assumed that they have absconded. In this situation, parents / carers and (where appropriate) social worker are to be informed immediately and kept up to date with the process. Once the pupil has been missing for 20 minutes the police are to be called. This may vary depending on the circumstance and individual needs of the pupil (see below).
- e) The absconding from school without being seen procedure would then be triggered – see 3)

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

- a) As soon as a child has absconded from the school building, an alert should be sent out to all staff via the school telephone system. Members of senior leadership staff will be sent out until the child is found / brought back.
- b) At least one member of staff should follow the pupil and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school grounds. NB: Telephone contact by mobile telephone should be maintained at all times.
- c) If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school, the school office, Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher must be contacted immediately.
- d) Staff will follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance, if in view.
- e) The lead staff member will contact the police and pupil's parents/carers, if deemed appropriate.
- f) If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil they must contact the school office giving details of their location.
- g) If the pupil returns / is returned to school of their own volition, parents/carers and the

police will be updated as soon as possible.

- h) Upon his or her return to school, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with their child and the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher 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.
- i) A Incident report on CPOMS will be filed once the situation is safe (with adequate after care / well-being support offered to those involved and, if appropriate an HS160 Near Miss / serious incident investigation report.
- j) If the pupil is not located / safely returned, the following absconding from school without being seen procedure is followed (see 3).

3) Where a pupil is suspected of leaving / having left the school premises without authorisation, without being seen / has gone missing for a period of time, the following procedures should be followed:

- a) As soon as it is suspected that a child has absconded from the school site, the staff member(s) concerned will alert the SLT by telephone through the school tannoy / telephone or via the pinpoint system.
- b) The class staff and SLT staff will liaise between each other, informing the teacher (and/or visit lead if appropriate) and draw up an immediate dynamic risk assessment of how to respond.
- c) If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school, the school office, Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher must be contacted immediately.
- d) At last 2-3 staff will follow the pupil via the likely route and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance, if in view. NB: Telephone contact by mobile telephone should be maintained at all times.
- e) The lead staff member will contact the police and pupil's parents/carers, if deemed appropriate. School CCTV will be viewed to see if this provides a clue to the location / exit direction of the pupil concerned.
- f) If the searching staff do not immediately locate the child, the school must be contacted giving details of their location. If the pupil is not located within 2-5 minutes, the police will be contacted by 999. At this point the school office will contact the family of the pupil.
- g) If the pupil returns / is returned to school of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be updated as soon as possible.
- h) The school staff, in liaison with the police, will conduct a grid search where, it is hoped that the child will safely be found.
- i) Upon his or her return to school, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with their child and the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher 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.
- j) A Incident report on CPOMS will be filed once the situation is safe and / or resolved (with adequate after care / well-being support offered to those involved and, if appropriate an HS160 Near Miss / serious incident investigation report.

4) Where a pupil attempts or is seen to be leaving a school visit / offsite activity without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

- a) As soon as a child has absconded / attempted to abscond from the group the staff will liaise between each other, informing the visit lead. A dynamic risk assessment of how to respond will then be drawn up, including informing the security staff of the site and / or area, where appropriate.
- b) At least one member of staff should follow the pupil and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school grounds. NB: Telephone contact by mobile telephone should be maintained at all times.
- c) If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the group, the school office, Head Teacher and / or Deputy Head Teacher must be contacted immediately.
- d) At least 1 member of staff will follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance, if in view.
- e) The lead staff member will contact the police and pupil's parents/carers, if deemed appropriate.
- f) If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil they must contact the school office giving details of their location.
- g) If the pupil returns / is returned to school of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be updated as soon as possible.
- h) Upon his or her return to school, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with their child and the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher 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.
- i) A Incident report on CPOMS will be filed and, if appropriate an HS160 Near Miss / serious incident investigation report.
- j) If the pupil is not located the following absconding from a school visit / offsite activity without being seen procedure will be followed (see 5).

5) Where a pupil has left a school visit / offsite activity without authorisation, without being noticed / has gone missing (for a period of time) the following procedures should be followed:

- a) As soon as it is suspected that a child has absconded / attempted to abscond from the group, the staff will liaise between each other, informing the visit lead. An immediate dynamic risk assessment of how to respond will then be drawn up, including informing the security staff of the site / area, where appropriate. CCTV will be viewed to try to locate the missing child or their exit route.
- b) The visit lead will immediately contact the school who will inform the SLT – who will contact the family.
- c) At last 2-3 staff will follow the pupil via the likely route and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance. NB: Telephone contact by mobile telephone should be maintained at all times.
- d) If the searching staff do not immediately locate the child, the school must be contacted giving details of their location. If the pupil is not located within 5 minutes,

the police will be contacted by 999. At this point the school office will contact the family of the pupil.

- e) If the pupil is not located within 2-5 minutes, the police will be contacted by 999. At this point the school office will contact the family of the pupil.
- f) If the pupil returns / is returned to school of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be updated as soon as possible.
- g) The school staff, in liaison with the police, will conduct a grid search where, it is hoped that the child will safely be found.
- h) Upon his or her return to school, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with their child and the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher 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.
- i) A Incident report on CPOMS will be filed once the situation is safe and / or resolved (with adequate after care / well-being support offered to those involved and, if appropriate an HS160 Near Miss / serious incident investigation report.

Flow Chart 1 School Procedure if a child is missing / absconds from the school grounds

Staff member informs SLT that a pupil is possibly missing / absconding or has absconded

Staff check location of pupil / if pupil still on premises by:

- Asking other available staff.
- Staff check last known location, known hiding points / calm down areas / areas pupil may regularly go to if absconding
- Staff members man any points of easy exit from school grounds / building whilst others sweep building / grounds systematically (starting in the main foyer and tracing areas where egress could technically be possible – staff car park, playgrounds, front entrances etc.)

Pupil not found on the premises

Pupil sighted leaving site

Staff leave premises to search / follow if safe to do so

Pupil is found on the grounds / premises

Pupil deliberately absconded

Pupil accidentally lost / misplaced

- Staff inform parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact
- Staff inform the police, if deemed appropriate.

- SLT and other staff informed

Pupil is found

Pupil is not found – staff to follow in possible directions, call 999 enact dynamic emergency action plan.

Pupil refuses to come in - SLT will manage.

Pupil comes in / SLT will manage

- Parents, pupil and police (if appropriate) attend school to discuss the matter. This should be done as soon as possible.

- Keep watch from discrete distance (if applicable)
- Call parents
- Pupil and parent discuss matter with SLT

Investigate incident, determine how it happened and any lessons to be learnt. Take action to prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk assessments to reflect any changes. Make reports to KCC / RIDDOR as appropriate.

Flow Chart 2 School Procedure if a child is missing / absconds from an offsite activity / visit

Staff member informs SLT that a pupil is possibly missing / absconding or has absconded from an offsite visit / residential activity

Staff check surrounding location of pupil / if pupil still on-site visit premises or area by:

- Asking other available staff, members of the public and / or site security. Staff check last known location.
- The school will be contacted by phone and kept in regular contact. School will contact the family
- Staff members man any points of easy exit from grounds / area whilst others sweep building / grounds systematically. Emergency action plan drawn up and some staff leave the site to sweep the local area.
- CCTV may be inspected / Police may be called.
- Some staff will remain behind with the group to supervise / contain / keep safe, in a central position.

Pupil not found on the premises / in the area

- Emergency plan drawn up with areas to search / follow.
- Group of staff go out to sweep local area
- Police or site security contacted to assist with searches / CCTV analysis.

Pupil is found

- Staff to contact school office to inform the pupil is found.
- Office informs parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact.
- Staff to inform the police, if pupil is found.

Pupil is seen leaving the area

Pupil refuses to come back - visit leader will manage. Return to school, if need be / SLT to go out to join group.

Pupil comes back.
- visit leader will manage.
- Group to return if need be

- Staff to contact school office to inform the pupil is found.
- Office informs parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact.

Investigate incident, determine how it happened and any lessons to be learnt. Take action to prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk assessments to reflect any changes. Make reports to KCC / RIDDOR as appropriate.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for monitoring attendance within school on a weekly basis and reporting concerns to the headteacher at the SLT meeting. The headteacher is also responsible for monitoring overall attendance within the school and will report to the Governing Body.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Deputy Headteacher and approved by the Governing Body.

EQUALITY, SAFEGUARDING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

St Nicholas School, in all policies and procedures, will promote equality of opportunity for students and staff from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds and ensure freedom from discrimination on the basis of membership of any group including gender, sexual orientation, family circumstances, ethnic or national origin, disability (physical or mental), religious or political beliefs.

As part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), St Nicholas School aims to:

- Provide equal opportunity for all;
- Foster good relations, and create effective partnership with all sections of the community;
- Only take actions which does not discriminate unlawfully in service delivery, commissioning and employment;
- Provide an environment free from fear and discrimination, where diversity, respect and dignity are valued.

All aspects of Safeguarding will be embedded into the life of the School and be adhered to and be the responsibility of all staff.