The Meadows School



Policy for Absconding Students

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1. **Rationale**
   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.

2. **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 students. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that students are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.

3. **Where a student, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation, <u>and was not seen leaving</u>, the following procedures should be followed:**

Member of staff to inform the Head Teacher or member of SLT, DSL and main office.

Head Teacher or member of SLT organises search of buildings and known places that the student may have gone to.

If the student is not found, then all available staff to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.

- School office to phone the police when area has been fully checked if the child is not found.
- School office to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation.

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, and on what action is in the child's best interests.
- Any information regarding where the child has absconded to.
- Who the child might be with.

Any staff (this must be a minimum of 2) who leave the school grounds need to take mobile phone to contact school.

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

A written report will be recorded on the school's monitoring and recording safeguarding systems (Safeguard).

Member of SLT to brief police and parents.

4. **Where a student attempts or is seen to be leaving the school premises without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:**

- Staff must follow the student to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the student to stay in the school.

- If a student is deemed to be a high risk to himself or other people, then staff should adhere to the Behaviour and *Positive Handling* Policy with reference to holding the student, if appropriate.

- Staff to follow Individual Behaviour Plan and Individual Risk Assessment control measures (as appropriate and relevant). Staff to continue to carry out dynamic risk assessments at all times.

- 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 student to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.

- If the student has left the immediate vicinity of the school, the DSL, Head Teacher or SLT members must be contacted immediately, and the lead person will direct the course of action.

- Staff (minimum of 2) will follow the student and engage in a local search, following the student at a safe distance if in view.

- The SLT lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.

- The SLT lead will contact the student's parents/carers.

- If the searching staff lose sight of the student, they must contact the school office giving details of their location and the clothes which the student is wearing, in order that they may call the police.

- If the student(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is 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 student absconding, the student's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes.

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

- Upon his or her return to school, and when the student is calm, the student must be seen by the SLT 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.

- A written report will be recorded on the school's online recording and monitoring safeguarding system (Safeguard).

Appendix 1 - Example School Procedure if a child is missing / absconds.

Staff member informs SLT / Head that pupil is possibly missing / absconding

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

- 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.

Pupil not found on the premises

Pupil sighted leaving the premises

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

- **Staff inform parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact**
- **Staff inform the police**

Pupil is found

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

Pupil is found on the grounds / premises

Pupil deliberately absconded

Pupil accidentally lost / misplaced

- SLT and other staff informed

Pupil refuses to come in / go to Head

Pupil comes in / goes to Head

Keep watch from discrete distance (if applicable)

- **Call parents**
- **Pupil and parent discuss matter**

Investigate incident, determine how it happened and any lessons to be learnt. Take action to prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk