

ABSCONDING/MISSING STUDENTS POLICY

Approved by: Governing Board

Date: Wednesday 22nd December
2020

Next review due by: SEPTEMBER 2024

Definition

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 activities.

Purpose

To ensure that all children at Parayhouse School are safe and that the School promotes the welfare of all children.

It is important for us as a school to maintain a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. Accordingly, we must take reasonable steps, through our site management, pupil management and staff training programme, to minimise the likelihood of pupils absconding.

Actions

- the school site will be as secure as possible
- children at risk of absconding will have a risk assessment
- parent / carer details will be kept up to in the school office
- processes and procedures for students moving around the building will be robust and continually reviewed

Where a pupil is found to be absent from the school site:

- staff inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team asap
- member of SenLT organises a search of the school building and known places that the pupil may have gone to
- if the pupil is not found then all available staff will complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds
- as soon as it is clear that the student is not on the school site on the very immediate surroundings, the school will inform parents/carers immediately. If the pupil is Looked After, then the Social Worker will also be informed at this time. Parents will be kept updated by 1 member of staff assigned to communicate and be constantly available during the time the student is missing

- staff will inform the police (101) if the adult has not been able to contact the parents/carers and the pupil is gone for more than 15 minutes and cannot be found anywhere in the vicinity
- 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 any active risk assessment. Liaise with the police at all times
- wherever possible any member of staff who leaves the school grounds will take a school mobile phone, or personal mobile in order to keep in contact with school. Where possible staff should search in pairs
- once the pupil has been found then the SenLT will use their professional judgement in the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future. They will continue to liaise with police as necessary
- the Headteacher will discuss the absconding with the student and their parents/carers
- the pupil's risk assessment will be reviewed
- a written report will be completed about the incident
- the incident will be reported to the school's Safeguarding Governor

Where a pupil is seen to leave the school site:

- staff member should follow the pupil and attempt to engage and stop them but staff must also be aware at all times 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 them at risk, for example by running on to a busy road
- de-escalation techniques must be attempted. In such stressful circumstances it is important that staff remain as calm and collected as possible and follow procedures (see Appendix 1)
- as soon as possible the staff member should use their mobile phone to contact staff back on the site to come and assist
- the school will inform parents/carers as soon as they are made aware that a student has been seen leaving the site. Parents will be kept updated by 1 member of staff assigned to communicate and be constantly available during the time the student is missing
- if a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to themselves or other people then staff member it may be necessary to use physical intervention. This should follow the school's policy on **xxx**

- if the staff lose sight of, or are concerned for the safety of the pupil or themselves, they must contact the school office giving current details of their location and the clothes the pupil is wearing. The school office will contact the police (101).
- once the pupil has been found then the SenLT will use their professional judgement in response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future. They will continue to liaise with police as necessary
- the Headteacher will discuss the absconding with the child and their parents/carers
- the pupil's risk assessment will be reviewed
- a written report will be completed about the incident
- the incident will be reported to the school's Safeguarding Governor

Where a pupil goes missing whilst on a school trip

- where a student is identified as 'missing' during a trip off-site, staff will immediately arrange for all other students to remain in one secure position with sufficient staff while other members of staff undertake a search of the immediate area
- the most senior member of staff present will immediately inform site security if possible (e.g. in a train station or museum) and provide information on the student's clothing, name and complexity of need
- if the student is not found within 10 minutes, the staff member will call the police (101) and the school office who will immediately inform parents/carers
- A member of the SenLT will continue to update the family be constantly available while the student is missing
- once the pupil has been found then the SenLT will use their professional judgement in response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future. They will continue to liaise with police as necessary
- the Headteacher will discuss the absconding with the child and their parents/carers
- the pupil's risk assessment will be reviewed
- a written report will be completed about the incident
- the incident will be reported to the school's Safeguarding Governor

After all absconding incidents school will:

- produce a written report
- discuss the incident with staff and review any required actions and training
- review procedures for the individual every half term to ensure appropriate control measures are in place and that staff are fully informed
- review site security and Absconding Policy
- inform governors at every full governing body meeting about any incidents of absconding

Appendix 1

De-escalation techniques

It may help to:

Use TEAM TEACH de-escalation techniques

Use Restorative Language (to avoid asking why they are doing something)

- Move calmly
- Make simple, clear statements to the pupil
- Keep your voice quiet, firm and assured
- Lessen the threat of your presence by sitting down or allowing the pupil space
- Talk to the pupil all the time
- Offer comfort, reassurance and security
- Maintain eye contact
- When possible, have help at hand
- Find a way to allow the pupil to 'save face'

It is usually **unhelpful** to:

- Give complex advice or instructions
- Speak quickly and loudly
- Corner a child or stand too close