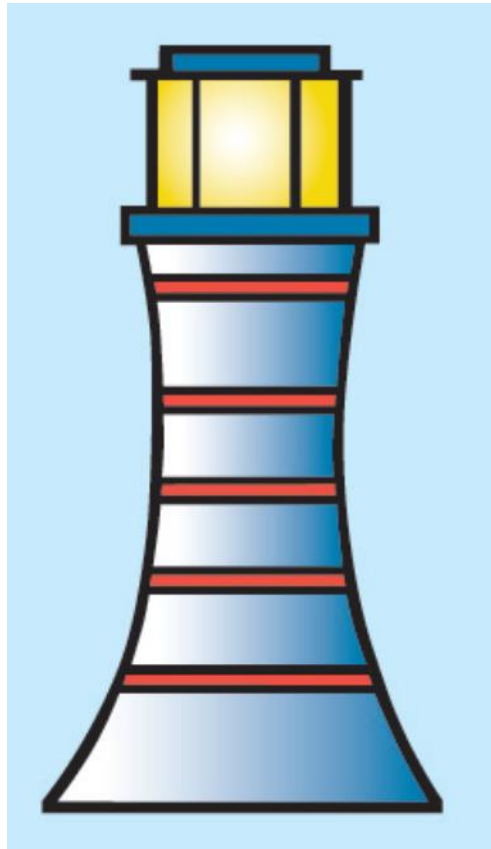


AUSTHORPE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Absconding Child Policy

Reviewed: Autumn Term 2021

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Guidance on dealing with children who abscond

1. Introduction

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.

The purpose of this guidance document is to provide a framework for schools to develop their individual policy and procedures for dealing with pupils who abscond.

2. Definition.

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.

Internal Absconding	External Absconding
Internal absconding - where the pupil leaves the care of the responsible person without permission but remains on the school site.	External absconding - where a pupil 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 swimming, alternate education provision, etc.
Where a pupil leaves a club run on behalf of the school without permission but remains on the site..	Where a pupil leaves a defined area or supervision of the responsible adult without permission. E.g. when undertaking fieldwork or on an educational visit..
Where a pupil leaves extended services provision without permission but remains on the site.	Where a pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission, E.g. transport between split sites, to and from specialist provision.

3. Control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

In order to prevent a child from absconding from the site, a school/centre should consider the following measures. These are suggested control measures and each school/centre would have to consider which are suitable for their provision.

Site security

- The site should have a secure perimeter and gates which can be locked.
- Gates/doors should be secured outside of your stated drop off and pick up times.
- Unsecured gates should be locked during break times if there is a significant risk of absconding.
- Doors into school should be locked from the outside with key coded access or similar.
- There maybe a need to have high bolts/closures on doors/gates to restrict unauthorised egress by younger pupils.
- Early Years should have double handled egress points.
- Fire doors may have high level bolts/closures on them if there is a significant risk of absconding. This must be recorded in the Fire Risk Assessment and there must always be someone in the room who can unlock the door whilst pupils are present.

Effective supervision

- Effective supervision is dependant on a number of factors including
 - Age of the pupils
 - Ability of the pupils
 - Number of the pupils
 - Activities being undertaken
 - Pupil behaviour
 - Site layout and security
 - Specific identified risks e.g. pupils with history of absconding, public rights of way through school grounds, building work, etc.
- Schools should mark on a plan of the school where supervisors should be placed.
- Regular head counts should take place through the school day.
- Ensure there is a robust system in place for pupils to be handed over to their parents, especially in Early Years and KS1.
- Ensure there is a clear system in place for pupils who need to leave the school grounds with permission during the school day, e.g. lunchtimes, medical appointments.
- Ensure there is a clear system for handing pupils over to before/after school clubs.

Information to pupils.

- School rules and expectations are clearly displayed and reinforced throughout the school year.
- There is a clear and consistent reward and sanction system in school which covers absconding pupils.
- Absconding and the school's procedures for dealing with it should be referenced in the home/school agreement.

Individual Pupil Risk Assessments.

- Where there is a foreseeable risk of absconding, there should be an IPRA in place for that child in the prescribed format. Further guidance can be found in PG518 in the Health and Safety Handbook or by contacting the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team.
- The IPRA should clearly detail the individual control measures required to reduce the risk of absconding.
- A Positive Handling Plan (PHP) or Personalised Behaviour Plan (PLP) should be drawn up for a child who absconds, in partnership with the parent/guardian.

External visits/sites.

- On an Educational Visit the security of the venue/location should be assessed and supervision levels altered accordingly.
- Ensure that there are robust systems in place so that each group has specified members and leaders, and regular head counts occur throughout the visit.
- 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.
- Communication between the groups and robust emergency procedures should be place.
- The 14-19 Framework for Alternative Offsite Provision clearly details procedures for attendance and absconding.
- For transport please refer to the School Transport policy.
- When using staff cars to transport known absconders the RA should specifically refer to the risk of absconding.

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

- Notify a member of SLT immediately. This system must NOT place the remaining pupils at risk.
- A procedure for securing and systematically searching the site in the event of a child absconding and their whereabouts being unknown.

- The office staff will notify the parents / carers and the police if a child is known to have left the school site, or they cannot be found.
- Follow up actions to be taken once a child has been found.
- The systems above should cover educational visits and transport where relevant.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to use reasonable physical interventions to prevent a child from putting themselves at risk. Please refer to our Care and Control policy which provides more detail.

5. Further / Additional Information.

There are a number of documents available to assist schools in this matter. These are all available on Infobase via quicklink **P452** :

- Educational Visits Handbook and associated risk assessments.
- Site security guidance in PG204 and playground risk assessments in the Health and Safety Handbook for Schools.
- Care and Control Guidance.
- Individual pupil risk assessment guidance in PG518 in the Health and Safety Handbook.

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.

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.

Where a pupil, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

- Member of staff to inform the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or another member of the SLT also Mrs Fraser (Learning Mentor) .
- “On Call” member organises search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.

- If the pupil 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 staff who leave school grounds to take mobile phone to contact school.
- Once a pupil has been found then the lead SLT member will use their professional judgement to outline the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future.
- A written report will be filed on the incident.
- Member of SLT to brief police and parents.

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

3. Staff must follow the student to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the student to stay in the school.
4. If a student is deemed to be a high risk to himself or other people then staff should adhere to the Care and Control Policy with reference to holding the student, if appropriate.
5. 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 pupil to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.
6. If the student has left the immediate vicinity of the school the school office and SLT members must be contacted immediately and the lead person will direct the course of action.
7. Staff will follow the student and engage in a local search, following the student at a safe distance if in view.
8. The SLT lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.
9. The school office will contact the student's parents/carers.

10. 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.

If the pupil(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 pupil absconding, the pupil'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 filed on the incident.

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 :

- 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 (add specifics here for your site e.g one end to other, first to ground floor, outside edges of playground to middle)

Pupil not found on the premises

Pupil sighted leaving the

Pupil is found on the grounds / premises

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

Pupil deliberately absconded

Pupil accidentally lost / misplaced

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

- SLT and other staff informed

Pupil is found

Pupil refuses to come in / go to Head

Pupil comes in / goes to Head

- 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 Head

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.