



TEENAGE KICKS

Engagement • Progress • Outcomes

PROCEDURE FOR CHILDREN WHO ABSCOND

Approved by:	James Docherty
Last reviewed on:	29 August 2026
Next review due by:	29 August 2027

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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 a caring community. However, we recognise that, due to the social and emotional difficulties many of our children face, the fight-or-flight response to certain situations may make it more likely that a child will try to take 'flight'. These procedures are in place to ensure we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.

Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. 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. Although the perimeter of the site is fenced, the school doors and gates are locked during the school day, and the main entrance has a release system, we recognise that it is possible to circumvent these barriers.

Where a pupil is found to be absent from school without authorisation, the following procedure should be followed:

1. A staff member must inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) immediately.
2. SLT will organise a search of the building and known places the pupil may have gone to. If the pupil is seen leaving the building, staff will follow to the school boundary and attempt to direct the pupil back to site. If the pupil cannot be seen, the parent/carers and Headteacher must be contacted immediately.
3. If the pupil is not found, all available staff will complete a more thorough sweep of the school and grounds.
4. If the pupil is still not found once the school and grounds have been fully checked, staff will inform the parent/carers and contact the police. All calls and attempted calls will be recorded.
5. Consideration will be given to whether the search should be extended beyond the school buildings and grounds. This decision will be based on staff knowledge of the pupil, the level of risk and what action is in the pupil's best interests. The school recognises that following a pupil beyond the school grounds can sometimes cause further distress and may place both the pupil and staff member at additional risk.
6. Any staff who leave the school grounds should take a mobile phone so that they can remain in contact with the school.
7. Once the pupil has been found, the Headteacher will use professional judgement to decide the immediate next steps required to ensure that the pupil remains safe.
8. A written report will be made and an incident record completed.
9. Parents/carers and, where appropriate, social workers will be informed.
10. Upon the pupil's return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil will meet with the Headteacher so that the reasons for absconding can be discussed in detail. At this point, a decision will be made about any further action that may be appropriate. The Headteacher may consider a fixed-term exclusion if it is felt that the pupil's safety has been compromised by absconding.

Pupils who abscond from school but remain in or around the school grounds

In these circumstances, school staff will not pursue a pupil or force them back into the school building. Staff will use their judgement, knowledge of the pupil and assessment of the pupil's safety when deciding what to do. This will include considering the pupil's age, vulnerability and emotional state.

If the pupil is upset or angry, care should be taken when approaching them. The pupil's size and any known risks should also be considered. In all cases, staff must not place themselves in situations where there is a foreseeable risk of injury.

Pupils who return to school after absconding

Pupils who abscond may do so because of a specific incident that has taken place at school, at home or on the way to school.

For pupils who return to school, either by their own choice, with support or following intervention by a member of staff, consideration should be given to their welfare. They are likely to need support, understanding and perhaps some time apart from their peers.

Staff will assess the pupil's presentation on return to school and decide whether they should remain at school or be collected.

Where a pupil attempts, or is seen, to leave the school premises without authorisation, the following procedure should be followed:

1. A member of staff will alert the Headteacher or, in their absence, a member of SLT. This lead person will direct the course of action.
2. A member of staff who knows the pupil well and has a good relationship with them will follow the pupil to the perimeter fence, exit or gate and will try to persuade the pupil to remain on the school site.
3. As active pursuit may encourage a pupil to leave the site and may also cause them to panic, staff will not chase. Staff will instead try to identify the direction in which the pupil is travelling so this information can be shared with parents/carers and the police.
4. The pupil's parents/carers will be contacted. Calls and attempted calls will be recorded. A member of staff will also contact the police to log the incident and will make a record of the call.
5. If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible, staff will decide how to proceed, taking into account the pupil's age, the nature of the incident that led to the pupil absconding, any previous history of absconding and the outcomes of those incidents. If the pupil returns of their own volition, the parents/carers and police will be informed.
6. Upon the pupil's return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil will meet with a member of SLT so that the reasons for absconding can be discussed in detail. At this point, a decision will be made about any further action that may be appropriate. The Headteacher may consider a fixed-term exclusion.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers of pupils are responsible for supporting the work of the school and encouraging their children to keep to all school procedures and policies.

Once the school has informed the parents/carers that their child has absconded, parents/carers are responsible for actively supporting the school with subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming into school to help secure the safety of their child, as well as meeting with the Headteacher or SLT to agree subsequent actions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Each incident will be monitored and evaluated. Individual risk assessments for pupils may be appropriate.

Next review date: August 2027