Absconding Policy

Start Date: September 2019
Reviewed: September 2026

This policy should be read in conjunction with key national and local legislation, guidance and policies.

Introduction and Rationale

This policy is written to guide staff in the event of a student going missing on the premises, going missing outside of the school or having absconded.

Staff are reminded to read the following school policies and practice guidelines in conjunction with this policy:–

- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- School Security Policy
- Behaviour Management Strategy (BMS)
- Individual Risk Assessments

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out the process for all stakeholders 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.

It is important for us as a school to maintain a caring, welcoming ethos which establishes a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. Accordingly we must take reasonable steps, through their pupil management and staff training programme, to minimise the likelihood of positive handling becoming necessary in the case of pupil one or more pupils absconding.

Procedures

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

1. Member of staff to inform Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the main office.

2. Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or member of SLT organises search of buildings and known places to which the pupil may have gone.

3. 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.

4. School office must phone the police when area has been fully checked if the child is not found.

5. School office to **immediately** contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation when the Police have been informed. Always keep parents updated.

6. 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, any active risk assessment and on what action is in **the child's best interests**. Liaise with the police at all times.

7. Any staff who leave school grounds **must** take a school mobile phone, a walkie-talkie or personal mobile to contact school. Staff should where possible leave the site accompanied by another member of staff.

8. 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.

9. A written report **must** be filed on the incident.

10. Member of SLT **must** brief police and parents.

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

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

2. **De-escalation techniques must be attempted in the first instance**. In such stressful circumstances it is important that staff remain as calm ~~and collected~~ as possible and follow procedures. (See Appendix 1)

3. If a student is deemed to be a high risk to themselves or other people then staff should adhere to their **Care and Control Policy** with reference to holding the student, if appropriate.

4. 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 them at risk, e.g. by running onto a busy road.

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

*This will be dependant on the child / behaviour.

6. Staff will follow the student and engage in a local search, following the student at a safe distance if in view. Staff **must** take a school / personal mobile phone or walkie-talkie.

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

8. If the searching staff lose sight of, or are concerned for the safety of the student or themselves, they must contact the school office giving current details of their location and the clothes which the student is wearing.

9. The SLT or DSP **must** contact the Police and student's parents/carers immediately. These phone calls must be made concurrently.

10. 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.

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

12. 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, e.g. a risk assessment plan.

13. A written report will be filed on the incident.

14. It is important that following an incident the issues that arise are addressed and staff **must**:

- Consider an individual risk assessment for the student involved. If there is a second incident within an academic year then a risk assessment **must** be completed.
- Where appropriate, talk through the incident with the student and parents involved. Ensure that a record is kept of the discussion held with the student and parents.
- Complete an incident form and/or an absconding record (a copy of which should be placed in the student's personal files).
- Keep all colleagues informed and discuss the incident in staff meetings and/or in supervision meetings.
- Review procedures for the individual every half term to ensure appropriate control measures are in place and that all staff are fully informed.
- Inform Governors every term about any incidents of absconding.

Information for Students and Parents

What happens if you / your child / go missing?

What is meant by "missing"?
You will be considered missing if members of staff do not know where you are.

What is meant by "absconding"?
You have "absconded" if you deliberately go away from where you should be without telling a member of staff or without a member of staff giving you permission.

What will happen if you go missing?
The people looking after you have a responsibility to know where you are and to make sure you are safe. If you are 'missing' they will speak to your friends, teachers and family to see if they can help. If there is concern for your safety then staff will need to search for clues as to where you are. The Police may
be informed that you are missing and they and the school staff will look for you.

What happens if you can't be found?
A meeting will be held between the school and the Police to plan how to search for you. Your name, description and a photograph will be given to the Police in order to help them with their search.

What happens when you are found?
You will be returned to a safe place and will be asked about the reasons for you going missing. This is to try and find out if anything is troubling you and to see if anyone can help. You do not have to run away to talk to someone. If you want to talk to someone outside of the school, this can be arranged.
You may also be visited by a Police Officer who will check that you are back.
This is called a "Safe and Well Check". You will be able to speak to the Police Officer without any member of staff present if you wish to do so.

Will anything else happen?
If you are injured or unwell then you will be checked by a Doctor or Nurse.
Your teacher or keyworker will want to talk to you about going missing. If you have deliberately run away (absconded) then the people responsible for your safety will meet to discuss ways in which such incidents can be prevented by looking at the reasons for your actions.

Remember - You have the right to use a telephone in private. If you are worried about something or just want to talk, a school counsellor or nurse may be available.

The national Child Line number is 0800 1111.
MEIC Cymru if you are worried about a bullying issue 08088 023456

Your Safeguarding member of staff to talk to is	Mr Andrew Williams Mrs Katie Jones
Your safeguarding Governor is	

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually as part of the overall Safeguarding policies review.

This policy will be ratified by the Governing Body.

Signed: …… (Chair of Governors)

Date: ……

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 pupils 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
- attempt to reason by asking questions