St John's Church of England Primary School

Gather, Grow, Go

The Parable of the Mustard Seed Matthew 13: 31-32

Procedures for children who abscond from school

Date agreed: December 2025

Procedures for children who abscond from school

The purpose of this non-statutory document is to set out the procedures for all stakeholders should a child leave the school without permission.

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. We recognise that it is highly unlikely that a child will try to abscond from our school but 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 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 gates are locked during the school day and both entrances/exits have an electronic release system, we recognise that it is possible to circumvent these barriers.

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

1. CT to inform the Headteacher, or a member of the SLT, and the school office.
2. Headteacher or member of the SLT to organise a search of the building 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 grounds.
4. School office to phone the police when the school and grounds have been fully checked if the child is not found.
5. School office to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation.
6. Consideration will be given as to whether the search should be extended beyond the school buildings and grounds. This decision will be based on staff knowledge of the child and levels of risk and on what action is in the child's best interests.
7. Any staff who leave the school grounds should take a radio and/or mobile phone to contact school.
8. Once a pupil has been found then the lead member of the SLT will use their professional judgement as to outline the response towards the pupils and the support the pupil will need in the future.
9. A written report will be made and added to CPOMS
10. The lead SLT member will brief parents and the police.
11. Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil will meet with a member of 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. The headteacher may consider a suspension as a sanction.

Pupils who abscond from school but remain on the school grounds.

In these circumstances, school staff will not pursue a pupil or force him/her back into the school building.

School staff will use their judgement, knowledge of the pupil and assessment of the pupil's safety in deciding what to do. This will include taking into account the pupil's age and vulnerability.

The demeanour of the pupil will need to be taken into account. If the pupil is upset or angry, care should be taken in approaching the child. The size of the pupil will also be taken into account.

In all cases, staff should not place themselves in situations of potential danger of injury.

Pupils who return to school after absconding

Pupils who abscond will do so as a result of a specific incident which may have taken place at school, at home or on the way to school.

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

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

1. A member of staff will alert the headteacher or the deputising Senior Leader; 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 the pupil will follow the pupil to the perimeter fence, exit or gate and will try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school.
3. As active pursuit may encourage a child to leave the site and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, staff will not chase but will try to keep a child in sight at a distance.
4. The lead member of the SLT may request additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact the school.
5. A member of the SLT will contact the pupil's parents/carers. A member of the office team will also call the police to log the incident and make a log of the call.
6. If the searching staff member loses sight of the pupil they must contact the school office giving details of their location and the clothes that the pupil is wearing.
7. If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the lead SLT member will make a decision as to how to take matters further, which will take into account the age of the pupil, 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 pupil returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed.
8. Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil will meet with a member of 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. The headteacher may consider a fixed term suspension as a sanction.

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 that their child has absconded, parents and 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 a Senior Leader in order to agree subsequent actions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

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