

**St John's Church of England VA Primary School**



# **Absconding Pupil Policy**

**Agreed by the SLT**

**Agreed: September 2024**

**Review: September 2026**

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## Absconding Pupil Policy

### Sharing joy and hope in the community

***When considering matters of behaviours of children it is important for all the school community to reflect, considering our vision statement, 'Sharing joy and hope in the community'; along with the school values Respect, Compassion, Friendship, Service and Endurance. Through this we will ensure we are guided into good decisions to support all those in the St John's community.***

#### **INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE**

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

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

- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviours for Learning Policy

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(s).

#### **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(s) 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 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 Headteacher/Deputy Head/members of SLT and main office.
2. Headteacher/Deputy Head/members of SLT organises search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.
3. If the pupil is not found, then available staff will complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
4. School office must phone the parents/carers to inform that their child is missing. When the school has been fully checked and if the child is not found the Police will be contacted.
5. School office to **immediately** contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation when the Police have been informed. Always keep parents/carers 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 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 report **must** be filed on the incident using CPOMS
10. Member of SLT **must** brief police and parents/carers and Chair of Governors.

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

1. Staff must follow the student to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the student to stay in the school. This may mean the member of staff having sight of the child but standing back and giving the child time and space.

2. 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)
3. If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to themselves or other people then staff should consider reasonable force with reference to holding the pupil, if appropriate.
4. At all times, staff must be aware 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 by running onto a busy road, for example.
5. If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school the main office, Headteacher or SLT member must be contacted immediately and a lead person will direct the course of action.
6. Where possible, staff will follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance if in view. Staff **must** take a school or personal mobile phone.
7. The SLT lead may direct any available additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, if required, taking a school or personal mobile phone to contact school.
8. If the searching 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 which the pupil is wearing.
9. The SLT lead or main office **must** immediately phone the parents/carers to inform that their child is missing, having left the school and that the Police will be contacted.
10. School office to **immediately** contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation when the Police have been informed. Always keep parents/carers updated.
11. If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the SLT lead will make a decision as to how to take matters further which will take into account the age of the pupil, 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.
12. If the pupil returns of their own volition, Parents/Carers and the Police will be informed as soon as possible.

13. Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil must be seen by the SLT lead with their parent/carer 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.
14. A report will be filed on the incident using CPOMs
15. It is important that following an incident the issues that arise are addressed
16. Consider an individual risk assessment for the student involved.
17. Keep colleagues informed
18. Review procedures for the individual every half term to ensure appropriate control measures are in place and that all staff are fully informed.

## Information for Pupils and Parent/Carers

### **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 may be checked by a medical practitioner. The Headteacher 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** - If you are worried about something or just want to talk, your teacher, teaching assistant or the Emotional Literacy Support assistant, SENDCo may be available.

The national ChildLine number is 0800 1111

Your Safeguarding members of staff to talk to are: Mr Priestley, Mrs Plant and Mrs Roberts.

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**Appendix 1**

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## De-escalation techniques

It may help to:

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