

# Child Absconding Policy



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## Policy Intent

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils, in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (DfE, 2026) and *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DfE, 2026).

- We aim to provide a safe, secure environment where pupils feel valued and supported.
- We recognise that pupils with SEND and EHCPs may present a higher risk of absconding. Individual risk assessments are therefore mandatory.
- This policy applies during the school day, off-site educational activities, and school transport.

## Legal Framework

This policy has been developed in line with:

- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (s.3)** – duty of care for pupils.
- **Children and Families Act 2014 & SEND Code of Practice** – duties relating to pupils with EHCPs.
- **Education Act 2002 s.175** – duty to safeguard and promote welfare of children.
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)** – safeguarding procedures and safer recruitment.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)** – inter-agency safeguarding duties.
- **DfE Guidance on School Security (2023)** – perimeter and access control.
- **DfE Non-Maintained Special Schools Guidance** – inspection and compliance requirements.

## Definition of Absconding

Absconding is when a pupil leaves the supervision or premises of the school without permission.

- **Internal absconding:** leaving a classroom or designated area but remaining on site.
- **External absconding:** leaving the school site or off-site location, including school transport, without permission.

## Prevention Measures

- **Site Security:** Secure perimeter fencing, controlled gates, CCTV, visitor sign-in, and regular maintenance checks.
- **Supervision Levels:** Staffing ratios comply with SEND needs and risk assessments.
- **Information to Pupils:** Clear rules, visual supports, and individualised social stories for high-risk pupils.
- **Individual Risk Assessments:** Required for all pupils with known or potential absconding risks; signed by parents/carers and reviewed at least termly.

- **Transport Safety:** Contracts with transport providers include clauses on safeguarding and absconding prevention.

## Procedures in the Event of Absconding

### If a pupil absconds internally:

- Alert SLT immediately.
- Staff to locate and escort pupil back safely.
- Record on safeguarding system.

### If a pupil absconds externally:

1. Notify SLT and office immediately.
2. Conduct an immediate search of the site and perimeter.
3. If not found within 5 minutes (or sooner if high risk), call police (999) and parents/carers.
4. Maintain line of sight where possible without endangering others.
5. Senior leader coordinates the response and communicates with external agencies.
6. Record incident on safeguarding system and update the pupil's risk assessment.
7. Debrief pupil and staff afterwards and offer supportive interventions.

### Educational Visits / Off-Site:

- Group leaders maintain clear registers, headcounts, and buddy systems.
- Pre-visit risk assessment includes absconding risk and control measures.
- Staff have mobile phones, emergency contacts, and clear escalation routes.

## Reasonable Force

Staff may use reasonable force only where necessary to prevent harm, in accordance with the school's Behaviour and Physical Intervention Policy and the DfE guidance Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in Schools Force (2026).

## Recording and Reporting

- All incidents logged on [school safeguarding system] and reviewed by DSL and governors.
- A written report shared with parents/carers and, where applicable, the placing local authority.
- Repeated absconding triggers a multi-agency review (EHCP review, safeguarding strategy meeting).

## Parents/Carers Responsibilities

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Work in partnership with school on risk assessments and support plans.
- Provide updated contact information.
- Assist promptly in securing the child's safety if contacted.

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- Governors review incident data termly.
- Policy reviewed annually or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.
- Findings from incidents feed into staff training and risk-reduction planning.

## Training

All staff receive annual safeguarding and absconding prevention training, including:

- Recognising signs of potential absconding.
- De-escalation strategies.

Safe follow-up and communication procedures.

| Document Detail   |           |                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Document Name:    |           | Child Absconding Policy |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Version:          |           | 1                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Effective From:   |           | September 2026          |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Approved by:      |           | Marie Claire Bretherton |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Next Review Date: |           | September 2027          |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Version Control   |           |                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Version           | Date      | Author                  | Change/Reference                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1                 | Sept 2025 | Head of SEND            | New Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 2                 | Sept 2026 | AFidment                | Change to reference used to updated 2026 KCSIE and 2026 Working Together to Safeguard Children. Update to DfE guidance of Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (2026) |