



Vermont School's Absconding Policy

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Introduction

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.

If a pupil attempts to abscond from the school premises, then the action taken will depend upon the age, maturity, emotional state and medical condition of the pupil.

Pupils who abscond from direct staff supervision are putting themselves at risk, any action taken by staff must always be in the best interests of the pupil and the school environment.

Absconding

Absconding is when a pupil goes beyond the fenced boundaries of the school without permission. Many of our pupils have difficulties managing their anxiety, and may seek to abscond as a result. Other pupils may abscond for attention. In any circumstance, due to the vulnerable nature of our pupils, the absconding policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that pupils are safeguarded at all times. The absconding policy will also be followed if a pupil absconds during an off-site activity/ trip.

Examples of absconding:

- When a pupil leaves the school site without permission;
- Where a pupil leaves an offsite provision without permission;
- Where a pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission.

Control measure and procedures to prevent absconding

In order to prevent a pupil from absconding, the following control measures have been implemented.

Physical Control Measures

- The Vermont school site has a secure perimeter and gates which are locked from 9.30am daily
- Doors into and within the school building are locked with either fobs, PIN codes or intercom systems
- CCTV cameras are located at strategic points to monitor school boundaries and vulnerable areas
- Staff are assigned to allocated areas or pupils during break times or times of movement to ensure a high staff presence.

Procedural Control Measures

- Identified pupils at higher risk of absconding have risk assessments
- Emergency response – clear procedures for when a pupil absconds.

Needs and Supportive Measures

- Staff are trained to recognise signs that a pupil may be planning to abscond, such as anxiety or restlessness
- Staff provide de-escalation and conflict resolution strategies to address situations that may trigger absconding
- Pupils work with the Pastoral team to support their emotional wellbeing and address any issues that may contribute to a desire to abscond
- Keep open communication with parents/ carers to understand any external factors influencing absconding.

Procedures if a Pupil Absconds

Step 1: Immediate Action

- **Alert Staff:** Any staff member noticing or informed of a pupil leaving school premises must alert reception who in turn will alert a member of the senior leadership team (SLT) immediately.
- **Search School Grounds:** Conduct an initial search of the premises, including known hiding spots or areas the pupil frequents unless the pupil has been seen leaving the school site.
- **Assess the Situation:** If the pupil is still on-site, approach calmly and use de-escalation techniques.

Step 2: If the Pupil Leaves the Premises

Follow Safeguarding Protocols:

- Staff must follow the child at a safe distance, ensuring their safety without escalating the situation;
- Avoid physical intervention unless there is an immediate risk to the child's or others' safety;
- Staff must update the school office with regular updates whilst office staff keep a log of the on-going incident using the absconding form (see appendix 1).

Contact Parents and/or Carers: If staff do not have 'eyes on' the pupil within 5 minutes of the pupil leaving school site, parents will be informed by either reception or SLT.

Contact Authorities (if necessary): If the pupil's location is unknown after 5 minutes, or there is concern for their safety, contact the police (999).

Step 3: Returning the Pupil to School

Welcome Back without Judgement: When the pupil is found, ensure they feel safe and supported. Avoid punitive responses that might heighten anxiety or trigger further incidents.

Record the Incident: Complete the absconding incident form (**appendix 1**) and log the incident on CPOMs. The form is to be returned to reception to update the absconding spreadsheet.

Step 4: Follow Up Actions

- Class team to conduct a restorative discussion to understand the reasons for absconding;
- Offer Pastoral support including interventions and attending Pastoral clubs;
- Review and update the pupils Regulation Support Plan (RSP) to include new strategies or triggers.

Repeated absconding incidents will trigger a review of the pupil's educational placement, safety measures, and additional interventions.

Appendix 1

Absconding Form

Lead by:

Date:

Children involved:		Place last seen:	
Time:		DOB for children:	
Parents called at:		EHCP needs:	
Photos of children:		Police called at:	
Family address:		Police Ref no:	
What were they wearing:		Absconded before and where to:	
Previous self harm concerns?		Any changes in behaviour?	
Children returned/ found at:		Medication (dosage etc)	
Children went to: • Where did you go? • Did you speak to anyone? • Why did you go out? • What did you do? • Have you hurt yourself? • Would you like something to eat or drink?			
Other Information			