

## **Absconding Pupil Policy**

### **Intent**

At Westhaven School, 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 unlikely that a child will try to abscond from our school but this policy is written to ensure we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

Where a child is likely to try to absconding due to their SEND needs, an individual risk assessment should be in place.

### Definition

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.

Internal Absconding	External Absconding
Where a pupil leaves the care of the responsible person without permission but remains on the school site.	Where a pupil leaves the school site without permission.  (Absconding from school grounds)

(Leaving the building without permission)	
Where a pupil leaves a lesson without permission but remains on the school site.  (Leaving the room without permission)	Where a pupil leaves an off site provision without permission, e.g., curriculum swimming, alternative education provision, etc.  (Absconding off-site)
	Where a pupil leaves a defined area or supervision of the responsible adult without permission, e.g., when undertaking fieldwork or on an educational visit.  (Absconding off-site)
	Where a pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission  (Absconding from transport)

## Implementation

### Control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

#### Site security

The site has a secure perimeter and gates, which are kept locked during school hours. External doors into the school are supervised at all times.

Visitors must report to the main reception and sign in (reading and signing the visitor agreement).

Westhaven operates a CCTV system.

#### Effective supervision

Effective supervision is dependent on a number of factors including:

Age of the pupils

Ability of the pupils

Number of the pupils

Activities being undertaken

Pupil behaviour

Site layout and security

Specific identified risks e.g. pupils with history of absconding, public rights of way through school grounds, building work, etc.

### Information to pupils

School rules and expectations are clearly displayed and reinforced throughout the school day.

There is a clear and consistent system in school which covers absconding pupils.

### Individual Pupil Risk Assessments

Where there is a foreseeable risk of absconding, there should be a risk assessment in place.

The risk assessment should clearly detail the individual control measures required to reduce the risk of absconding

### External visits/sites

On an Educational Visit the security of the venue/location will be assessed and supervision levels altered accordingly.

Staff will ensure that there are robust systems in place so that each group has specified members and leaders, and regular head counts occur throughout the visit.

In the planning for an educational visit the risks of absconding will be clearly assessed, particularly in the case where known absconders are in attendance. This will include transport.

Communication between the groups and robust emergency procedures will be in place.

When using staff cars to transport known absconders the risk assessment will specifically refer to the risk of absconding.

### **Actions to be taken in the event of a child absconding.**

*Any action taken will be proportionate to the risk and in the best interest of the child.*

- A member of the SLT (or the off-site excursion leader) must be notified immediately.  
*This system must NOT place the remaining pupils at risk.*
- Staff must be deployed to secure and systematically search the site or area for the absconding child if their whereabouts are unknown.
- Parents /carers (and the police) must be notified if a child is known to have left the school site or school excursion area, or they cannot be found.

- Follow up actions must be taken once a child has been found.

*The systems above should cover educational visits and transport where relevant.*

If a child leaves a school building they are to be followed but only to the boundary of the school premises. The pupil is to be reminded, if appropriate, that if they leave the school site and go out of staff sight the police and their parents/ carers will be informed. Staff must continue to observe/ support as long as the pupil is in sight, perhaps moving back towards the building if the pupil begins to return. If the pupil does go out of sight a phone call is to be made to parents/ carers and the police. If the pupil is younger and/ or of higher risk as noted on their EHCP, a member of staff may follow after (taking a mobile phone) and informing a member of the SLT on site.

## **Impact**

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Each incident will be monitored and evaluated. Risk assessments for any children believed to pose a risk of absconding will be created by school with the support of staff and parents/carers.

## 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 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 to subsequent actions. Risk assessments will be shared and signed by parents/carers.

Where a pupil absconds, the following procedures should be followed:

1	Member of staff to inform a member of the SLT and main office.
2	Reporting staff member organises search of buildings / area and known places that the pupil may have gone to.

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	Reporting staff member to liaise with the office team to phone the police when the area has been fully checked if the child is not found within a reasonable amount of time.
4 b	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, and on what action is in the child's best interests.  Any staff who leave school grounds to take a mobile phone to contact the school.
5	Reporting staff member to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation.
6	Once the 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.
7	A written report will be filed on Class Charts of the incident by the leading staff member.
8	A member of the SLT to brief police and parents.

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

1	If a child leaves the building they are to be followed but only to the boundary of the school premises.
2	The pupil is to be reminded, if appropriate, that if they leave the school site and go out of staff sight the police and their parents/ carers will be informed.
3	Staff must continue to observe/ support as long as the pupil is in sight, perhaps moving back towards the building if the pupil begins to return.

4	If the pupil does go out of sight a phone call is to be made to parents/ carers and the police (101 / 999).
4b	If the pupil is younger and/ or of higher risk as noted on their EHCP, a member of staff may follow after taking a mobile and informing the office team / SLT on site.
5	Once the pupil has been found, a member of the SLT will brief the police and parents.
6	A written report will be filed on Class Charts of the incident by the leading staff member.
7	Upon their return to school, and when the pupil is calm, they must be seen by the Head Teacher 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.
8	If not already in place, a risk assessment will be completed detailing post incident learning and steps to reduce the risk of this happening again.

### Information to have ready when contacting the police

- Pupil name
- Pupil date of birth
- Pupil address
- Parent / Carer contact details
- Pupil level of need / method of communication / known triggers
- What they were wearing
- Last known location / direction in which they were heading

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**History of Document**

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