



Lawnside Academy

Pupil Absconding (Missing from Education During the School Day) Policy

Version 2: September 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils by providing clear procedures for preventing, responding to and recording incidents where a pupil absconds, attempts to abscond, or is missing from the supervision of school staff during the school day. Schools have a duty of care to safeguard pupils and take all reasonable steps to ensure they remain safe whilst under the school's supervision.

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
 - Behaviour Policy
 - Educational Visits Policy
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Attendance Policy
 - Risk Assessment Procedures
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2. Definition of Absconding

For the purposes of this policy, absconding is defined as a pupil leaving the supervision of school staff without permission.

This may include:

Internal Absconding

Where a pupil leaves a classroom, activity, or supervised area without permission but remains on the school site.

External Absconding

Where a pupil leaves the school site without permission during the school day.

Off-site Absconding

Where a pupil leaves the supervision of staff during an educational visit, sporting event, residential trip, or other off-site activity.

Attempted Absconding

Behaviour indicating an intention to leave supervision or the school site without permission.

3. Legal and Safeguarding Context

This policy is informed by:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Education Act 2002 (Section 175)
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Common Law Duty of Care

Absconding will always be treated primarily as a safeguarding concern rather than solely as a behaviour issue.

4. Preventative Measures

The school will:

Site Security

- Maintain secure perimeter fencing and gates.
- Keep external gates closed during the school day.
- Ensure visitor access is controlled.
- Regularly inspect site security arrangements.

Supervision

- Ensure appropriate levels of supervision throughout the day.
- Position staff strategically during arrivals, departures, breaktimes and transitions.
- Carry out risk assessments where specific concerns exist.

Individual Support

For pupils known to be at risk of absconding, the school may:

- Complete an individual risk assessment.
 - Develop a Behaviour Support Plan.
 - Identify triggers and preventative strategies.
 - Allocate key adults and safe spaces.
 - Work closely with parents/carers and external agencies where appropriate.
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5. Responsibilities

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is implemented.
- Overseeing investigations into absconding incidents.
- Reviewing risk assessments and support plans.
- Reporting significant incidents to governors where appropriate.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL will:

- Assess safeguarding risks.
- Liaise with external agencies where necessary.
- Ensure appropriate records are maintained.
- Consider whether a referral is required.

All Staff

All staff must:

- Remain vigilant.
- Follow this policy.

- Report concerns immediately.
 - Record incidents accurately and promptly.
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6. Procedure When a Child Goes Missing on Site (Internal Absconding)

1. The member of staff noticing the pupil is missing must immediately inform the school office and a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
 2. Staff should establish:
 - Last known location.
 - Direction of travel.
 - Any known triggers or concerns.
 3. A coordinated search of:
 - Classrooms
 - Toilets
 - Corridors
 - Intervention spaces
 - Outdoor areas
 - Other known locations

should begin immediately.
 4. Other pupils should remain supervised at all times.
 1. If the pupil is located:
 - Their welfare should be checked.
 - The incident should be recorded.
 - Parents/carers should be informed where appropriate.
 - Follow-up support or review should be considered.
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7. Procedure When a Child Leaves the School Site (External Absconding)

If a pupil leaves the school grounds without permission:

Immediate Actions

1. Notify the Headteacher, DSL or senior leader immediately.

2. Contact the school office so gates, entrances and exits can be monitored.
3. Staff may maintain visual contact where safe to do so.
4. Staff must not place themselves or the child at additional risk through pursuit.

Contacting Parents

The school will:

- Contact parents/carers immediately.
- Establish whether the pupil is likely to go to a known location.
- Request parental assistance where appropriate.

Contacting the Police

The police will be contacted immediately where:

- A child cannot be located quickly.
- The child is particularly vulnerable.
- The child is at risk due to age, SEND, medical needs or safeguarding concerns.
- The child enters a road, public space, transport network or other unsafe area.
- There are concerns regarding exploitation, self-harm or criminal activity.

In such circumstances the pupil should be treated as a missing child.

8. Educational Visits

If a pupil absconds during an educational visit:

1. The Visit Leader must be informed immediately.
 2. The remaining pupils must continue to be supervised safely.
 3. Staff should conduct an immediate search of the surrounding area.
 4. The Visit Leader should contact:
 - School
 - Parents/carers
 - Police (where necessary)
 5. The incident must be recorded upon return to school.
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9. Following an Absconding Incident

Following any absconding incident, the school will:

- Complete a CPOMS record and safeguarding chronology entry.
- Inform parents/carers.
- Conduct a debrief with the pupil.
- Consider underlying causes and triggers.
- Review risk assessments and support plans.
- Implement additional support measures where necessary.
- Refer to external agencies if safeguarding concerns are identified.

The school's response will be proportionate, supportive and focused on understanding the reasons behind the behaviour rather than solely applying sanctions.

10. Recording and Reporting

All incidents must be recorded and include:

- Date and time.
- Staff involved.
- Circumstances leading to the incident.
- Actions taken.
- Duration of absence.
- Outcome.
- Communication with parents and external agencies.
- Follow-up actions.

Serious incidents will be reported to governors through safeguarding and health and safety reporting arrangements where appropriate.

11. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher and DSL will:

- Review all absconding incidents termly.
 - Identify patterns or recurring concerns.
 - Review individual risk assessments.
 - Update procedures where necessary.
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Appendix A: Immediate Response Flowchart

Child Missing?



Inform Office and Senior Leader Immediately



Search School and Grounds



Child Found?

YES

- Welfare check
- Inform parents
- Record on CPOMS
- Review support plan

NO



Contact Parents Immediately



Assess Risk



Contact Police if Child Cannot Be Located Quickly or Safeguarding Risk Exists



Complete Incident Record and Review Procedures

Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Notes on Revision(s)	Date Ratified by LGB	Next Review Date
2	September 2026	C. Johnson	Policy reviewed and updated to reflect current safeguarding guidance and school procedures.	September 2026	September 2029
1	October 2021	C. Johnson	New policy written for adoption.		September 2024