



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

"Let all that you do be done in love." 1 Corinthians 16:14

Children who Abscond – Policy and Protocol

1. 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 always remain within the care of the school throughout the school day and during school led activities.

2. Definition

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.

Internal Absconding	External Absconding
Where the 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.
Where the pupil leaves a lesson without permission but remains on the school site.	Where the pupil leaves an off-site provision without permission. E.g. swimming pool, concert, sporting event
Where a pupil leaves a club run on behalf of the school without permission but remains on site.	Where a pupil leaves a defined area or supervision of the responsible adult without permission when on an educational visit.
	Where a pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission. E.g. educational visit transportation

Please note: The definition of abscond does not include when a pupil leaves the care of a parent/carer outside of the school's duty of care being in place, even if this separation occurs while on the school site and at times of entering and exiting the school premises.

3. Control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

Site security:

- The site has a secure perimeter and gates which can be locked.
- Gates/doors are secured outside of our stated drop off and pick up times.
- Doors into school are locked from the outside with fob access or similar.
- There are high bolts/closures on doors/gates to restrict unauthorised exit by younger pupils.

Effective supervision:

- Effective supervision is dependent on several factors including:
 - o Age of the pupils
 - o Ability of the pupils
 - o Number of pupils
 - o Activities being undertaken
 - o Pupil behaviour
 - o Site layout and security
 - o Specific identified risks e.g. pupils with history of absconding, building work, etc.
- Regular head counts take place through the school day and especially at the end of playtime and lunchtime.
- There is a robust system in place for pupils to be handed over to their parents/carers.
- There is a clear system in place for pupils who need to leave the school grounds with permission during the school day, e.g. lunchtimes, medical appointments.
- There is a clear system for handing pupils over to before/after school clubs.
- Staff are strategically deployed at playtime and lunchtime to supervise the pupils.

Information to pupils:

- School rules and expectations are clearly shared with pupils and reinforced throughout the school year.
- There is a clear and consistent reward and sanction (logical consequences) system in school.

Individual Pupil Risk Assessments (IPRA):

- Where there is a foreseeable risk of absconding, there will be an IPRA in place for the individual pupil.
- The IPRA clearly details the individual control measures required to reduce the risk of absconding.
- A Positive Handling Plan (PHP), Personalised Behaviour Plan (PBP) or Consistent Management Plan (CMP) will be drawn up for a pupil who absconds, in partnership with the parent/carer.
- An IPRA will outline use of the staff and visitor car park if appropriate, with risks and protocols noted.

External visits/sites:

- On an Educational Visit the security of the venue/location will be assessed and supervision levels altered accordingly.
- Venue/location risk assessments are requested ahead of the visit.

- There are robust systems in place so that each group has specified members and leaders, and regular head counts occur throughout the visit.
- In planning for an educational visit the risks of absconding are clearly assessed, particularly in the case where known absconders are in attendance. This includes transport.
- Parents/carers of known absconders and high-risk pupils are asked to attend educational visits in order to facilitate attendance and 1:1 support.
- Known absconders and high-risk pupils will always be placed in the group of their class teacher.
- Communication between the groups and robust emergency procedures are in place.

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

- Notify the Headteacher, or in their absence, a member of SLT immediately – Deputy Headteacher, SENCo, School Business Manager, Phase Leader.

This must NOT place the remaining pupils at risk.

- Follow outlined procedures for securing and systematically searching the school site and immediate school vicinity.
- Office staff will notify the parents/carers and the police (dial 999) if a pupil is known to have left the school site, or they cannot be found.
- Follow up actions will be taken once a pupil has been found.
- The systems above should cover educational visits and transport where relevant.

Where a pupil, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

- Member of staff to notify the Headteacher, or in their absence, a member of SLT immediately – Deputy Headteacher, SENCo, School Business Manager, Phase Leader.
- Headteacher/Member of SLT organises search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.
- If the pupil is not found then all available staff, under instruction, to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
- School office to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation.
- School office to phone the police (dial 999) when area has been fully checked if the pupil is not found.
- Consideration will be given to whether the search should be extended beyond the school perimeter and in to the immediate vicinity of school. This decision will be based on staff's knowledge of the pupil and on the levels of risk, and on what action is in the child's best interests.
- Any staff who, under instruction, leave the school grounds are to take a mobile phone and are to remain in regular contact with the school.
- Once a pupil has been found then the Headteacher/Member of SLT will use their

professional judgement to outline the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future.

- A written report of the incident will be recorded and filed on CPOMs.
- Headteacher/Member of SLT to brief parents/carers and police.

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

- Staff must follow the pupil to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school.
- If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to them self or other people then staff should adhere to the Positive Handling Policy.
- At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the child to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the child to panic, possibly putting them at greater risk.
- If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school the Headteacher/SLT member must be contacted immediately and then organise and direct the course of action.
- Staff, under instruction, will follow the pupil and engage in a local search of the immediate vicinity of the school, following the pupil at a safe distance if in view.
- The Headteacher/Member of SLT may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.
- The school office will contact the pupil's parents/carers.
- If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil they must contact the school office giving details of their location. If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the SLT Member will decide as to how to take matters further which will consider 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. If the pupil returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed as soon as possible. Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil must be seen by the Headteacher/Member of SLT 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. A written report of the incident will be filed on CPOMs.

Outlined Procedures: Initial Actions & Search

1. Alert & Search:

The staff member who notices the pupil missing will search the immediate vicinity, taking a mobile phone or walkie-talkie for communication. If the pupil cannot be found in known places, staff member will

2. Escalate to Leadership:

The Headteacher/SLT Member is alerted and will advise on further actions, including a wider search of school premises and grounds, and immediate off-site vicinity (if applicable).

Staff members man any easy exit points from school premises, whilst others sweep buildings and grounds systematically -

- EYFS -> Year 1 -> Year 2 -> KS1 Hall -> Computer Suite
- Music Corridor -> Year 5 -> Year 6 -> Year 3 -> Year 4 -> KS2 Hall -> Computer Suite
- Forest School -> EYFS Mound -> KS1 playground
- Field -> Upper KS2 playground
- Sacred Garden -> Lower KS2 playground -> Astro Turf
- Carpark

3. Parent/Carer Contact:

Parents/carers are contacted to be informed of the situation and asked to come to the school to help secure the pupil's safety.

4. Police Notification:

If the pupil cannot be found, the Police are notified (dial 999) with comprehensive details, including the child's name, date of birth, description, last known location, and any known risks.

Information to Provide Police

- *Pupil's full name, date of birth, and relevant personal details.*
- *Time and location of when and where the pupil went missing.*
- *A recent photograph, description, and information on clothing and belongings.*
- *Details of family, friends, and associates.*
- *Relevant safeguarding information or medical history.*

5. Post-Incident Procedures

• Liaise with Authorities:

The school will continue to communicate and act in accordance with police instructions.

• Return Review Interview:

Once the pupil is located, a return review interview must be conducted to understand the reasons for absconding, address any harm suffered, and prevent recurrence.

• Individual Risk Assessment:

The school will investigate the incident and act to prevent similar events, which may include creating an Individual Risk Assessment (IPRA) for the pupil.

• Safeguarding Support:

Information on how to stay safe, including helpline numbers, may be provided to the pupil's parent/carers or pupil themselves (if age appropriate).

• Review Site Security

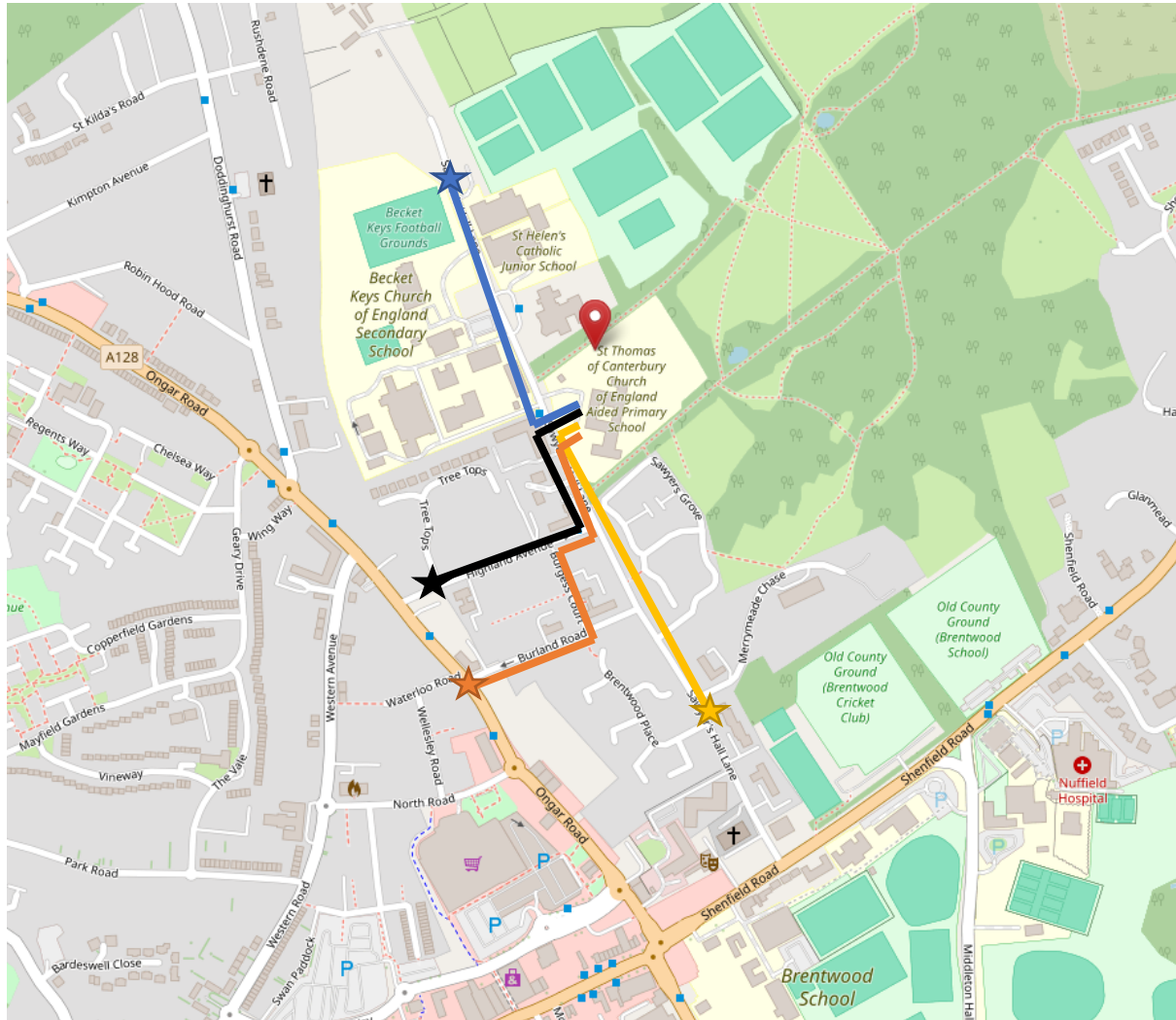
Post incident analysis. To action any changes and updates deemed necessary.





RISK ASSESSMENT for **name here** (example)

School:		Activity:	Child Leaving the School Grounds Without Permission (Absconding)			
Assessment carried out by:		Date:		Date of Review:		

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Existing Control Measures: What are we already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Completed:
<p>Child leaving school premises without permission.</p> <p>PHOTO of Pupil here</p> <p>Pupil's Emergency Contact information:</p> <p>1st Priority:</p> <p>name & number</p> <p>2nd Priority:</p> <p>name & number</p>	<p>Pupil/Staff Member</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Injury exiting the school site eg. when climbing fence ❖ Getting lost ❖ Road traffic collision ❖ Abduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Door access systems on required doors ❖ Monitoring doors/gateways ❖ Controlled gates when opening/closing outside of set times ❖ Staff vigilance ❖ Children with history of running/running from school premises are supervised closely when in outdoor areas ❖ Higher levels of supervision in high-risk areas – LKS2 gate at worship and playtime; KS2 and KS1 Hall fire exits ❖ 1:1 LSA support (EHCP/Complex Need led assessment of need) ❖ Emergency procedures that can be activated quickly when a child is found to be unaccounted for ❖ Staff aware of any potential triggers for pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Emergency procedures that can be activated quickly when a child is found to be unaccounted for ❖ Improving door access control in school building – staff to ensure door securely closed behind them; adults to hold doors open at times of high pedestrian traffic ❖ School site security risk assessment carried out taking into consideration issues of child leaving site – improvements to site security 	<p><i>Name of person responsible to be added here</i></p>	<p><i>Realistic time frame to be added here</i></p>	<p><i>Sign and date when further actions have been completed</i></p>

Immediate Off-Site Vicinity



-  Route A
-  Route B
-  Route C
-  Route D

November 2025