Shipbourne Primary School

Absconding Policy
September 2024

The purpose of this non-statutory document is to set out the procedures to all stakeholders should a child leave the premises without permission. It is closely link to the school's 'Child Protection Policy'.

Aim

We work actively to provide a secure, safe environment for the pupils at Shipbourne Primary School. We want pupils to enjoy coming to school and being a part of our school community.
We recognise that it is highly unlikely that a pupil should abscond from the school premises, but in the event that it should happen, the procedures detailed below, will ensure that we are ready to deal with this eventuality.

Definition

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'. This could mean a child leaves the school building, yet remains in the grounds, or leaves the school grounds.

School Grounds

The school site available to pupils during the day is fully fenced in and locked. Regular checks of the fencing and gates are carried out by the Head Teacher and governors with the responsibility for premises and as part of safeguarding and health and safety audits. If a gate is found to be open or insecure when pupils are on site, a full head count will be undertaken to ensure all staff and pupils are accounted for and that no-one has entered the premises without authorisation.

Risk Assessment

If a child with specific additional needs poses a higher risk of absconding, a risk assessment and action plan will be agreed with staff and parents in order to make the risk as low as possible..

Absent Pupils

If a pupil, who has previously been marked as present, is found to be absent, the procedure will be as follows:

1. Teacher to inform Headteacher, or a member of SLT, and the office **straight away**.
2. Headteacher, or SLT, plus any available staff, to organise a search of the grounds.
3. If pupil is not found, gather as many staff as possible to re-search the grounds as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.
4. School office to phone parents and police. Every attempt to contact parents and police should be recorded.

5. A senior member of staff will then make the decision as to whether the search should be extended beyond the school grounds. The decision may also be influenced by staff's knowledge of the child who has absconded.
6. Any staff who leave the school grounds should take a mobile phone with them and not put themselves or the child in danger at any point (see below).
7. Once the child has been found, the member(s) of staff will use their professional judgement to inform how they respond to support the child.
8. A written report will be logged with the Headteacher *(see 'Absconding Form').*
9. The Headteacher, or lead member of SLT, will brief parents and police, if necessary.
10. Upon his/her return into school, and when calm enough to do so, the pupil will meet with a member of SLT, so that reasons for the absconding can be understood. A support plan and/or risk assessment for the individual may need to be considered along with sanctions appropriate for the pupil's needs.

Pupils Who Abscond From School, But Remain Within the School Grounds

In these circumstances, a pupil will not be pursued by staff or forced back into the school. Staff will remain at a safe distance, keeping the child in sight. Interventions should only be attempted by staff if the pupil is a danger to themselves or others. Any damage to property may be charged to the child's parent(s) / carer(s).

Staff will also consider the pupil's age, vulnerability and demeanour when considering decisions to be taken. Staff will support each other in care and decisions to be made. The Positive Handling Policy may be applied if physical intervention is required.

Pupils Who Abscond From the School Grounds

Where a pupil is seen to leave the school premises without authorisation, the following procedure will be followed:

1. **Active pursuit of the pupil should not be considered.** This may make the pupil panic possibly putting himself / herself into immediate danger. Staff will instead try to follow, keeping the pupil in sight and at a safe distance. Any staff who leave the school grounds should take a mobile phone with them and not put themselves or the child in danger at any point.
2. Teacher to inform Headteacher, or a member of SLT and the office **straight away**.
3. Consider if there is a member of staff who has a good connection with the pupil, who can support the absconding pupil.
4. School office to phone parents and police. Every attempt to contact parents and police should be recorded.
5. Once the child has been made safe, the member(s) of staff will use their professional judgement to inform how they respond to support the child.
6. A written report will be logged with the Head of School *(see 'Absconding Form').*
7. The Headteacher, or lead member of SLT, will brief parents and police, if necessary.
8. Upon his/her return to school, and when calm enough to do so, the pupil will meet with a member of SLT, so that reasons for the absconding can be understood. A support plan for the individual may need to be considered along with sanctions appropriate for the pupil's needs.
9. If the pupil returns to school of their own volition, parents and police to be phoned by the office.

Parents will always be informed if their child absconds from the school.

All incidents will be recorded on an 'Absconding Form' and attached to a school 'Safeguarding Form' *(green form)*

Monitoring and Review
This policy will be agreed by the Headteacher and reviewed every year or sooner if practice is reviewed in response to a specific need or event.

Shipbourne Primary School
Absconding Form

Pupil		**Class**	
Date & time Of leaving premises			
Name of Lead adult			
Dress, appearance & distinguishing marks			
Last seen			
First actions			
Parent contacted			
Police contacted			
Timeline of events *(continue on the back of this form if necessary)*			
Time returned to school			
Final actions, including sanctions			
Timeline of events *(continue on the back of this form if necessary)*			