



FFPS Child Going Missing or Absconding policy

September 2025

Approved at the meeting of the Governing Board held on: 23rd September 2025

Signed: James Verran

Position: *Chair of Governors*

Date to be reviewed: September 2026

Please note – this is NOT a policy for Children Missing Education (CME).
For CME guidance and procedures, the following link should be visited
[Children missing education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

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1. Overview

This policy is put in place to ensure that every action possible is taken to secure the quick and safe return of a child if they go missing or abscond from school.

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly for all stakeholders, the process that will take place should a child abscond from 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 highly 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. It is our goal to work positively with children and families in order to prevent children leaving school without permission and work together to support and implement strategies.

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.

2. Objectives

- To locate any missing child quickly
- To ensure that children who leave school during the school day only do so with the head teacher's, teachers or office staff's permission and that they are accompanied by an authorised adult.
- To ensure that the building, grounds and play areas are safe and secure during school hours.
- To ensure that staff keep children under proper supervision at all times.
- To ensure that if a child 'goes missing' during the school day, he/she is located quickly and returned safely to school.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher are responsible for all decisions made when a child absconds from school.

The class teacher and the teaching assistants are responsible for caring for the child (until the child leaves the premises with an authorised adult). They will be responsible for seeking additional help if this is felt to be necessary.

Parents / carers of pupils are responsible for supporting the work of the school. They are responsible for 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 the subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming to school to help secure the safety of the child after he / she has absconded as well as meeting with the Head Teacher in order to agree subsequent actions and strategies.

4. Strategies for possible scenarios

- If the child has gone missing at the end of the school day members of staff may take the most appropriate route home to look for the child. They should also enquire whether the child is likely to have gone to a relative's house, an after-school club or a friend's house and explore these routes as well. The rest of this policy will be applied.
- If a child goes missing during an outing or school visit, the teacher in charge must ensure that the remaining children are safely cared for by the other staff and adults. The teacher in charge must also inform the

headteacher, immediately, and the rest of this policy will be applied.

4a. If a child cannot be found when he/she should be in school

- If a child cannot be found when he/she should be in school, the head teacher or a deputy head teacher must be notified immediately and told when and where the child was last seen. Time is of the essence and prompt actions must be taken by all.
- The remaining children must be left safe in the care of suitable staff. All other available staff will conduct a thorough search of the child's classroom, play areas, storage areas, toilets, the school building and the school grounds.
- If the child is not found within a short period of time, the head teacher or deputy head teacher will advise that the parents/carers **must** be called.
- Members of staff who are not supervising children, should, (with their mobile phones), search the area in the immediate vicinity of the school.
- An urgent but thorough search should be made of the immediate vicinity and if the child is not found quickly the head teacher must be notified and take swift action.
- Under direction of the head teacher or deputy head teacher, the parents/carers will be notified that their child is missing.
- If a member of staff finds the child the head teacher or deputy head teacher must be told at once. They will ensure that relevant parties are notified.
- The head teacher or deputy head teacher will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.
- When the child is found, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with their child and the Head Teacher or Deputy 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.
- A Serious Incident Log will be filed (Appendix 1).

4b. Where a pupil attempts or is seen to be leaving the school premises without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

1. As soon as a child has absconded from the school building, a member of staff must stand at the front gate or open gate until the child is found.
2. The Office must be informed immediately and they are to monitor the school gate/s until a member of staff arrives to watch the school gate/s.
3. Staff must follow the pupil to the perimeter fence or gate/s and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school.
4. If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school, the school office, Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher must be contacted immediately.
5. Staff will follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance if in view.
6. The Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher will contact the pupil's parents/carers and consider any additional action.
7. If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil, they must contact the school office giving details of their location.
8. If the pupil returns of their own volition, parents/carers will be informed as soon as possible, as well as any other agency that may have been contacted.
9. Upon his or her return to school, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with their child and the Head Teacher or Deputy 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.
10. A Serious Incident Log will be filed.
11. The school must also consider contacting the police if:
 - This is uncharacteristic behaviour for the pupil
 - The child was under a large amount of stress
 - The school believes the child to be in danger

4c. Where a pupil is suspected of having left the school premises already without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

1. As soon as a child has absconded from the school building, a member of staff must stand at the front gate or open gate/s until the child is found.
2. The Office must be informed immediately and they are to monitor the school gate/s until a member of staff arrive to watch the school gate/s.
3. Staff must follow the pupil to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school.
4. If a child is no longer visible then, after 10 minutes parents/carers will be informed.
5. If parents have their child, they must inform school immediately.
6. If the child has not been seen for 10 minutes and we have a strong suspicion that they have left the school grounds, the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher will consider any additional action.
7. The search for the child will continue until the child is back in school.
8. Upon his or her return to school, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with their child and the Head Teacher or Deputy 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. This may include an individual riskassessment.
9. A Serious Incident Log will be filed.
10. The school must also consider contacting the police if:
 - This is uncharacteristic behaviour for the pupil
 - The child was under a large amount of stress
 - The school believes the child to be in danger

5. Looking for the missing child

It is recommended to send teachers or other members of staff who know the child well to look for him/her. The school may know of particular places the child likes or feels comfortable in. For example, he/she may feel safe and comfortable at a particular friend's house. It is also possible that, having run away, the child will not know where to go. It is therefore worth looking for him/her near the school.

6. What to do when the pupil is found

When the child is found and returned to school, the focus must be on establishing why the child decided to leave the school site. It should:

- Seek to explain clearly to the child, in an age-appropriate way, why their behaviour left them unsafe.
- Seek to understand why the child took this action. Was it because of something that happened in school? Was it because of something happening outside of school?
- Establish whether the child feels safe in school.
- School should then consider ways of ensuring the child does not repeat this action.
- This might involve looking at behaviour strategies for coping with stress. For example, school might provide a 'safe place' the child can go to for 'time out'.
- School might also encourage the child to speak to a particular member of staff if he/she begins to feel upset, angry or stressed.

7. What if the pupil has SEN?

If the child that has gone missing or the absconder has special education needs (SEN), the behaviour may be associated with his/her learning difficulties. Strategies to support the child in managing this behaviour should be identified and shared with all staff involved with the child. This may form part of the planning process or require a specific risk assessment.

8. Understanding why the child has run away

It is important to establish why the child might have run away. This will help it to decide how to deal

with the situation. Some questions, for the school and parents/carers, to help identify the cause are:

- Does the child have a relevant special educational need that might contribute to his/her decision to run away?
- Has something happened in the child's life outside school that might affect his/her behaviour in school?
- Is there a specific place or person at the school that has prompted this behaviour?
- Has the child experienced acute stress at school for any reason?
- Is he/she a victim of bullying?
- Has this happened before?

9. Things to consider when following this policy

- If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to himself or other people then staff should adhere to the Behaviour Policy with reference to positive handling, if appropriate.
- At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the pupil to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.
- If a pupil is deemed to be at risk of absconding, a risk assessment should be completed and shared with staff working with that pupil.
- If a supply teacher covers a class, a member of staff who knows the pupils will help with dismissal.

10. Outcomes

The safety of all children will be given our highest priority. A missing child should be an extremely rare happening. This policy is designed to put into place swift and effective actions to locate any missing child and to notify and involve parents and relevant parties at every appropriate point.

Relevant Documentation to read:

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Health & Safety Policy (and arrangements)
Positive Handling Policy
Behaviour Policy

Serious Incident Log

1.	Involves serious, actual or threatened violence against another pupil or member of staff	
2.	Puts himself/herself, other pupils, members of staff or the wider community at risk of harm or injury	
3.	Self-harm	
4.	Absconds from the premises	

Name of person completing the form:

Child/Children Involved:

Date & Time of incident	Lesson	Setting

Trigger: *What happened just before the incident?*

Details of incident: What exactly does the child do that is of concern? (If I were a fly on the wall, what would I see?)

Action Taken:

Follow-Up Action Taken

Activity / area:		Child/ren leaving School grounds						
School/Academy:		Forest Fields Primary School			Date of assessment		21.6.24	
Who might be harmed and how?		Pupils/Staff - Injury when climbing fence - Road Traffic Collision - Abduction			How many are affected?		Any child at risk of leaving school grounds.	
Hazards (including inadequate or lack of arrangements)	<i>Possible control measures existing (What are we doing already?)</i>	✓ if in place ✗ if not or n/a	Where: ✗ state action to be taken with timescales ✗ any additional control measures ✓ site specific details	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Completed	Residual Risk rating High, medium, low
Children leaving School grounds	• Door access systems on required doors	✓		• Emergency procedures that can be activated quickly when a child has left the site • Improving door access control in school building • School site security Risk Assessment carried out taking into consideration issues of child leaving site – Improvements to site security	Site team	All staff vigilant daily, especially during drop off, pick up times and any unstructured times.	1.9.23	L
	• Monitoring doors	✓			All staff		21.6.24	L
	• Staff Vigilance	✓			Phase Lead		21.6.24	L
	• One to one Classroom Assistant for high-risk pupils in unstructured times	✓			SEND Lead		1.9.23 LP	L
	• In EYFS, all children sit on the carpet at dismissal time and staff members call children to be dismissed one-by-one and physically hand over child to parent/ carer one at a time.	✓			All staff		21.6.24	L
	• Children with history of running from school grounds are supervised closely when playing in outdoor play area	✓			SEND Lead		1.9.23 LP	L
	• High levels of supervisors in high-risk areas – especially with older children with history of running.	✓			SLT		1.9.23 LP	L
	• Emergency procedures that can be activated quickly when a child has left the play area	✓			SLT & All staff		1.9.23	L
	• Staff aware of any potential triggers for pupils	✓			SEND Lead		21.6.24(F1)	L
• Any pupils with SEND have specific measures in place and individual risk assessment completed and signed by parents.	✓	SEND Lead	24.6.24(F1)	L				

Children Absconding		Risk rating:	L
		Site specific details:	
Supervision levels have been determined appropriate, particularly during play, taking into account any large playing fields which may have places to hide/blind spots (including woodland areas or significant changes of height of the field).	✓	2 Middays in each area Playground rota completed for staff present in all areas	
The times of the day when school staff commence and conclude supervising pupils on site has been determined. This has been shared with parents/ carers.	✓	Phase Leads (AHTs) to remind staff to be vigilant at arrival and dismissal times. In EYFS, all children sit on the carpet at dismissal time and staff members call children to be dismissed one-by-one and physically hand over child to parent/carer one at a time.	
High level bolts are installed on nursery final exit doors (and other parts of the school where necessary- e.g., SEN children).	✓	Yes	
Window restrictors are installed wherever necessary.	✓	If necessary	
Nursery aged children are prohibited from entering other parts of the school without permission.	✓	Yes	
Pupils require permission to leave the main school reception area and/or the main pedestrian entrance/exit (e.g., by use of a buzzer system)	✓	Yes, fob system	
Additional absconding risks are identified through site inspections and from ongoing feedback from staff (and parents).	✓	LP – additional metal spokes added to the bottom of the front gates around school. Metal sheets added to the bottom of the gates on Gladstone gate and gate on Sturton Street, the entrance for the minibus.	
Procedures are in place, including individual responsibilities, in the event that a pupil absconds (within the school site and off school premises). Procedures may be tailored to specific age groups and particular pupils.	✓	Individual RA	
Pupils that have a known identified risk of absconding have a “high-profile pupil” risk assessment in place.	✓	Individual RA	
Suitable procedures are in place for pupils to be dropped off at school which minimise the likelihood that pupils may abscond.	✓	If necessary, under SEND Lead direction, HT & parent/ carer agreement	
Suitable procedures are in place for pupils to be picked up at school which minimise the likelihood that pupils may abscond or taken by, e.g., an estranged parent or abductor.	✓	If necessary, under SEND Lead direction, HT & parent/ carer agreement	
Identified perimeter and/or internal gates are locked outside of drop off and pick up times to assist in the management of late pupils and visitors (e.g., they are guided into the school via main school reception).	✓	Yes	

RISK ASSESSMENT: School specific (Page 3 of 3)

Children Absconding / Intruders gaining access outside school hours		Risk rating:	L
		Site specific details:	
All boundaries well defined, well maintained and inspected on a regular basis. Fencing is at a height relative to the risk (e.g., 2.4 metres). For effective security, fencing should be of security weldmesh, palisade or railings. Fencing is installed according to British Standards. If it is not feasible because of costs to fence the entire school site, including all playing fields then the fencing line has been brought in closer to the school buildings. Gates have the same protection as the main fence line.	✓	Health and safety audits completed annually Site visits with site team and HT	

Security Improvement Action Plan

Short Term Action/s Required	Target Date	Completed
Creation of policy re child going missing or absconding	21.6.24	23.6.24
Staff to alert SEND Lead regarding any parental concerns of child running or absconding	21.6.24	23.6.24
In EYFS, all children sit on the carpet at dismissal time and staff members call children to be dismissed one-by-one and physically hand over child to parent/carer one at a time.	21.6.24	23.6.24

Medium Term Action/s Required	Target Date	Completed
SEND Lead to complete individual risk assessments for all pupils requiring it, following an audit	24.6.24	24.6.24

Long Term Action/s Required	Target Date	Completed
Monitor SEND Lead annual audit and completion of risk assessments	1.9.24	Annually

Assessed by:	Site Manager & SEND Lead & SLT	Signed		Date	23.6.24
Line Manager:	Shahida Chowdhury	Signed		Review Date	Annual

Reference Documents

ASSESSED BY (Print name) Shahida Chowdhury	SIGNED	DATE 23.6.24
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