

Amotherby CP School Absconding from School Policy



November 2024

Introduction

Amotherby School is committed to the safety and well-being of all our pupils. We recognise that absconding – when a pupil leaves school premises without permission – is a serious safeguarding concern that may put the child at risk. This policy outlines our procedures for responding to instances of absconding, in line with the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance and our broader safeguarding practices.

Definition of Absconding

Absconding refers to any instance where a pupil leaves the school premises without permission or without notifying a member of staff. This may include leaving the school grounds during the school day or attempting to leave without being noticed. Absconding can involve any pupil, although it is often more common in older students, those experiencing emotional distress, or those with challenging behaviours.

Legal Context and Safeguarding

Under the Education Act 1996, schools have a legal duty to ensure that pupils are safely accounted for during the school day. According to the DfE guidance (January 2024), absconding can be considered a safeguarding issue, as it may indicate that a pupil is at risk of harm. Schools are expected to have clear procedures in place for responding to absconding incidents and to work with parents and carers to ensure the child's safety.

Procedures for Dealing with Absconding

In the event of a pupil absconding from school, the following steps will be taken:

1. Immediate Action:

- Staff will conduct an immediate search of the school premises, including classrooms, outdoor areas, and other spaces, to locate the pupil.
- If the pupil is not found on school grounds, staff will check if the pupil has left the site and, if necessary, check nearby areas where the child might be.

2. Communication:

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), **Lucy Wade (Headteacher)**, will be informed immediately.
- If the pupil has not been located within a reasonable timeframe, the pupil's parents or carers will be contacted to inform them of the situation and to seek assistance in locating the child.
- The police will be contacted if the pupil cannot be located within a reasonable timeframe, or if there are concerns for the pupil's safety or well-being.

3. Monitoring and Documentation:

- A full report of the incident will be completed by the staff involved, and records will be maintained regarding the time, circumstances, and any actions taken.
- The incident will be reviewed by the safeguarding team to ensure that any necessary improvements to procedures are identified and implemented.

4. Risk Assessment:

- After an absconding incident, a thorough risk assessment will be conducted to determine why the pupil left the school premises and to identify any

safeguarding concerns. This assessment will inform the next steps and any support that the pupil may require.

- Support will be provided to the pupil to understand why absconding is unsafe and to address any underlying issues that may have led to the behaviour (e.g., bullying, family issues, mental health concerns).

Preventative Measures

Amotherby School takes a proactive approach to reducing the risk of absconding by implementing the following measures:

- **Building Positive Relationships:** We prioritise developing positive, trusting relationships between staff and pupils. This can help to prevent pupils from feeling the need to abscond and encourages them to seek help if they are feeling anxious or upset.
- **Monitoring Vulnerable Pupils:** Pupils who are known to be at higher risk of absconding (e.g., those with behavioural or emotional difficulties, those experiencing bullying, or those with complex family situations) will be closely monitored. Additional support and strategies will be put in place for these pupils as appropriate.
- **Clear Communication and Engagement:** Staff will regularly check in with pupils, especially those who may be at risk of disengagement or who have expressed a desire to leave school early. Clear communication channels with both pupils and parents/carers are essential to preventing absconding.

Support and Follow-Up

Once the pupil has been located and the situation is resolved, we will work closely with the pupil and their family to ensure the child's safety and well-being moving forward. This may include:

- **Counselling or Support Services:** Offering support through the school's pastoral team, external agencies, or counselling services, depending on the nature of the issue.
- **Reviewing the Pupil's Needs:** A review of the pupil's individual needs, including any additional safeguarding or behavioural concerns, will be carried out.
- **Involving Other Agencies:** If necessary, we will involve other support agencies, such as social services or local mental health services, to provide additional support to the pupil and their family.

Parental Involvement

Parents and carers play a critical role in preventing and responding to absconding incidents. Amotherby School will:

- **Inform Parents Immediately:** If a pupil absconds, parents will be informed as soon as possible, and they will be kept updated on any developments.
- **Work in Partnership:** We encourage open communication with parents and carers, ensuring that they are aware of any behavioural or emotional difficulties their child may be facing. Parents are encouraged to work with the school to support their child in addressing the underlying issues that may contribute to absconding.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly, and any incidents of absconding will be monitored to ensure the school's response is effective. The review process will take into account any changes in guidance from the Department for Education or other relevant bodies, and any feedback from staff, parents, or pupils.

Conclusion

At Amotherby School, the safety and well-being of our pupils is our top priority. We take incidents of absconding very seriously and have established clear procedures to respond swiftly and appropriately. By working closely with parents, carers, and relevant agencies, we aim to ensure that pupils receive the support they need and that any incidents of absconding are addressed effectively.

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy, please contact the school office or **Lucy Wade (Headteacher)**, our Designated Safeguarding Lead.

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