

Meare Village Primary School

Absconding Policy



Approved by:	Sandra Leggett, Headteacher	Date: May 2022
Last reviewed on:	May 2022	
Next review due by:	May 2024	

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly for all Staff, Volunteers, Pupils, Parents and Governors the process that will take place should a child abscond from school. All staff will have received safeguarding training and are aware of the school policies surrounding this, although are reminded to be mindful of these when following this policy.

Aim:

We actively work to provide a secure and safe environment, a school where children want to come to enjoy learning with others as part of a caring community. We recognise that in most cases, 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.

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.

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

- A) pupils who abscond before the end of the registration period
- B) pupils who abscond after registration
- C) pupils who are excluded, but come onto the school site
- D) pupils who abscond from school but remain in the school grounds
- E) pupils for whom, it is foreseeable, may abscond

A) Pupils who abscond before the end of the registration period

Schools are required to register their pupils at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. This should take place within a period, of not less than 15 minutes, set aside when the register is open.

If a pupil absconds from the school during the period of registration, the class register should show the pupil as being absent.

Should the pupil return to school after the end of the registration period, the class register should be amended to indicate a late arrival.

It is good practice when a pupil absconds in these circumstances for the school to make every effort to advise the parents/carers.

B) Pupils who abscond after registration

Once a pupil has been registered as present, the registration period has ended and the class register closed, the school is "in loco parentis".

Should a pupil abscond after the end of the registration period, the school, technically, remains "in loco parentis".

Every attempt should be made to contact the parents/carers to advise them that their child has absconded from school. When parents/carers are contacted, it should be made clear that the responsibility for their child is being passed back to them. Procedures will be followed – see page 4.

Contact with parents/carers should be by telephone in the first instance. In all circumstances, it is advisable to record details of attempts to establish contact. If the parents/carers are contacted, the attendance register should be amended to show unauthorised absence.

If the parents/carers cannot be contacted, the attendance register should remain unamended. At this stage you may wish to contact your local Police Station to seek assistance. However, the responsibility for the pupil remains with the school.

C) Pupils who are excluded but come onto the school site

If a pupil is excluded, either for a fixed period or permanently, he/she should not be on the school site.

Should an excluded pupil appear on the school site, he/she should be asked to leave. If the pupil refuses or is causing a nuisance or disturbance which requires action, the school should, in the first instance, make every effort to contact the parents/carers to ask them to remove their child from school property.

If the parents/carers are either not contactable or are not able to remove their child from school property, the Police should be contacted for assistance.

D) Pupils who abscond from school but remain in the school grounds

The general advice in these circumstances is that school staff should not pursue the pupil or try to force her/him back into school.

However, there may be circumstances where school staff will need to use their judgement and possibly knowledge of the pupil along with any control measures/procedures contained within the individual risk assessment of the pupil if they have one.

A pupil's age, vulnerability and other factors need to be considered. For example, it may be dangerous to let a particular pupil wander about the school grounds. In cases where there are foreseeable risks (from climbing etc) the Head/Deputy/member of SLT will ensure a site survey is undertaken to reduce risks as low as is reasonably practicable.

The demeanour of the pupil will need to be considered. If the pupil is upset or angry, care must be given to how he/she is approached.

The size of the pupil will also be important in judging whether to try to approach her/him.

The gender of the pupil may indicate a particular member of staff as being more appropriate to deal with the situation.

In all cases, ***staff should not place themselves in situations of potential danger.***

E) Pupils for whom, it is foreseeable, may abscond

In situations where it is foreseeable that a pupil may abscond without permission, it is imperative that a thorough risk assessment is carried out in advance to determine the best way of managing the individual. This will naturally include trigger factors and thus where possible ways to prevent the behaviour or at least de-escalate – but also must include procedures to follow (with the assistance of an Educational Psychologist/Health and Safety Professional etc if relevant). This procedure must be agreed in advance with all stakeholders. The School may use the “Special Needs” module of EEC in order to carry out these risk assessments effectively, using the ISP (Individual Safety Plan) templates.

Pupils who return to school after absconding

Most pupils who abscond will do so as a result of a specific incident which may have taken place either at school, at home or on the way to school.

For those pupils who return to school either by their own choice, with parental support or following intervention by a member of staff, thought should be given to their welfare. They are likely to be in need of support, understanding and perhaps some time apart from their peers.

Parent & Carers

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 to agree subsequent actions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Each incident will be recorded, monitored and evaluated and individual risk assessments amended if necessary and appropriate. The School may use the “Special Needs” module of EEC in order to carry out these risk assessments effectively, using the ISP (Individual Safety Plan) templates.

Procedures (see appendix D on page 8 for flow chart)

If a pupil is suspected of leaving the school site without permission, in an emotional state:

1. The member of staff will alert the headteacher or (in her absence) the deputising teacher.

If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the SLT will make a decision as to how to take matters further which will take into account the age of the student, 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.

2. If there is no doubt that the pupil has absconded, the school will contact the police as an emergency situation and the pupil's parent to inform them. Staff will not chase or follow the pupil closely as this could lead to the pupil wandering further afield, acting impetuously or causing a traffic accident.
3. If the child is within an easy distance of the school, staff are not to engage in conversation as the child might be in a distressed state and unable to act in a controlled manner. This would mean there is still the potential for traffic accidents. **However**, staff should be aware (through the risk assessment process) of any potential triggers and techniques to use in such events if this is a foreseeable incident.
4. If the child appears to be missing but there is no evidence that he / she has left the site, a quick but thorough search of the site should be conducted before the parents / police are informed.
5. If the pupil returns of his / her own volition, parents and (if necessary) the police will be informed. Upon his or her return to school, and when the student is calm, the student must be seen by the 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 will be filed on the incident.
6. If possible, the pupil who has absconded should be brought back to school the same day. The parent, child and head teacher will then discuss the issues and any consequences. This policy will be discussed. An agreement will be written, giving details of the incident and agreed actions. See appendix A, B and C.
7. If the child absconds for a second time in the same academic year, the head teacher may consider a fixed term exclusion but should consider an individual risk assessment.
8. Head/Member of SLT to consider if de-escalation techniques and safe restraint techniques should be imparted to staff through a training course such as Team Teach.

If the head teacher / deputising teacher is aware that a pupil is not acting emotionally but has left the school grounds (e.g. by mistake), the above procedures may be adapted.

Appendix A:

Agreement following a pupil absconding from school

(To be completed by the head teacher or deputising teacher and attached to appendix B and C)

Child: _____ Date: _____

Record of incident:

An agreement has been reached following this absconding incident. Actions have been agreed in order to help this pupil feel happy and safe in school (Appendices A, B and C).

School will support this agreement by:

School

- 1.
- 2.

Signed: _____ (Head teacher / deputising member of staff)

Appendix B: Parental Agreement

(To be completed by the parent or carer)

I have read the record of the absconding incident (Appendix A). I wish to make the following comments relating to the incident (optional):

I understand that it is unacceptable for my child to leave the school site without permission and a repeated action of this nature might result in the school following exclusion procedures.

I understand that the following actions have been agreed to help my child be happy and safe in school. I know my child needs to keep to the school rules and not leave the school grounds without permission. I understand that there are agreed actions for all parties involved. For my part, I will support this agreement by:

Parent

- 1.
- 2.

Signed: _____ (Parent/Carer)

Appendix C: Pupil Agreement

(To be completed by the pupil or by an adult on behalf of the pupil)

I have read or listened to the record of the absconding incident (Appendix A). I wish to make the following comment about the incident (optional):

I understand that it is unacceptable for me to leave the school site without permission and a repeated action of this nature might result in the school following exclusion procedures.

I understand that the following actions have been agreed in order to help me to be happy and safe in school. I know I need to keep to the school rules and not leave the school grounds without permission. I understand that there are actions too for the school and my parents. I will support this agreement by:

Pupil

1.

2.

Signed: _____ (Pupil)

Appendix D - School Procedure if a child is missing / absconds.

Staff member informs SLT / Head that pupil is possibly missing / absconding

Staff check location of pupil / if pupil still on premises by:

- Staff check last known location, known hiding points / calm down areas / areas pupil may regularly go to if absconding
- Staff members man any points of easy exit from school grounds / building whilst others sweep building / grounds systematically, if possible.

Pupil not found on the premises

Pupil sighted leaving the premises

Staff leave premises to search / follow if safe to do so

Pupil is found on the grounds / premises

Pupil deliberately absconded

Pupil accidentally lost / misplaced

- Staff inform parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact
- Staff inform the police
- Staff should carry mobile phone if following

• SLT and other staff informed

Pupil is found

Pupil refuses to come in / go to Head

Pupil comes in / goes to Head

Keep watch from discrete distance (if applicable)

- Parents, pupil and police (if appropriate) attend school to discuss the matter. This should be done as soon as possible.

- Call parents
- Pupil and parent discuss matter

Investigate incident, determine how it happened and any lessons to be learnt. Take action to prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk assessments to reflect any changes. The School may use the "Special Needs" module of EEC in order to carry out these risk assessments effectively, using the ISP (Individual Safety Plan) templates.