

# St Barnabas C of E First and Middle School

'Let all that you do be done in love' I Corinthians ch16 v14



## Absconding from school Policy

Reviewed by	Approved by	Date of Approval	Version Approved	Next Review Date
LR	LAB	September 2025	V2 (no changes)	September 2027

## Our Vision

We are an inclusive Church School with a commitment to providing quality education that meets the needs of all. We aim to create successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens through our Christian approach of love and cooperation. **‘Let all that you do be done in love’** encourages us to have a lifelong love of learning so we flourish as human beings.

*‘Let all that you do be done in love’ 1 Corinthians ch16 v14*

**The purpose of this non-statutory policy is to set out clearly for all stakeholders, the process that will take place should a child abscond from school.**

## Statement of Intent

At St. Barnabas CE First and Middle 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.

As a school, we recognise that pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties experience a range of different physiological and psychological challenges within their daily life. Some of our pupils are vulnerable learners. This affects their capacity for attention, learning, concentration and rationality. Some of their experiences also reduce their window of tolerance and increase their risks of fight or flight behaviours.

As a result, a few pupils at St. Barnabas CE First and Middle School will occasionally display flight behaviours as a response to a perceived threat. All pupils are supervised by members of staff at all times throughout the school day; however, despite St. Barnabas CE First and Middle School being a secure site, pupils are able to climb fences if they are willing and physically able to.

Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other educational 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.

**It is important to note that a pupil is considered to have ‘absconded’ if they intentionally / knowingly leave the school site or the immediate area of an off-site activity without permission. To keep pupils safe, staff should adhere to the following procedures set out within this policy.**

## **Procedures: pupil absent from school (but remaining in 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, knowledge of the pupil and assessment of the pupil's safety in deciding what to do. A pupil's age, vulnerability and other factors need to be taken into account. For example, it may be dangerous to let a particular pupil wander about the school grounds. The demeanour of the pupil will need to be taken into account. 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.

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

- staff will communicate (using walkie-talkies) with other members of staff, including SLT, Office team and Nurture Lead
- staff will locate the pupil
- appropriate reintegration back to a learning environment, i.e. brain break, time with a trusted adult, visit to the Nurture area.

## **Vulnerable Learners**

Some vulnerable learners display behaviours that make them more likely to discuss, threaten and act upon absconding from school than others. These specific pupils are known to find the classroom environment and/ or school difficult. These pupils have a support programme in place, i.e. 1:1 adults, alternative provision timetables and/ or behaviour plans which outline the likelihood of a pupil absconding from school and any specific instructions regarding triggers and/ or regulating suggestions.

## **Procedures: pupil absent from school (absconsion)**

### **First Response**

- If a pupil is in the early stages of crisis, staff should follow the child's self-regulation plan and/ or Behaviour Policy to help them feel safe.
- If a pupil absconds from the school site, staff should immediately inform SLT and maintain sight of the pupil until support arrives (walkie-talkies required by all staff/ classrooms)
- On arrival, SLT will coordinate the recovery of the pupil.

### **Second Response**

- If a pupil absconds and cannot be seen by a member of staff they are considered to be missing.

- If a pupil is missing, SLT should be called to conduct an immediate search of the building.
- If a pupil is not on site, a vehicle will be used to support the search and cover known locations that pupil visits.
- If the pupil is not located and recovered on the first sweep, staff should move to the Third Response.

### **Third Response**

- If a pupil is not located during the First or Second response procedure and the time has extended beyond what is deemed suitable by a dynamic risk assessment (a maximum of 30 minutes), SLT will:
  - Report high risk pupils to parents and the police and continue to search the local area.
  - Report low risk pupils to parents and maintain communication for an appropriate period reporting the pupil to the police if they have not been located before the end of the school day.

## **Parents & 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 Executive Headteacher in order to agree to subsequent actions.

## **Police involvement**

Police involvement will be requested during the absconsion of a high-risk pupil any low-risk pupil if an appropriate period of time has passed.

## **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. Parents/carers will be contacted. The incident will also be noted on Arbor as a behaviour/ pastoral note.

## **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. Procedures will be followed – see above. 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.

## **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.

## **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. This may be in the form of being sent home for a Mental Health day, consisting of rest and support from parents/ carers.

## **Offsite Learning**

If a pupil absconds whilst attending an offsite learning experience such as a school trip or residential, the following protocols should be followed:

### **First Response**

- The visit leader should direct staff where possible and, if it is safe to do so, follow the pupil and attempt to re-engage them into the group/session.
- If a pupil is not in close enough proximity to re-engage, staff should maintain sight of the pupil until further support/guidance is received.
- If it is not possible to follow the absconded pupil for any reason, contact SLT at school straight away who will contact parents and the police if appropriate.

### **Second Response**

- If a pupil absconds and cannot be seen by a member of staff they are considered to be missing.
- If a pupil is missing, the visit leader should contact SLT at school to inform them of the situation.

- Parents will be informed by SLT. If a pupil is missing, staff must continue to search to locate the pupil, using a vehicle if required.
- The visit leader is to complete a dynamic risk assessment to assess whether the remaining pupils are successfully managing with the disruption to the visit and whether they need to return to school or change their location.
- If a change of location is deemed necessary to safeguard the rest of the group, the visit leader should leave a staff member searching for a pupil that has absconded and request further support from school.

### **Third Response**

- If a pupil is not located during the First or Second response procedure and the time has extended beyond what is deemed suitable by a dynamic risk assessment (a maximum of 30 minutes), SLT will:
  - Report high risk pupils to parents and the police and continue to search the local area
  - Report low risk pupils to parents and maintain communication for an appropriate period reporting the pupil to the police if they have not been located before the end of the school day.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

SLT and the extended leadership team will ensure that all staff take responsibility for implementing the guidance and procedures. Overall responsibility for this guidance and procedures rests with the Executive Headteacher. The guidance has been read by staff, governors and parents who are in agreement with the guidance and procedures outlined in this document.

***Every incident will be recorded, monitored and evaluated.***

### **Post Incident Review**

- Any incident of pupils absconding should be reviewed by the staff working with the pupils.
- Staff should update appropriate risk assessments and self-regulation plans with additional information and controls to prevent further incidents of absconding in future.
- Incidents of absconding should be followed up with restorative conversations with the pupils and parents where appropriate to support their understanding of the risks and the impact of them absconding from school.
- Reporting Incidents of absconding should be recorded using Arbor and MyConcern.
- Parents and appropriate agencies should be informed verbally by phone and a record of these conversations should be recorded using Arbor and MyConcern.

## **Equality Statement**

At St. Barnabas CE First and Middle School, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the school, irrespective of race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and age (for staff only). We will adhere to the legal definitions of these protected characteristics as set out in the

Equality Act 2010. We aim to develop and maintain a culture of inclusion and diversity, in which all those connected with the school feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in school life.