Pupil Absconding from School Policy

Blakehill Primary School



**Together We Can**

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**Headteacher/ SLT**

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| **Headteacher** | **Chair of Governors** | **Review Dates** |
|  |  | Last Review: July 2024 |
| Lisa Keighley | Philip Cavalier-Lumley | Next Review: July 2026 |

Statement of intent

Blakehill Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare, both physical and emotional, of every pupil both inside and outside of the school premises.

This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for delivering this promise, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.

It will be achieved by:

* Creating a culture of safer recruitment by adopting procedures that help deter, reject or identify people who might pose a risk to children.
* Educating pupils on how to keep safe and to recognise behaviour that is unacceptable.
* Identifying and making provision for any pupil that has been subject to abuse.
* Ensuring that members of the governing body, the Headteacher and staff members understand their responsibilities under safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, and are alert to the signs of child abuse and know to refer concerns to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL).
* Ensuring that the Headteacher and any new staff members and volunteers are only appointed when all the appropriate checks have been satisfactorily completed.

The DSL is: Catherine Scott. In the absence of the DSL, child protection matters will be dealt with by Lisa Keighley or Helen Hall.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the procedures to all stakeholders should a child leave the premises without permission. It is closely linked to the school’s ‘Safeguarding Policy’.

Under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and in common law, schools 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.

**Aim**

We work actively to provide a secure, safe environment for the pupils at Blakehill 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’**

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. The safety strategies will be dependent on school phases (ages) and vulnerability of specific individuals.

**Staff Awareness**

It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that they follow security and safety procedures to maintain the safest possible environment for the young person. They must familiarise themselves with the School Behaviour Policy (and all related policies) and the individual strategies for support within each pupil’s Behaviour Support Plans and Risk Assessments.

**School grounds**

The school site available to pupils during the day includes all playgrounds, the school hall, classroom, corridors the school field. Children may only be on the school field if the duty staff member agrees the conditions are appropriate to do so. Pupils may not play in the car park or any area unsupervised by a member of school staff. Pupils may not access the area around Early Birds or Night Owls without an adult. Children are not allowed to leave the school grounds via the school car park unless directly observed by an adult.

The children know and understand these rules and staff regularly reinforce them in the course of their interactions with children. At least two members of staff supervise outdoor play at all times and are appropriately positioned to ensure they maintain a view of the whole area, being especially mindful of the footpath and front entrance access and egress points. External gates are locked during the school day 9:00am – 3:15pm.

**External visits**

The security of each visit location should be assessed and supervision levels altered accordingly. Our Education Visit policy and staff training ensures that there is an identified Visit Leader in charge of making a detailed risk assessment to include known risks of absconding pupils. The Visit Leader will deploy staff and volunteers to ensure close supervision of all pupils with regular head counts taking place.

 Parents will always be informed if their child absconds from the school. All incidents will be recorded on an ‘Absconding Form’ and uploaded to CPOMs.

The safety and supervision of all children is of equal priority and safe staffing levels for all children will be maintained at all times.

See also the school’s protocol on children absconding from educational school visits (website)

**Absent pupils**

If a pupil, who has been marked as present at morning or afternoon registration, is found to be absent, the procedure will be as follows:

1. Teacher to inform Headteacher or a member of SLT immediately.
2. Headteacher/ SLT, with available staff, to organise a search of the buildings and grounds, as thoroughly as possible placing staff on exits.
3. In the event that the pupil is not found the Office Manager will be asked to phone parents and police. Every attempt to contact parents and police should be recorded.
4. The Headteacher 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.
5. Any staff who leave the school grounds should take a mobile phone with them *if possible* and not put themselves or the child in danger at any point (see 1. below).
6. 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.
7. A written report will be completed by the appropriate staff (see ‘Absconding Form’).
8. The Headteacher will brief parents and police, if necessary.
9. Upon his/her return into school, and when calm enough to do so, the pupil will meet with the Headteacher 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. (see behaviour policy)

**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 and the Headteacher or member of SLT in her absence, should be informed. Interventions should be attempted by staff only if the pupil is a danger to themselves or others. Any damage to property may be charged to the child’s parent(s) or carer(s). Staff will also consider the pupil’s age, vulnerability and demeanour when considering decisions to be taken.

**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. Physical intervention should only be used as a last resort where the staff member feels that to not physically intervene would likely result in physical damage or harm to the pupil. ( see Positive Handling – Restraint of Pupils policy). An example of this could be a child threatening to jump from a high position and therefore threatening serious injury or harm to themselves.
2. Active pursuit of the pupil should not be considered. This may make the pupil panic, possibly putting himself / herself into immediate danger. An appropriate member of staff – ideally two adults where possible should follow at a safe distance, ensuring they do not give chase which could cause the child to act dangerously. Any staff who leave the school grounds must take a mobile phone wherever possible with them and not put themselves or the child in danger at any point.
3. Staff must inform the Headteacher as soon as possible who will direct the course of action. Staff should not use a motor vehicle to search for an absconding pupil as it presents a risk of accident through driving and looking for a child at the same time. The use of their own vehicle may also result in potential liabilities for the individual.
4. If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil, they must contact the Headteacher giving details of their location, time and the clothes the pupil was wearing. The Headteacher will make a decision as to how to take matters further based on a risk assessment of the age of the pupil, weather conditions, the pupil’s previous history of absconding and outcomes and what led to the absconding in this instance.
5. The Office Manager will inform parents and police. Every attempt to contact parents and police should be recorded.
6. 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.
7. A written report will be completed by the appropriate staff (see ‘Absconding Form’).
8. The Headteacher will brief parents and police, if necessary.
9. Upon his/her return to school, and when calm enough to do so, the pupil will meet with the headteacher 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.
10. If the pupil returns to school of their own volition, parents and police will be phoned by the Office Manager.
11. Pupils who are known to abscond will have an individual risk assessment and a support plan in place. This will be referred to during any reintegration meeting with the child and their parents and reviewed where necessary.

 Blakehill Primary School Absconding Form

Name of Pupil : ................................................. Class: .......................................

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| Date & time of leaving premises  |     |
| Preceding circumstances  |           |
| Immediate actions  |             |
| Dress at time of absconding  |      |
| Staff member in charge  |     |
| Parent contacted, when by whom  |      |
| Police contacted, when by whom  |      |