

Absconding Policy:



POLICY STATEMENT:

Grays Point Activity Centre (GPAC) would like to ensure appropriate action is taken in relation to managing a child who runs away from the Centre's perimeter or supervised areas.

Our aim is to take immediate steps to establish whether the child has left the Centre's perimeter, Grays Point Public School (GPPS) grounds or a supervised area when outside the Centre's perimeter (e.g. Vacation Care excursions, excursion to Swallow Rock, National Park, Grays Point Oval etc).

GPAC will take all responsible steps to discharge the "Duty of Care" that is owed to the child and notify the Centre Manager, GPPS Principal, and NSW Police, venue security, if there is a reasonable concern for the safety of a child or others. GPAC will notify parent/guardians of the child as soon as reasonably possible and report the incident to the Department of Education (DOE) and ACEQCA (if required).

PROCEDURE:

If a GPAC Educator reasonably suspects a child has stepped outside the supervised perimeter or left the GPPS School grounds, without authorisation, the Educator should immediately notify the Responsible Person of the day. Following this notification, the Centre Manager should be informed of all updates throughout the event. The responsible steps to be taken will also vary and depend upon the individual circumstances of the case and the individual child.

At all times, staff must act in accordance with their duty of care to ensure the safety and welfare of all children

In determining what reasonable steps to take, relevant considerations will include:

- Location of Centre/supervised area/excursion area and its proximity to external dangers e.g. busy road, water, railways.
- The child's level of intellectual disability that may affect their ability to appreciate the associated risks of their behaviour or actions.
- The age of the child.
- The child's prior behaviour or previously exhibited vulnerabilities.
- The child's mental state immediately prior to moving outside the Centre's premises/supervised area.
- Time that has elapsed since the child has left the School grounds/activity.
- Whether the children can be appropriately supervised within educator-to-child ratio requirements while other staff take action to manage the child who has absconded.
- Remain calm and keep all children and Educators as safe as possible.

Depending upon the individual circumstances of the case, reasonable steps to be taken may include:

- Contacting NSW Police and advising them of a missing child, their age, disability, vulnerabilities or mental state.

- The Responsible Person to call or appoint an Educator to contact the parents/guardians of the child to advise them that the child has left the Centre’s premises/supervised area and obtain any additional information that may assist in locating the child.
- Searching for the child, particularly if information is available on their potential whereabouts.
- Following the child and maintaining visual contact until the child returns into an appropriate supervised area or is in the company of the Police or their parent/guardians.
- Making contact with the child and encouraging them to return to the Centre/supervised area, go to a safe place, (stop the behaviour putting them at risk) or remain with a suitable and responsible adult.
- Restraining the child in appropriate circumstances and in accordance with GPAC’s ‘Restraint of Child Policy’ e.g. where the child is about to step in front of a car or harm themselves. This will only be when absolutely necessary for safety.

After an incident in which a child has run away from the Centres premises or supervised area, GPAC Educators should take the following steps:

- Report the incident to the parent/guardians (if this hasn’t already been done).
- Report to GPPS so they can continue to maintain supervision and welfare.
- Complete an incident form.
- Report to DoE or ACEQCA. An absconded child is defined as a Serious Incident in relation to the National Quality Framework and must be reported to the Education and Care Unit within 24 hours of the occurrence.
- Contact Early Childhood Education & Care Directorate (ECECD).
- Consider whether is it appropriate to conduct a meeting with parent/staff/ committee.
- Check the welfare of all involved and offer counselling.
- Consider whether it is appropriate to develop or review a behaviour support plan for child, including Inclusion Support funding.

REFER ALSO TO: Missing Person Flowchart

CONSIDERATIONS:

Education and Care Services National Regulations and Law	National Quality Standard	Other Service Policies/documentation	Other
12, 87, 147		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision of Children • Child Protection • Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy • Delivery and Collection of Children • Restraint of a Child • Behaviour Guidance • Confidentiality Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing Child Flowchart

ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE:

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