



Key updates to this policy
New diagram in appendix 1

ABSCONDING POLICY

Approved by Gledhow Primary School Governing Body – May 2026

To be reviewed – May 2028

Based PG521 guidance by the Leeds City Council's Health and Safety and Wellbeing Team Absconding Guidance

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

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:

- Member of staff to inform member of SLT, pastoral office and main office.
- Member of staff organises search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.
- If the pupil is not found then all available staff to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
- Member of SLT to phone the police when area has been fully checked if the child is not found.
- Member of SLT to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation.
- Consideration will be given to whether the search should be extended beyond the school perimeter. This decision will be based on staff's knowledge of the child and on the levels of risk, and on what action is in the child's best interests.
- Any staff who leave school grounds to take mobile phone to contact school.
- Once a pupil has been found then the lead SLT member will use their professional judgement to outline the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future.
- A written report will be filed on the incident and saved on CPOMS.
- Member of SLT to brief police and parents.

Where a pupil attempts or is seen to be leaving the school premises without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

1. Staff must follow the pupil to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school. Staff member to try to alert other staff to the situation so that they may assist. This assistance may include the closure/ staffing of the schools exit points, which are the main gate and the side pedestrian gate both at the front of school. A member of the SLT team to be informed as soon as possible.
2. If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to himself or other people then staff should adhere to the Care and Control Policy with reference to holding the pupil, if appropriate.
3. At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the pupil to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.

4. If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school the school office and SLT members must be contacted immediately and the lead person will direct the course of action.
5. Staff will follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance if in view.
6. The SLT lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.
7. The school office will contact the spupil's parents/carers.
8. If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil they must contact the school office giving details of their location and the clothes which the pupil is wearing.

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 pupil, 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. If the pupil returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed as soon as possible.

Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil 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 and recorded on CPOMS.

Appendix 1 - Example School Procedure if a child is missing / absconds

Taken from ATT-1121-PG021 - 19. Children missing education.

