Henry Chichele Primary School

Absconding Policy and Procedures

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Guidance on dealing with pupils who abscond

The purpose of this document is to set out clearly for all stakeholders, the process that will take place should a pupil abscond from school.
Henry Chichele Primary School (HCPS) are committed to providing a safe and secure environment where pupils feel welcomed, valued, and excited to learn as part of a supportive and caring community. While incidents of absconding are extremely rare, this policy has been developed to ensure we are fully prepared to respond effectively should such a situation arise. Our aim is to work proactively with pupils and their families to prevent any unauthorised departure from school and to implement supportive strategies collaboratively when needed.

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 always remain within the care of the school throughout the school day and during school led activities.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Head Teacher is responsible for all decisions made when a pupil absconds from school. The staff are responsible for caring for the pupil (until the pupil leaves the school site). They will be responsible for seeking additional help if this is felt to be necessary. Parents / carers of pupils are responsible for supporting the work of the school. They are responsible for encouraging their pupils to keep to all school procedures and policies. Once school has informed the parents that their pupil 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 pupil after he/she has absconded as well as meeting with the Head Teacher to agree subsequent actions and strategies.

Control measures and procedures to prevent absconding

To prevent a pupil from absconding from the site, HCPS has considered the following control measures suitable for our provision.
Site security:

- The site has a secure perimeter and gates which are locked.
- Gates are secured outside of the stated drop off and pick up times.
- The door (in front of the main office area) is locked using a magnetic, swipe entry lock.
- The top gate and EYFS pedestrian gate are also secured in the is way.

The pupils know and understand these rules and staff regularly reinforce them during their interactions with the pupils.

Effective supervision

Effective supervision is dependent on a number of factors including:

- Age of the pupils
- Ability of the pupils
- Number of the pupils
- Activities being undertaken
- Pupil behaviour
- Site layout and security
- Specific identified risks e.g. pupils with history of absconding, public rights of way through school grounds, building work, etc.

HCPS has a plan of the school where break time supervisors should be placed.

Regular head counts take place through the school day (registers twice daily).
There is a robust system in place for pupils to be handed over to their parents, especially in Early Years, KS1and LKS2.
There is a clear system in place for pupils who need to leave the school grounds with permission during the school day, e.g. lunchtimes, medical appointments.
There is a clear system for handing pupils over to before/after school clubs (Going home information)

Information to pupils

School rules and expectations are clearly displayed and reinforced throughout the school year.
Absconding and the school's procedures for dealing with it should be referenced in the home/school agreement and Behaviour and Relationships Policy.

Individual Pupil Risk Assessments

Where there is a foreseeable risk of absconding, there will be a risk assessment in place for that pupil.
The risk assessment should clearly detail the individual control measures required to reduce the risk of absconding. A Positive Handling Plan (PHP) or Individual Support Plan may be drawn up for a pupil who absconds, in partnership with the parent/guardian.

External visits

On an Educational Visit the security of the location should be assessed and supervision levels altered accordingly
There will be robust systems in place (risk assessments) so that each group has specified members and leaders, and regular head counts occur throughout the visit. In the planning for an educational visit, the risks of absconding must be clearly assessed, particularly in the case where known absconders are in attendance. This should include transport.
Communication between the groups and robust emergency procedures should be place (risk assessment and yellow card). When using staff cars to transport known absconders the RA should refer to the risk of absconding, particularly in the case where known absconders are in attendance.

Staff training

Appropriate training is provided to all staff to ensure the policy is consistently understood and followed across the school.

Pupils who abscond from the school building but remain on the school site (internal absconding)

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 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 family. Staff will also consider the pupil's age, vulnerability and demeanour when considering decisions to be taken.
Pupils who abscond within the school building (internally) may be at increased risk of leaving the school premises (externally). To ensure a shared understanding of the school's procedures and to support pupil safety, the Headteacher will meet with the families of these pupils to discuss the procedure and policy with them.

Following this meeting, families will be asked to complete a confirmation form to acknowledge that the procedures have been explained and understood (see Appendix 2).

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

- Class teacher to inform the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), and the school office.
- The Headteacher and/or Deputy Headteacher will organise a search of the building 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 grounds.
- School office to phone the police when the school and grounds have been fully checked if the pupil is not found.
- School office to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation. Every attempt to contact parents to be recorded.
- Consideration will be given as to whether the search should be extended beyond the school buildings and grounds. This decision will be based on staff knowledge of the pupil and levels of risk and on what action is in the pupil's best interests.
- Any staff who leave the school grounds should take a mobile phone to contact school.
- Once a pupil has been found then the lead member of the SMT will use their professional judgement as to outline the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future.
- A written report (Appendix 3) will be made and saved on the school's safeguarding tool (My Concern)
- The lead SMT member will brief parents and the police.
- Upon 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 risk assessment for the individual will be considered along with sanctions appropriate for the pupil's needs
- If the pupil returns to school of their own volition, parents and police will be phoned by a member of the office team.

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

- Staff must follow the pupil to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school.
- If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to himself or other people then staff should adhere to the Behaviour and Relationships Policy with reference to use of reasonable force, if appropriate.
- 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 themselves at risk by running onto a busy road.
- Therefore, active pursuit of the pupil should not be considered. This may make the pupil panic, possibly putting themselves into immediate danger.
- If the pupil leaves the immediate vicinity of the school site, the school office, Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher must be contacted immediately and will direct the course of action.
- The police will be informed as soon as a pupil leaves the school site.
- Staff will follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance if in view.
- Where appropriate, at least two staff may join the search in a vehicle, with a mobile phone in order to remain in contact with school. The Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher will contact the pupil's parents/carers or request the office staff to do so.

- 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 has left the immediate vicinity of the school site and is no longer visible then the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will make a decision as to how to take matters further which will take into account the age of the pupil, the 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 accord, the family and the police will be informed as soon as possible.
- Upon their return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil must be seen by a trusted member of staff 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 (Appendix 3) will be made and saved on the school's safeguarding tool (My Concern)

Please refer to **Appendix 1** for a flowchart outlining the school's absconding procedure.

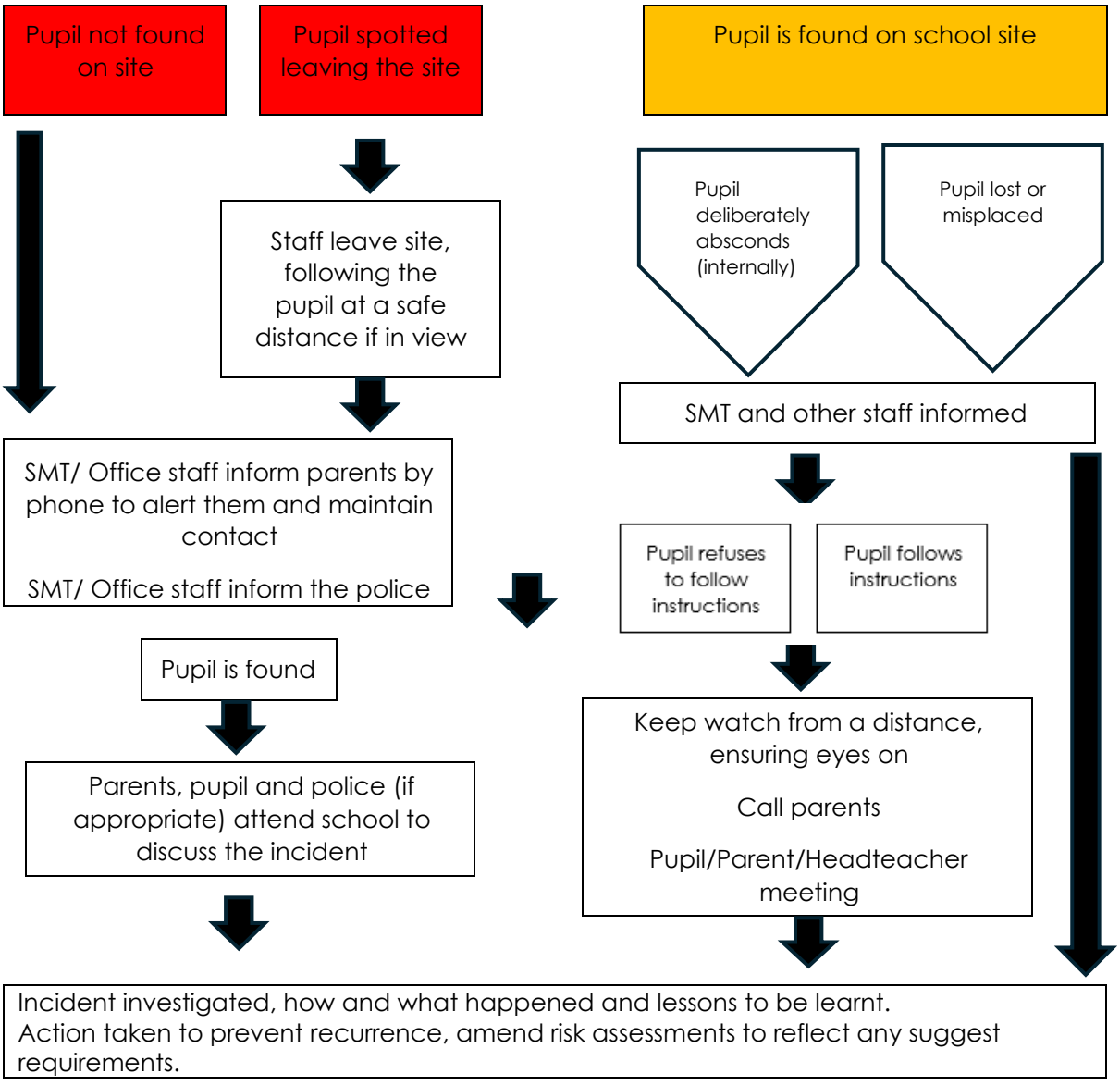
Appendix 1 (School Procedure)

School Procedure if a pupil is missing/absconds

The headteacher or Deputy headteacher is informed immediately that pupil is missing/has absconded

Staff check location of pupil by:

- **Asking other available staff**
- **Staff check last known location, known hiding points/ safe spaces/areas pupil may regularly go to if absconding**
- **Staff members man any points of easy exit from school site whilst others sweep systematically**



Appendix 2 (Receipt of Confirmation)

I confirm that I met with:

Date:

I confirm that I understand the **Absconding Pupil Procedure** provided by Henry Chichele Primary School, in relation to my child.

I understand the steps the school will take in the event of an absconding incident and my role in supporting the school's safeguarding measures.

Pupil Name:

Class:

Parent/s Name:

Parent/s Signature/s:

_____

_____

Thank you for your continued support in helping us keep all children safe.

Appendix 3 (Absconding Pupil Record)

Name of pupil Class	
Date and time of leaving premises	
Proceeding circumstances	
Immediate actions	
Parent Contacted by whom	
Parent Contacted – when?	
Police contacted by whom	
Police contacted – when?	
Timeline of events	
Date of meeting (Headteacher and pupil)	
Date of meeting (Head and family)	
Actions	
Sanctions	