



Absconsion policy

Arbour Academy

Last reviewed on: July 2023

Reviewed by: Donna Hindley Deputy Headteacher

Next review due by: July 2023

Approved by Julie Owen Headteacher

Introduction

We define absconsion to be an act whereby a pupil goes beyond the school perimeter without permission.

Aims

When it is believed that a child has left the school without authority, a search is made of the whole premises and the following course of action is followed:

- The office staff and the senior member of staff on duty must be informed immediately;
- The parent/carers must be informed as soon as possible;
- It is likely that 'chasing' a young person may exacerbate the situation and hence staff are advised to monitor the young person remotely if possible.
- There may be circumstances when staff will physically stop a young person from leaving their classroom and/or school premises if health and safety issues are involved.

Preventative Approach

'Keeping Safe' is a topic regularly discussed with young people in assemblies, tutorials, PSHE lessons and counselling sessions. Additionally, support is available and used regularly from other services such as Route 29 and 42nd Street. Peer mentoring has also been identified as having a positive impact on in reducing the risk of young people feeling overwhelmed by their own issues which may be school or home related.

Guidelines for dealing with young people who return after a brief period

If a young person absconds but returns within approximately 20 minutes, the young person must be offered the opportunity to speak to an adult of the young person's choice so that the cause of his/her action can be ascertained.

Details of the young person's absence without authority will be recorded in their file and their parent/guardian informed. If the young person declines the opportunity to discuss his/her absence, this too should be clearly recorded.

There are other behaviours that involve children in absenting themselves from prescribed activities. These include:

- Walking out of class/activity on and off site
- Failure to return to class/activity from a break.

These absconsions will be dealt with within the guidelines of the behavior strategy.

Guidelines for dealing with young people who abscond from school

As stated in the document referred to above, 'going missing is a dangerous activity and can have short and long term consequences, ...and it is imperative that services working with children are able to and actively do identify those who are commencing a pattern of running behaviour and provide the appropriate interventions at the earliest opportunity to prevent future incidents which may place them, or others, at risk...

Many children will exhibit normal adolescent behaviour in testing boundaries and it is not helpful to consider every incident of lateness or absence for all people as high risk. However, some will need to be treated as missing immediately due to their vulnerability. This protocol is based upon the principles of sound individual risk assessment, by carers and agency professionals and by GMP in classifying and responding to the incident."

GMP distinguishes between young people going missing, and young people absenting themselves:

- **Missing** – Anyone whose **whereabouts cannot be established and** where the circumstances are **out of character**, or the context suggests **the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another**.
- **Absent** – A person **not at a place** where they are **expected or required** to be but where carers or Police do not feel the need to start a full missing investigation at that stage.

It is further stated in the document that young people should not be reported missing as a behaviour management tool. A clear risk analysis will establish the risk to the young person involved:

<p>High</p> <p>The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability, or may have been a victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger</p>
<p>Medium</p> <p>The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger, or they are a threat to themselves or others.</p>
<p>Low</p> <p>There is no apparent risk of danger to either the subject or the public.</p>

On return to school, a **Safe and Well Check** will have to be carried out. In many cases this may not be undertaken by the police as it is recognized that the young people might be more likely to confide in a trusted adult who can support them longer term and help reduce further risk.

Guidelines for reporting the young person missing to the police

(See 'Standardised Approach to Dealing with Missing and Absent People of all Ages')

If a young person under 16 (or 18 if in care) is found to be missing from school, school must inform the parent or carer with parental responsibility. **It is the parent's / carer's responsibility then to notify the police of the missing person.** Only if the individual is aged over 16 years (over 18 years if in care), school may decide to report the individual missing directly to the Police.

The only exceptions to this rule are:

- When a member of the senior management team makes a professional judgment that circumstances indicate too high a risk so any delay must be avoided.
- In cases where school cannot get in contact with the person with parental responsibility.
- If the school has concerns about compromised parenting and/or believes the parents will not report the young person missing in a timely manner

The academy will follow the usual Safeguarding procedures and report to Children's Services if there are concerns for the young person's safety and welfare during or following a missing or any absent episode. Other agencies will be involved to support the young person as appropriate, and additional support will be offered to parents/carers on a multi agency basis (CAF, TAC, CIN, CP as appropriate). If a young person is considered at risk of Sexual Exploitation, appropriate referrals will be made and a strategy meeting called to identify the risk level and what can be done to further support the young person.

(Missing from school should not be confused with "Missing from Education" which is about an individual's access, or lack of access, to education rather than their physical location.)

Related Policies:

- Greater Manchester 'Standardised Approach to Dealing with Missing and Absent People of all Ages'
- Safeguarding Policy
- RSHE policy
- Counselling Protocol
- Calling Emergency Services Protocol
- LAC policy
- Behaviour and Relationships policy