

Absconding Policy



Name of Owner: Kate Emptage

Date: Feb 2026

Approved by 26.03.26
Governors:

Date of next review: Feb 2027

Southgate School: Absconding Policy

This policy is shared and signed by all the staff at Southgate School and shared on the school's website for all parents and carers to view. If you have any questions in relation to this policy, please email office@southgateschool.co.uk

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils or staff with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Overview:

Absconding is when a pupil goes beyond the fenced boundaries of the school without permission. Some of our pupils have difficulties managing their anxiety, and a small minority of these may seek to abscond as a result. Other pupils might not have an awareness of danger and could put themselves at risk unintentionally. In any circumstance, due to the vulnerable nature of our pupils, the absconding policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that pupils are safeguarded at all times. The absconding policy will also be followed if a pupil absconds during on off-site activity/ trip.

Prevention:

All pupils are closely supervised at all times whilst in school. Our site is secure, with fobbed access to the external gates and doors and the entrances to each corridor. Outdoor spaces are fenced and risk assessed. Unused rooms are always locked. Some pupils use our 'Independence fobs' to develop their skill in independently moving around school. This is always carefully assessed and remotely supervised.

Registers are taken every morning between 9.15 and 9.30 following arrival to school. Any absentees are followed up by phone call. A further register is taken in the afternoon between 12.30 and 1pm. It is the responsibility of the staff in each class to account for the whereabouts of their pupils.

Pupils who present a known risk of absconding will have a risk assessment and/or PMP in place to reduce the risk of absconding. Personal safety and life skills are an embedded part of our curriculum.

Within School:

Upon discovering a pupil is missing, an immediate search is undertaken by school staff looking in and around any familiar places. The search will not exceed approximately 10 minutes and a member of SLT or WLT must be informed immediately. If the pupil cannot be found, it must be assumed that they have absconded. In this situation, parents/ carers/ social worker are to be informed immediately and kept up to date with the process. Once the pupil has been missing for approximately 20 minutes the police are to be called. This may vary depending on the circumstance and individual needs of the pupil (see below).

If a Pupil Absconds:

1. Where possible, a member of staff should follow the pupil, attempting to persuade them to come back on to site or keeping a safe eye on the pupil. The staff member is to make a dynamic risk assessment of the situation and, if appropriate, further staff members will be allocated to assist.

2. Staff will alert the office in the event of a pupil absconding and SLT or WLT must be informed immediately if a pupil absconds. For pupils where there is a high risk of absconding, the allocated member of staff will carry a school mobile to aid communication.
3. SLT, WLT or admin will inform parents/carers /social worker and keep them updated.
4. If the pupil is missing for approximately 20 minutes without being sighted, or the situation becomes unsafe, the police are to be informed.

Individual Circumstance:

The response must be informed by the individual circumstances, determining their developmental level and their emotional state. For example, if a pupil has no road awareness or is a danger to themselves or others, physical intervention could be necessary to prevent the pupil absconding. In all events, the pupil's individual risk assessment and PMP are to be followed.

Policy Date: June 2017 by P. Evans

Agreed at Governing Body Meeting: 07/06/2017

Reviewed and Updated: January 2024 by R. Cranmer

Reviewed and Updated: February 2025 by C. Gaffigan

Reviewed and Updated: February 2026 by K. Emptage

Southgate School: Absconding Policy