

Hatfield Peverel
St Andrew's Junior
School



Child Going Missing
or Absconding
Policy

Document detail

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Please note – this is NOT a policy for Children Missing Education (CME).
For CME guidance and procedures, Essex VST Schools should go to Essex Schools Infolink
https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/education_compliance/Pages/children_missing_education.aspx

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1. Overview

This policy is put in place to ensure that every action possible is taken to secure the quick and safe return of a child if they go missing or abscond from school.

2. Objectives

- To locate any missing child quickly
- To ensure that children who leave school during the school day only do so with the head teacher's, teachers or office staff's permission and that they are accompanied by an authorised adult.
- To ensure that the building, grounds and play areas are safe and secure during school hours.
- To ensure that staff keep children under proper supervision at all times.
- To ensure that if a child 'goes missing' during the school day, he/she is located quickly and returned safely to school.

3. Strategies

- If the child has gone missing at the end of the school day members of staff may take the most appropriate route home to look for the child. They should also enquire whether the child is likely to have gone to a relative's house, an after-school club or a friend's house and explore these routes as well.
- If a child goes missing during an outing or school visit, the teacher in charge must ensure that the remaining children are safely cared for by the other staff and adults. The teacher in charge must also inform the headteacher, immediately, and the rest of this policy will be applied.
- If a child cannot be found when he/she should be in school, the head teacher or a deputy head teacher must be notified immediately and told when and where the child was last seen. Time is of the essence and prompt actions must be taken by all.
- The remaining children must be left safe in the care of suitable staff. All other available staff will conduct a thorough search of the child's classroom, play areas, storage areas, toilets, the school building and the school grounds.
- If the child is not found within a short period of time, the head teacher or deputy head teacher will advise that the parents/carers **must** be called.
- Members of staff who are not supervising children, should, (with their mobile phones), search the area in the immediate vicinity of the school.
- An urgent but thorough search should be made of the immediate vicinity and if the child is not found quickly the head teacher must be notified and take swift action.

- Under direction of the head teacher or deputy head teacher, the parents/carers will be notified that their child is missing.
- If a member of staff finds the child the head teacher or deputy head teacher must be told at once. They will ensure that relevant parties are notified.
- The head teacher or deputy head teacher will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

4. Children who run

- If staff fear that a child is likely to run out of the school grounds, a swift and urgent check must be made to ensure exit routes are secure – e.g. gates around drop off and pick up time.
- If a child does manage to leave the school site and is in the eye line of adults, the adult should seek other adult assistance and call after the child or try and talk to the child to try and get them to come back.
- The member of staff will alert other members of staff and search the immediate vicinity, taking a mobile phones/walkie talkie with them. One member of staff alerts the head teacher or deputy head teacher. The head teacher or Deputy will then advise of the appropriate action and will advise that the parents/carers must be called and consider any additional action.
- If a member of staff finds the child the head teacher or deputy head teacher must be told at once. They will ensure that relevant parties are notified.

The head teacher or deputy head teacher will investigate how the incident occurred and will take every appropriate action to mitigate against similar events happening again. This may include an individual risk assessment.

- The school will offer a meeting with the parents/carers of any children who run from school
- The school must also consider contacting the police if:
- This is uncharacteristic behaviour for the pupil
 - The child was under a large amount of stress
 - The school believes the child to be in danger

5. Looking for the pupil

It is recommended to send teachers or other members of staff who know the child well to look for him/her. The school may know of particular places the child likes or feels comfortable in. For example, he/she may feel safe and comfortable at a particular friend's

house. It is also possible that, having run away, the child will not know where to go. It is therefore worth looking for him/her near the school.

6. What to do when the pupil is found

When the child is found and returned to school, the focus must be on establishing why the child decided to leave the school site. It should:

- Seek to explain clearly to the child, in an age appropriate way, why their behaviour left them unsafe.
- Seek to understand why the child took this action. Was it because of something that happened in school?

Was it because of something happening outside of school?

- Establish whether the child feels safe in school.
- School should then consider ways of ensuring the child does not repeat this action.
- This might involve looking at behaviour strategies for coping with stress. For example, school might provide a 'safe place' the child can go to for 'time out'.
- School might also encourage the child to speak to a particular member of staff if he/she begins to feel upset, angry or stressed.

7. What if the pupil has SEN?

If the child that has gone missing or absconder has special education needs (SEN), the behaviour may be associated with his/her learning difficulties. Strategies to support the child in managing this behaviour should be identified and shared with all staff involved with the child. This may form part of the One planning process or require a specific risk assessment.

8. Understanding why the child has run away

It is important to establish why the child might have run away. This will help it to decide how to deal with the situation. Some questions, for the school and parents/carers, to help identify the cause are:

- Does the child have a relevant special educational need that might contribute to his/her decision to run away?
- Has something happened in the child's life outside school that might affect his/her behaviour in school?
- Is there a specific place or person at the school that has prompted this behaviour?
- Has the child experienced acute stress at school for any reason?
- Is he/she a victim of bullying?
- Has this happened before?

9. Outcomes

The safety of all children will be given our highest priority. A missing child should be an extremely rare happening.

This policy is designed to put into place swift and effective actions to locate any missing child and to notify and involve parents and relevant parties at every appropriate point.

APPENDIX - POLICE REPORTING A MISSING CHILD AND COUNTY INVOLVEMENT.

BEFORE CALLING 999- Complete this form (or a staff member to complete it whilst call being made)

School postcode is: CM3 2JX

School phone number is: 01245 380131

School DfE number is: 881/5279

INFORMATION FOR POLICE- MISSING CHILD	Police reference number Call 101 for sharing additional information
Name-	
Address-	
DOB-	
Parents name and numbers	
Time last seen	
Location last seen	
Who were they with?	
Height	
Description- physical	
What clothes were being worn?	
Phone with them?	
Any medical needs? On medication?	
Usual behaviours	
Pupils from other schools involved?	

(This may not be necessary)

press.desk@essex.gov.uk Contact re: Wording of emails to parents etc.

We currently have a child in Year XXXX who is missing from home. We believe her to be with an older girl.

If you have any information on the whereabouts of XXXXX please contact the school office on 01245 380131 or Essex Police if outside of school hours.

https://schools.essex.gov.uk/admin/Critical_Incidents/Documents/TEMPLATE%20-%20Incident%20Notification%20Form.docx

Complete this form asap and email to schools.communication@essex.gov.uk