

# Archibald Primary School

## Absconding Policy

September 2021

### INCLUSION STATEMENT/MISSION STATEMENT/PRINCIPLES

The staff at **Archibald Primary School** are committed to the inclusion of all pupils. We therefore:

- Provide an environment which enables every pupil to be safe and healthy.
- Every teacher is a teacher of every child or young person including those with SEN.
- Value every individual and enable them to enjoy their learning, achieve their full potential and economic well-being.
- Enable every pupil to make a positive contribution to their school and community.
- Identify and respond to pupils' diverse and individual needs.
- Identify and overcome potential barriers to learning.
- Set suitable learning challenges for every pupil.

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.

**Definition:** 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.

#### **Part 1:**

**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 immediately and the School Office.
- A member of SLT organises search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.
- If the pupil is not found, then all available staff (as advised by SLT) to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
- SLT/Mentors to phone the Police or advise Office or other member of staff to do so when area has been fully checked if the child is not found.
- SLT/mentors to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation or advise Office or other member of staff to do so.
- Consideration will be given as 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 member of staff who leaves the school grounds must take a 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.
- Member of SLT to brief Police and parents.

#### **Part 2:**

**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 school.

- Staff must alert quickly of any incident that requires immediate response. A pupil or additional adult can be sent to the school office or the mobile phones held by the following staff (SLT/Mentors/PSA/Attendance Officer) can also be contacted and used to alert the office who will locate senior staff.
- 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 (using trained team teach methods), 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 him or her at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.
- 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.
- After risk assessment, staff may follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance if in view.
- The SLT lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.
- SLT will contact the pupils' parents/ carers or advise school office or another member of 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.
- SLT to phone the Police or advise Office or other member of staff to do so when area has been fully checked if the child is not found.

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. This 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 pupils' 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.

**NOTE – Staff must keep parents/carers informed of any additional information received or if the child returns to school.**

#### **On return to the school:**

- Inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Parents/Carers will be informed or Social Worker by Designated Safeguarding Lead (if applicable).
- Police informed of pupil's return.
- Post-incident feedback will be initiated and fully documented quoting Incident Number and Police Log Number. The child's Risk Assessment will be updated.
- All documentation of absconding must always have Day, Date, Time, who you spoke with and an Incident Log Number.

#### **Post-incident Feedback**

During the post-incident feedback, should any issues arise requiring modification of Risk Assessments, it will be acted on accordingly.

Any further concerns, please refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

## **Schools and Safer Schools Officers reporting Protocol:**

### **Reporting children and young people as missing or absconded during the school day**

#### **1. Police Missing Person Criteria**

A child or young person will be defined as missing if their whereabouts are unknown and there are reasons to believe one or more of the following applies:

- a) There are suspicious circumstances, i.e. the young person may have been the victim of a serious crime.
- b) The behaviour is out of character and there is no apparent explanation for their absence.
- c) There is significant concern that the young person may have suffered harm.
- d) The young person is thought to be at risk of significant harm during the absence.
- e) The young person is dangerous and there is a significant risk they will harm another person whilst absent.

#### **1. Prior to contacting the Police**

When a young person appears to have gone missing **from school**, the school should as far as practicable take all reasonable and practical steps in order to identify whether the child is a missing person by:

- a) determining the nature and reasons for absence (consider recent events or precipitating factors);
- b) ascertaining the likely intentions of the young person;
- c) establishing the whereabouts and well-being of the young person.

Where there is no apparent risk and the Police Missing Person Criteria (Section 1) outlined above is not met, reasonable and practical steps should be taken **before** contacting the police and include but are not limited to:

- a) Contact parent(s)/guardian(s) to update them as to the young person being absent from school and to enquire about possible triggers for the absence.
- b) Searching the schools premises, grounds and immediate locality of the school.
- c) Telephoning and sending an SMS (text) message to the young person's mobile phone and checking their Facebook page via a school Facebook account only, if this is accessible.
- d) Making enquiries with the young person's friends.
- e) Contact professionals who support the young person or their family (e.g. social workers) for further information.

#### **1. Informing the police**

The Schools and Safer schools/Police Officer reporting protocol outlines the referral pathways for reporting missing episodes to the police.

The police should also be informed if the child/young person hits the criteria outlined above in **Section 1. Police Missing Person Criteria**.

#### **2. Initial Reporting to Police**

Police will require the following information:

- a) Personal details, family and friends contact details, time, date and location of last sighting, a clothing description (if not in school uniform).
- b) Any previous history of missing episodes, known associates, push/pull factors.
- c) Any known child protection concerns/social care involvement/identifiable risks.
- d) Details of all enquiries to locate the young person conducted so far/individuals (parent/carer) notified.
- e) A current photograph of the missing person wherever possible.

#### **1. Professional responsibilities to safeguarding children and young people who go missing during the school day**

Following any report of a missing person to police, the school should inform and update parent(s)/ guardian(s) and other appropriate agencies. There is a need for all involved parties to co-operate fully and schools should work with all partners to achieve this.

Where appropriate, the school will be expected to assist in finding the young person and to work co-operatively with police during any enquiry. The school should make a record of all actions taken throughout the period a young person is recorded as missing in relation to their welfare, and fully update police on those actions at the appropriate time.

The Police will investigate all cases falling within the definition of missing in accordance with the Police Missing Persons Policy and National Guidance.

On the child or young person's return the "Pupil/s Identified as Missing During School Day Incident Report Log (MA 1)" should be completed in order to ascertain the circumstances of why the pupil went missing and where they had been and what they had been involved with in the period of absence. Schools should ensure that there is an appropriate package of support and intervention in place to address any identified needs of the pupil concerned and care and control measures in place to prevent any further missing episodes. All completed MA1 forms should also be submitted electronically on a monthly basis during the first week of every calendar month to the Safer Schools Officer.

Identified threats and risks should be discussed with the young person's parents/carers/guardian and consideration should be given to a multi-agency strategy meeting regarding the young person if appropriate.

## **2. Risk Assessments**

Schools should consider preparing risk assessments for those young persons that are frequently absent from school, or those young persons that are deemed at risk should they absent themselves.

Risk assessments should consider the following elements:

How likely is it that the young person will go missing:

- a) Has the young person gone absent before and if so what is the pattern of their previous absent behaviour? Consider where and when young persons have been found and their accounts regarding their absence/ known associates.
- b) What factors or potential incidents may act as a trigger incident and lead to the young person going absent?
- c) Are there any other circumstances, behaviour or indicators that suggest that the young person may go absent in the future?
- d) What actions can the school take with partners, where appropriate to develop an intervention plan to reduce the likelihood of future missing episodes
- e) Agreement regarding the child being returned to school / and how they will be responded to, if found during school hours
- f) Does a child sexual exploitation partner checklist need to be completed? Is there a need for an early help plan and does there need to be a referral to children's social work services?
- g) How the school will work with independent return interview service to facilitate, where appropriate the completion of return interviews
- h) How the school will share information /intelligence with the police and other relevant partners