

ABSCONDING CHILD POLICY

ACTIV8 EDUCATION GROUP

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Policy Statement: The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly for all staff, volunteers, children/young people and parents the process that will take place should a child/young person abscond from our site/care. All core staff have received safeguarding training and are aware of our policy on safeguarding and child protection, and should be mindful of this when following this policy.

1. Aim

Activ8 actively works to provide a secure and safe environment, a place where children/young people want to come to enjoy learning and experiencing new activities with others as part of a caring community. In most cases, it is highly unlikely that a child/young person will try to abscond, but this policy is written to ensure readiness to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.

Where a pupil presents at formal registration is found to be absent from our site/care without authorisation, the following procedures will be followed.

2. Pupils who abscond before the end of the registration period

Activ8 are required to register their pupils at the beginning of each day, with regular headcounts being taken throughout the day. This should take place within a period, of not less than 10 minutes, set aside when the register is open.

If a pupil absconds from the site during the period of registration, the register should show the pupil as being absent.

Should the pupil return to the site after the end of the registration period, the class register should be amended to indicate arrival, with a note added to address late arrival.

If a pupil absconds in these circumstances, Activ8 staff will make every effort to advise the parents/carers if this happens on more than one occasion.

3. Pupils who abscond after registration

Once a pupil has been registered as present, the registration period has ended and the class register has closed, Activ8 are "in loco parentis".

Should a pupil abscond after the end of the registration period, Activ8, technically, remains "in loco parentis".

Every attempt should be made to contact the parents/carers to advise them that their child/young person has absconded from our site/care. When parents/carers are contacted, it should be made clear that the responsibility for their child/young person is being passed back to them.

Activ8 staff will follow the procedures outlined on the forthcoming page.

Procedure if a pupil is missing or absconds

Staff member informs SLT (DSL or DDSL) that pupil is possibly missing/absconding

Staff check location of pupil/if pupil is still on premises:

- Staff check last known location, known hiding points/calm down areas/areas pupil may regularly go to if absconding.
- Staff members man any points of easy exit from grounds/building whilst others sweep search building/grounds systematically, only where possible, and not putting other pupils' safety at risk

Pupil not found on the premises

Pupil sighted leaving the premises

Pupil is found on the grounds / premises

- Staff inform parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact.
- Staff inform the police if contact cannot be made with the parents/carers.

SLT and other staff informed

Pupil is found

Pupil refuses to come in

Pupil comes in

Parents, pupil and police (if appropriate) attend school to discuss the matter. This should be done as soon as possible.

- Call parents to inform them.
- If child refuses to re-enter and goes out of sight then the police will be informed
- Pupil and parent discuss matter with SLT.

Investigate incident, determine how it happened and any lessons to be learnt.

Take action to prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk assessments to reflect any changes.

Staff will not follow or chase after a child/young person that has absconded as this could potentially make the situation worse, risking endangerment of life to child/young person and/or staff

Contact with parents/carers will be by telephone in the first instance. In all circumstances, Activ8 will record details of attempts to establish contact. If the parents/carers are contacted, the attendance register should be amended to show unauthorised absence.

If the parents/carers cannot be contacted, the attendance register should remain unamended. At this stage, telephone 101 and inform the Police that the child is missing and unaccounted for. However, the responsibility for the student remains with Activ8.

4. Pupils who are suspended/excluded but come onto the delivery site

If a pupil is suspended or excluded, either for a fixed period or permanently, he/she should not be on the academy/school site.

Should a suspended or excluded pupil appear on the delivery site, he/she should be asked to leave. If the pupil refuses or is causing a nuisance or disturbance which requires action, Activ8 should, in the first instance, make every effort to contact the parents/carers to ask them to remove their child from the delivery site property.

If the parents/carers are either not contactable or are not able to remove their child from the delivery site property, the Police should be contacted for assistance.

5. Pupils who abscond from the building but remain in the site grounds

Activ8 staff should not pursue the pupil or try to force her/him back into building. However, there may be circumstances where Activ8 staff will need to use their judgement and possibly knowledge of the pupil along with any control measures/procedures contained within the individual risk assessment of the pupil if they have one.

A pupil's age, vulnerability and other factors need to be considered. For example, it may be dangerous to let a particular pupil wander about the academy/school grounds. In cases where there are foreseeable risks (from climbing etc) a member of SLT will ensure a site survey is undertaken to reduce risks as low as is reasonably practicable.

The demeanour of the pupil will need to be considered. If the pupil is upset or angry, care must be given to how he/she is approached.

In all cases, staff should not place themselves in situations of potential danger and/or put themselves at risk.

6. Pupils who may abscond

In situations where it is foreseeable that a pupil may abscond, it is imperative that a thorough risk assessment is carried out in advance to determine the best way of managing the individual. This will naturally include trigger factors and thus where possible find ways to prevent the behaviour or at least deescalate, but also must include procedures to follow. This procedure must be agreed in advance with all stakeholders. A positive handling plan or care plan may need to be drawn up.

A pupil absconding from the delivery site should not be restrained unless there is evidence that he/she is at serious risk. Physical restraint is to be used only in exceptional circumstances. Restraint must be reasonable and in proportion to the circumstances. Warning of intended restraint should be given, when practicable, in a non-threatening manner. This might involve holding, pushing or pulling individuals. It should not involve the more restrictive or percussive forms of force.

7. Pupils who return to the delivery site after absconding

Most pupils who abscond will do so because of a specific incident which may have taken place either at the delivery site, at home or on the way to school.

For those pupils who return to the delivery site either by their own choice, with parental support or following intervention by a member of staff, thought should be given to their welfare. They are likely to need support, understanding and perhaps some time apart from their peers.

8. Parents and Carers

Parents / carers of pupils are responsible for supporting the work of Activ8. They are responsible for encouraging their children to keep to all Activ8 procedures and policies.

Once the academy/school has informed the parents that their child has absconded, parents and carers are responsible for actively supporting Activ8 with the subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming to school to help secure the safety of the child/young person after he/she has absconded as well as meeting with a senior staff member to agree subsequent actions.

9. Monitoring and evaluation

Each incident will be recorded, monitored and evaluated and individual risk assessments amended if necessary and appropriate.

10. Procedures

If a pupil is suspected of leaving the delivery site without permission, in an emotional state:

- a) The member of staff will alert a member of the Safeguarding team.
- b) If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the delivery site and is no longer visible then the Safeguarding team will decide as to how to take matters further which will consider the age of the pupil, the prevailing 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.
- c) If there is no doubt that the pupil has absconded, Activ8 will contact the police as an emergency situation and the pupil's parent to inform them. Staff will not chase or follow the pupil closely as this could lead to the pupil wandering further afield, acting impetuously or causing a traffic accident.
- d) If the child/young person is within an easy distance of the delivery site, staff are not to engage in conversation as the child/young person might be in a distressed state and unable to act in a controlled manner. This would mean there is still the potential for traffic accidents. However, staff should be aware (through the risk assessment process) of any potential triggers and techniques to use in such events if this is a foreseeable incident.
- e) If the child/young person appears to be missing but there is no evidence that he/she has left the site, a quick but thorough search of the site should be conducted by a member of staff before the parents/police are informed.
- f) If the pupil returns of his/her own volition, parents and (if necessary) the police will be informed. Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil must be seen a member of 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. A written report will be filed on the incident and stored internally.

If the SLT is aware that a pupil is not acting emotionally but has left the delivery site grounds, the above procedures may be adapted.

Policy to be reviewed in September 2024

Owen Wedgwood