

Absconding Policy

Policy Review

The responsibility of reviewing and maintaining this policy is Craig Dembicki (Managing Director). This policy will be reviewed annually.

Start date of policy: **19th February 2015**

Reviewed: **12th July 2024**

Date of next review: **12th July 2025**

Signed



Craig Dembicki

Managing Director
Education 1st

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out for all staff, parents, carers, students and stakeholders, the processes that Education 1st will follow in the event of a student going missing on the premises, going missing whilst off-site or having absconded.

The definition of absconding in relation to this policy is where either the student:

- Exits the premises without permission
- Walks and/or runs from a member of staff during transport or at an offsite activity.

A student will be defined as having 'gone missing' if they have been out of sight of members of staff for more than ten consecutive minutes.

Education 1st actively strives to provide a secure and safe environment, aiming to provide an educational provision where students enjoy and thrive in their learning whilst also feeling part of a community.

Related Policies:

Transport Policy
Behaviour Policy
Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Health and Safety and Risk Management Policy
Lone Working Policy
Positive Handling Policy
Staff Wellbeing Policy
Trips and Visits Policy

On the Learning Centre Premises

A register of attendance of students is completed each morning and afternoon at the time the student is picked up by the collecting Education Key Worker. Upon arrival at the Learning Centre staff sign each student in using the register on the reception desk, students are also signed out when leaving the premises.

Education Key Workers are equipped with mobile phones which are tracked so that their location can be gathered whilst offsite in the event of an emergency.

It is the responsibility of the Duty Manager to be able to account for the whereabouts of every student, both onsite and offsite.

It is the responsibility of the Duty Manager to ensure that walkie talkies are operational within the Learning Centre where necessary.

Upon discovering that a student is missing onsite then the Duty Manager should be informed immediately. The Duty Manager must organise all available staff to begin an immediate search of the entire building. The search should not exceed ten minutes. One or two members of staff (depending on availability) should also search the immediate exterior of the building including the garden within the same ten minutes; a walkie-talkie should be used by members of staff to keep in contact. If the student is a known absconder then this should have been recorded in their individual risk assessment; this should include all known areas that the student goes to when absconding.

At this stage, if the student has not been located, the Duty Manager should:

1. Organise all available staff to search the immediate local community. **Staff must take potential dangers into account and not put themselves at risk.**
2. Make a phone call to 101 to inform the local police force (Avon and Somerset), giving a clear description of the student and the clothing being worn.
3. Contact the parents/ carers of the student who is missing.
4. Not leave the premises but remain onsite to co-ordinate the search, answer phone calls and provide photos and information. The police will want to visit Education 1st.
5. Ensure that there are adequate staff left in the building to deal with other contingencies. When searching the local community on foot, remember that you may be vulnerable (use a car whenever possible).
6. Following the incident, ensure appropriate documents are completed as soon as possible - behaviour tracker, incident log.
7. Arrange a meeting to discuss the circumstances of the incident and the effectiveness of the current procedures. A review must take place of the student's individual risk assessment. Keeping all colleagues informed.
8. If the student has been found to have absconded, then decide upon receipt of the facts, the appropriate sanctions to be placed on the student. (Follow guidance from the Behaviour Policy).
9. Ensure the commissioning body is made aware of the incident.

Off-site premises

Students involved in off-site activities are entered onto the daily rota with their designated member of staff. That member of staff is responsible for their group of students and should provide their daily plan, with locations, to the reception phone and this is entered onto a location log.

All staff whilst off-site and providing student transport must carry a fully charged mobile phone with them.

For groups larger than 3, a headcount should be taken at regular intervals and always before leaving in transport from a venue.

If a student is discovered as missing then a search of the immediate area is undertaken by available staff members, ensuring all other students continue to be appropriately supervised. This search should not exceed ten minutes. If a student has gone missing in a group supervised by one member of staff then the staff member should stay in the last place the missing student saw them and wait for 5 minutes to see if they return. **Staff must take potential dangers into account and not put themselves at risk.**

If the missing student does not return or is not located, then:

1. The staff member should notify the Duty Manager at the Learning Centre and act on any instructions given.
2. The Duty Manager will then notify the police with the most precise description of the student as possible, the last known whereabouts of the student and any other details they may require.
3. Notify, if appropriate, the venue that is being visited and ask them to initiate their lost child protocols.
4. The Duty Manager will notify the student's parents and keep them updated as necessary.

The member of staff initiating the search should remain in situ until police or assistance from Education 1st arrives in case the missing student should return or be found.

In such stressful circumstances it is important that staff remain as calm and collected as possible.

Absconding

A student is considered to have absconded if they intentionally / knowingly leave the Education 1st site or the immediate area of an off-site activity without permission from staff.

If a student absconds then:

- Where possible, a member of staff should follow the student calmly at a safe distance and/or respond in line with guidance from the student's individual risk assessment; ensuring that any other students under the staff members care are appropriately supervised. **Staff must take potential dangers into account and not put themselves at risk.**
- If the staff member is lone working with a group offsite and a student absconds then the staff member should remain stationary with the other students in the group and not follow. If the absconding student becomes out of sight then the student will be deemed 'missing', procedure will follow those outlined previously for a student missing offsite.
- The Duty Manager at the Learning Centre should be informed immediately of the situation; if they are unavailable then their Deputy or another member of senior staff should be informed and will act on behalf of the Duty Manager.
- Where possible, the member of staff following the student should remain in contact with the main group and/or the Duty Manager at the Learning Centre via mobile phone or walkie talkie.
- The Duty Manager will then, if appropriate, allocate further members of staff to assist in collecting the student.

If a student absconds and is deemed to be 'missing', then procedures will follow those outlined previously for a student missing offsite.

It is important that following an incident that the issues that arise are addressed and staff should:

- Review the individual risk assessment for the student involved.
- Where appropriate, talk through the incident with the student involved. Ensure that a record is kept of the discussion held with the student.
- Complete an incident form. (A copy of which should be placed in the student's personal files).
- Keep all colleagues informed and discuss incidents at staff meetings.
- Review procedures for individuals at adequate intervals to ensure the appropriate control measures are in place and that the staff are fully informed.

Education 1st takes absconding very seriously, it puts both the student and staff members at risk and therefore operates a **zero-tolerance** policy against the behaviour. The student will receive sanctions in line with the behaviour policy.

Repeat absconding will be followed up in line with our Behaviour Policy.

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS – Student Friendly Policy

What happens if you go missing?

What is meant by “missing”? You will be considered missing if members of staff do not know where you are.

What is meant by “absconding”? You have absconded if you deliberately go away from where you should be without telling a member of staff or without a member of staff giving you permission.

What will happen if you go missing? The people looking after you have a responsibility to know where you are and to make sure you are safe. If you are ‘missing’ they will speak to your friends, teachers and family to see if they can help. If there is concern for your safety then staff will need to search for clues as to where you are. The Police may be informed that you are missing, and they and Education 1st staff will look for you.

What happens if you can’t be found? A meeting will be held between Education 1st and the Police to plan how to search for you. Your name, description and a photograph will be given to the Police in order to help them with their search.

What happens when you are found? You will be returned to a safe place and will be asked about the reasons for you going missing. This is to try and find out if anything is troubling you and to see if anyone can help. You do not have to run away to talk to someone. If you want to talk to someone outside of Education 1st, this can be arranged.

You may also be visited by a Police Officer who will check that you are back. This is called a “Safe and Well Check”. You will be able to speak to the Police Officer without any member of staff present if you wish to do so.

Will anything else happen? If you are injured or unwell then you will be checked by a Doctor or Nurse. Your Teacher or Key worker will want to talk to you about going missing. If you have



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@ www.education-1st.org.uk

deliberately run away (absconded) then the people responsible for your safety will meet to discuss ways in which such incidents can be prevented by looking at the reasons for your actions.

Remember - You have the right to use a telephone in private. If you are worried about something or just want to talk, the national Child Line number is 0800 1111.