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# Abscending policy

**Version Control:**

<u>Version number</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amendments made</u>	<u>By who?</u>	<u>Approval date</u>
1	September 2025		G.Gibbons	

'Together in truth and faith we learn and grow as God's family'

# Mission Statement

**Together in truth and faith we learn and grow as God's family**

**At St Francis, we show the joy of being the children of God:**

## **TRUTH**

Truth and love are at the heart of our school

## **FAITH**

By following in Jesus' footsteps, our faith is strengthened

## **LEARN**

We promote and nurture the uniqueness of every child while striving for excellence in God's presence

## **GROW**

As part of the family of St Francis we grow closer to God through our daily words and actions



## A WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY FOR Absconding

### 1. Introduction and Purpose

St Francis Catholic Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils. This policy sets out our procedures for preventing and responding to incidents where a child leaves the school premises without permission ('absconding').

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. All staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn. Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Missing Child Policy

### 2. Definition

For the purposes of this policy, 'absconding' means when a pupil leaves the school premises, or a designated area during an off-site visit, without permission and appropriate supervision.

### 3. Risk Assessment and Prevention

We recognise that some pupils may be at higher risk of absconding due to:

- Special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- Mental health difficulties
- Previous incidents of absconding
- Safeguarding concerns
- Difficulties with transitions or changes to routine

For pupils identified as being at risk of absconding, we will:

- Conduct an individual risk assessment in consultation with parents/carers, the SENCO, and relevant external agencies
- Develop a personalised support plan outlining preventative strategies
- Ensure all staff working with the child are aware of the risk and the support plan
- Review the risk assessment regularly and after any incident

**3.3** Preventative measures across the school include:

- Secure perimeter fencing and gates
- Controlled access points with electronic locks, staff monitoring, CCTV at entry points.
- Clear supervision arrangements during break times, lunch times, and transitions
- Staff vigilance and awareness
- Teaching pupils about keeping themselves safe
- Creating a positive, supportive school environment where pupils feel safe and valued

#### **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

##### **All Staff**

- Maintain appropriate supervision of pupils at all times
- Be aware of pupils identified as being at higher risk of absconding
- Report any concerns about a pupil's wellbeing or behaviour immediately
- Follow the procedures in this policy if a child absconds

##### **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): [Insert name and contact details]**

- Provide support to staff to carry out their safeguarding duties and liaise closely with other services such as local authority children's social care Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Lead on risk assessments for pupils at risk of absconding
- Maintain records of absconding incidents
- Liaise with parents/carers and external agencies
- Review this policy annually

##### **Headteacher:**

- Ensure this policy is implemented effectively
- Ensure staff receive appropriate training
- Report serious incidents to governors and the local authority as required

##### **Governing Body**

- Ensure that policies and procedures are effective and comply with the law at all times Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Monitor the implementation of this policy

#### **5. Immediate Response Procedures**

##### **5.1 If a member of staff becomes aware that a child has absconded:**

###### **Step 1: Immediate Action (0-2 minutes)**

- Alert the nearest member of staff immediately & communicate this to SLT

- One member of staff should attempt to follow the child at a safe distance if they can be seen, maintaining visual contact where possible
- Do NOT leave other pupils unsupervised – ensure remaining pupils are safe and supervised

#### **Step 2: Alert Senior Leadership (2-5 minutes)**

- Immediately inform Headteacher, Assistant Head, DSL in person or by phone, internal email system
- Provide: child's name, age, class, description of clothing, time last seen, location last seen, direction of travel if known, any relevant risk factors

#### **Step 3: Search and Containment (5-10 minutes)**

- The senior leader will coordinate an immediate search of the school premises and grounds
- Assign specific staff to search specific areas
- Check all exits, toilets, storage areas, and places the child is known to frequent
- If the child is located on site, ensure they are safe and supervised. Do not leave them alone

#### **Step 4: Contact Emergency Services and Parents (10 minutes)**

- If the child is NOT located within the school premises within **5-10 minutes**, or if there are immediate safety concerns, the Headteacher or DSL will:
  - **Call 999** and report the child as missing, providing full details including any safeguarding concerns
  - Contact parents/carers immediately
  - Where reasonably possible, schools should hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil to give the school additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern. Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education

#### **Step 5: Extended Search (Ongoing)**

- If appropriate and safe, designated staff may conduct a search of the immediate vicinity (e.g., local streets, parks, known locations)
- Staff searching must work in pairs and maintain communication with school
- Staff must NOT put themselves at risk
- Follow police guidance once they arrive

### **6. Safeguarding Considerations**

**6.1** Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Where children need a social worker, this should inform decisions about safeguarding. Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education If the child has a social worker, they must be informed immediately.

**6.2** Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation. Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education The DSL will consider whether the absconding incident indicates wider safeguarding concerns.

### **6.3** If the child is located, staff should:

- Ensure the child is safe and calm
- Speak to the child in a calm, reassuring manner
- Reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe  
Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education
- NOT use physical intervention unless absolutely necessary to prevent immediate danger (see Section 8)
- Escort the child back to school safely

## **7. After an Incident**

### **7.1 Immediate Follow-Up**

- Ensure the child receives appropriate care and support
- Medical assessment if required
- Contact parents/carers if not already done
- Inform police that child has been located
- Complete an incident report form

### **7.2 Investigation and Recording**

- The DSL will investigate the circumstances leading to the absconding
- Speak with the child (when appropriate) to understand why they left
- Speak with staff and any witnesses
- Review CCTV footage if available and relevant
- Complete a detailed incident report including:
  - Date, time, and circumstances
  - Actions taken
  - Outcome
  - Any injuries or concerns
  - Follow-up actions required

### **7.3 Review and Learning**

- Review the child's individual risk assessment and support plan
- Consider whether additional support or intervention is needed
- Identify any lessons learned or changes needed to procedures
- Provide support to staff involved
- Consider whether a multi-agency meeting is required

### **7.4 Reporting**

- Report to parents/carers (full written report within 24 hours)
- Report to governors via termly safeguarding report or immediately for serious incidents
- Report to local authority if required under local safeguarding arrangements
- Complete any required accident/incident forms

## **8. Use of Physical Intervention**

**8.1** There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to use 'reasonable force' to safeguard children. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education

**8.2** Staff may use reasonable force to prevent a child from:

- Leaving the school premises if this would put them at risk of harm
- Putting themselves or others in danger

**8.3** The decision on whether or not to use 'reasonable force' to control or restrain a child is down to the professional judgement of the staff concerned within the context of the law and should always depend on individual circumstances. Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education

**8.4** Any use of physical intervention must:

- Be reasonable, proportionate, and necessary
- Use the minimum force required
- Be recorded in detail
- Be reported to parents/carers and senior leaders

**8.5** Staff should refer to our Positive Handling Policy, Behaviour Policy for full guidance on the use of physical intervention.

## **9. Support for Pupils**

**9.1** Following an absconding incident, we will:

- Provide emotional support to the child
- Work with parents/carers to understand and address underlying causes
- Review and update the child's support plan
- Consider referrals to external agencies (e.g., cluster, hubs, educational psychology, CAMHS, social care)
- Implement additional preventative strategies
- Monitor the child closely

**9.2** We recognise that absconding may be a sign of:

- Distress or anxiety
- Difficulty managing emotions
- Safeguarding concerns

- Unmet needs
- Bullying or peer relationship difficulties

## **10. Support for Staff**

**10.1** We recognise that absconding incidents can be distressing for staff. We will:

- Provide immediate support and debriefing after an incident
- Offer access to additional support if needed
- Ensure staff do not feel blamed for incidents
- Provide training on prevention and response strategies

## **11. Working with Parents and Carers**

**11.1** We will:

- Inform parents/carers immediately if their child absconds
- Work in partnership with parents/carers to prevent future incidents
- Share risk assessments and support plans
- Provide regular updates on their child's wellbeing
- Listen to and act on parents'/carers' concerns and insights

## **12. Training**

**12.1** All staff should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training at induction. The training should be regularly updated. Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education Keeping Children Safe in Education

**12.2** Training on this policy will be provided to:

- All staff at induction
- All staff as part of annual safeguarding updates
- Specific staff working with high-risk pupils (additional training)

**12.3** Training will cover:

- Procedures in this policy
- Risk assessment and prevention
- Safeguarding considerations
- Use of reasonable force
- Recording and reporting

## **13. Monitoring and Review**

**13.1** The DSL will:

- Maintain a log of all absconding incidents
- Monitor patterns and trends

- Report to the Headteacher and governors termly
- Identify any necessary improvements to procedures

**13.2** This policy will be reviewed annually by the governing body, or sooner if required following a serious incident or changes to legislation.

#### **14. Related Policies**

This policy should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Positive Handling/Physical Intervention Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Educational Visits Policy

#### **15. Key Contacts**

**Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Mrs G Gibbons ~ [safeguarding@stfrancismorley.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@stfrancismorley.org.uk)

**Deputy DSL(s):** Miss W Grayston, Mrs S Harrison, Miss B Goodall, Mrs D Lawson ~ [safeguarding@stfrancismorley.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@stfrancismorley.org.uk)

**Headteacher:** Mrs G Gibbons ~ [office@stfrancismorley.org.uk](mailto:office@stfrancismorley.org.uk) /

**SENCO:** Mrs G Gibbons ~ [sendco@stfrancismorley.org.uk](mailto:sendco@stfrancismorley.org.uk)

**Chair of Governors:** Mrs A.Walker ~ [office@stfrancismorley.org.uk](mailto:office@stfrancismorley.org.uk)

**Emergency Services:** 999

**Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** 0113 3789687 [lado@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:lado@leeds.gov.uk)

**Leeds Children's Social Care:** Professionals – 0113 3760336

**Non-emergency police:** 101



# Appendix

