



CITY OF BIRMINGHAM EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

BASKERVILLE SCHOOL

**POLICY IN THE EVENT OF A STUDENT
GOING MISSING OR ABSCONDING**

Date reviewed: May 2014
Next review: May 2017

BASKERVILLE SCHOOL, FELLOWS LANE, HARBORNE, BIRMINGHAM, B17 9TS

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VISION STATEMENT

We will ensure the entitlement of each student to access a variety of opportunities to promote academic, social, emotional and physical development.

We will use autistic specific, empathetic approaches and an autistic sympathetic learning environment to promote student learning and personal development.

We will provide choices and challenges in order to maximise potential and build upon strengths and interests.

All the members of the school community are valued equally and work in partnership with parents, carers and the wider community.

We will work within a supportive school framework to promote and celebrate individual success, integration into the wider community and prepare students for life after school.

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

This policy is written to guide staff in the event of a student going missing on the premises, going missing outside of the school or having absconded.

This policy is also written in response to the Minimum Standards of Care for Residential Special Schools drawn up by the National Care Standards Commission, now joined under Ofsted.

Staff are reminded to read the following school policies and practice guidelines in conjunction with this policy –

- Health and Safety Policy
- Care Plan documentation
- School Security Policy
- Behaviour Management Strategy (BMS)
- Individual Risk Assessment

On the School Premises

A register of students will be completed each morning and afternoon in school and each morning and evening in each residential unit's daily log by staff on duty. Also a full student register will be completed every evening by Night Waking staff.

It is the responsibility of the senior manager on site to be able to account for the whereabouts of every student.

Upon discovering a student is missing on site, an immediate search is to be made of the school buildings with all available staff. This search should not exceed ten minutes. All the usual haunts for that student should be searched. If the student is a known absconder this should have been recorded in their individual risk assessment and should include any known haunts for that student. Staff should then regroup and extend the search to the school grounds. This should not exceed a further fifteen minutes. When the search has to be carried out at night time, torches are available in each residential unit's office. The Site Manager or Team Leader is responsible for ensuring these are charged at all times.

If at this stage the student has not been located the senior manager on site 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 the local police station giving a clear description of the student and clothing being worn. Tel 0845 1135000 (Rose Road in Harborne is our nearest police station).
- 3 Contact the parents of the student who is missing.
- 4 Not leave the premises but remain on site to co-ordinate the search, answer phone calls and provide photos and information. The police will want to visit the school.
- 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 or the school minibus whenever possible).
- 6 Following the incident, ensure appropriate documents are completed as soon as possible – absconding record, incident record.
- 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 and, where appropriate, BMS.
- 8 Keep all colleagues informed.

Off School Premises

Students involved in an outing are entered into “off site – fire register” sheets in reception. When going off-site staff are to take their ID badges.

All staff on visits out should ensure they have a fully charged mobile phone with them – the school telephones are kept in reception.

A ‘head count’ of the students should be made at regular intervals and always before a minibus leaves a venue. If a student is discovered as missing, then a search (not exceeding ten minutes) of the immediate area is undertaken by all available members of staff, ensuring that all other students continue to be appropriately supervised.

If the missing student is not located, then:

- A staff member should notify the most senior manager at the school and act on any instructions given.
- The senior manager will notify the police and provide them with as precise a description of the student as possible, the last known whereabouts of the student and any other details they may require. An arrangement has been made with Rose Road Police Station for all emergency calls from the school to be treated as a priority because of the vulnerability of the students.
- Notify, if appropriate, the venue that is being visited and ask them to initiate their lost child protocols.
- The senior 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 the police or assistance from school 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 school site or the immediate area of an off-site activity without permission.

If a student absconds then:

- Where possible, a member of staff should follow the student at a safe distance and/or respond in line with guidance from the student's individual risk assessment and/or BMS.
- A senior manager at school must immediately be informed of the situation.
- Where possible, the member of staff following the student should remain in contact with either the main group or the senior manager at school via a mobile phone.
- The senior manager will then, if appropriate, allocate further staff members to go and collect the student and return them either to the venue or to school.
- The senior manager will also inform the student's parents and keep them updated as necessary.

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

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

- Review the individual risk assessment for the student involved.
- Review the student's BMS.
- 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 and/or an absconding record (a copy of which should be placed in the student's personal files).
- Keep all colleagues informed and discuss the incident in staff meetings and/or in supervision meetings.
- Review procedures for the individual every half term to ensure appropriate control measures are in place and that all staff are fully informed.
- Inform Governors every term about any incidents of absconding.

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

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 the school staff will look for you.

What happens if you can’t be found?

A meeting will be held between the school 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 the school, 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 keyworker will want to talk to you about going missing. If you have 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 ChildLine number is 0800 1111.