



Loughton School

Absconding Pupils Policy

Date last reviewed by school: December 2024

Date last updated by school: December 2024

Policy signed off by Governing Body: 11.12.24

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly for all stakeholders, the process that will take place should a pupil abscond from school.

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.

Where a pupil, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation, and was not seen leaving, the following procedures should be followed:

- Member of staff to inform the Headteacher or member of SLT, DSL and main office.
- Headteacher or 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 to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
- SLT to phone the police, or another member of staff who has been directed by SLT, when area has been fully checked if the pupil is not found.
- School office to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation when told to by SLT.

Consideration will be given to whether the search should be extended beyond the school perimeter. This decision will be based on:

- Staff's knowledge of the pupil and on the levels of risk, and on what action is in the pupil's best interests
- Any information regarding where the pupil has absconded to
- Who the pupil might be with.

Any staff (this must be a minimum of 2) who leave the school grounds need to 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 recorded on CPOMS by the main lead with others add information to it that may have been missed out or the main lead did not see happen.

Lead member of SLT to brief police and parents.

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 student to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the student to stay in the school.
- At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the student to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.
- If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school, the Headteacher or SLT members must be contacted immediately and the lead person will direct the course of action.
- Staff (minimum of 2) will follow the student and engage in a local search, following the student at a safe distance if in view.
- If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil they must contact the school giving details of their location and what has happened. One of the searching staff will phone the police so they can give direct information to them.
- The SLT lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.
- The office team will contact the pupil's parents/carers straight away.

If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the member of SLT will decide as to how to take matters further, which will consider the age of the student, 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.

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, they must be seen by the headteacher or a member of SLT in her absence 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 recorded on CPOMS by the main lead with others add information to it that may have been missed out or the main lead did not see happen.