



THE HERMITAGE SCHOOLS

Inspire, Learn, Achieve

Absconding from School Policy

Person Responsible:	Executive Headteacher / Behaviour and Welfare Leaders
Date Adopted:	Autumn Term 2025
Date of last review:	Autumn Term 2025
Date of next review:	Autumn Term 2028

Policy review statement

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if operationally required

Links to other school policies:

- Behaviour and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Outdoor Learning and Visits Policy
- Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion Policy
- Touch and use of Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy

Definition

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 always remain within the care of the school throughout the school day and during school led activities.

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out for all stakeholders the process that will be followed should a child abscond from school.

We are committed to providing a secure, safe environment where children want to attend to enjoy learning with others as part of our school community. Our goal is always to work positively with children and families to prevent children leaving school without permission. Whilst it is unlikely that a child will try to abscond from our school, it is important for us to be ready and equipped to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Headteacher and the Deputy Headteachers are responsible for all decisions made when a child absconds from school.

The class teacher and learning support assistants, midday supervisors, sports coaches and administration staff are responsible for caring for the child whilst on the school premises. They will be responsible for seeking additional help if necessary.

Parents/carers are responsible for encouraging their children to adhere to school procedures and policies as part of our Home/School Agreement. Once school has informed the parents/carers that their child has absconded, parents and carers are expected to actively support the school with the subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming to school to help secure the safety of the child after he/she has absconded, as well as meeting with an appropriate staff member to agree subsequent actions and strategies.

Parents/carers

There may be actions that parents/carers may be able/wish to take if notified that their child has absconded. This will vary according to the age and profile of the child, and The Hermitage Schools welcome collaboration with families where they feel they are able to assist. An example of this is if a child has a mobile phone, this may have some kind of tracking software which the parent/carer has access to.

4. General control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

To prevent a child from absconding, the following control measures are in place:

Site security

- The site has a secure perimeter and gates which can be locked.
- Gates/doors are secured outside of our stated drop off and pick up times.
- Doors into school are locked from the outside with key coded access or similar.
- There are secure closures on doors/gates to restrict unauthorised egress by younger pupils
- Fire doors may have high level bolts/closures on them if there is a significant risk of absconding. This is recorded in the Fire Risk Assessment and there will always be someone in the room who can unlock the door whilst pupils are present.

Effective supervision

- The level of supervision is dependent on a number of factors including:
 - Age of the pupils
 - Ability of the pupils
 - Number of the pupils
 - Activities being undertaken
 - Pupil behaviour
 - Site layout and security
 - Specific identified risks e.g. pupils with history of absconding, public rights of way through school grounds, building work, etc.
- We consider where adults are placed within the school site to ensure maximum supervision.
- In line with [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from August 2024\)](#), a register will be taken at the beginning of the morning session and again in the afternoon. Where necessary, registers may be taken more frequently throughout the school day after any periods of transition between sessions/lessons.
- We have a robust system in place for pupils to be handed over to their parents, especially in Early Years and KS1.
- We have a clear system in place for pupils who need to leave the school grounds with permission during the school day, e.g. lunchtimes, medical appointments.

- We have a clear system for handing pupils over to before/after school clubs.
- Staff are fully briefed on these systems.

Information to pupils.

- The schools' Behaviour and Wellbeing Policy and Behaviour Curriculum are reinforced throughout the school year.
- There is a clear and consistent reward and consequence system in place.

Risk Assessments (RA) and Behaviour Response Plans (BRP)

Where there is a foreseeable risk of absconding, a risk assessment or behaviour response plan will be developed in partnership with parents/carers and any relevant professionals. The plan will clearly detail:

- the individual control measures required to reduce the risk of absconding.
- the actions that will be taken in response to absconding.

Children who abscond who have an EHCP/additional needs.

Where a child who has special educational needs or a disability which makes it difficult for them to communicate, they may have a Pegasus Card or be signed up to the Pegasus Scheme.

[Pegasus card scheme | Surrey Police](#)

If the child is a frequent flight risk, they may be known to local police or the local community.

External visits/sites.

- Prior to an educational visit, the security of the venue/location is assessed and supervision levels allocated accordingly.
- Should a child with known absconding risks be attending an educational visit, a RA and/or BRP will be developed in a timely manner in advance of the visit, in partnership with the school's educational visits co-ordinator and parents/carers.
- Communication between the groups and robust emergency procedures will be in place.
- Where necessary and appropriate, parents/carers may have the opportunity to attend the trip to transport/support their child to access the trip.
- When using staff cars to transport children who are at risk of absconding, the RA and/or BRP should specifically refer to the risk of absconding and the agreed mitigations.
- If the risk is deemed too great for a child to attend an off-site visit, alternative provision to remain in school may be made.
- Please also see the Outdoor Learning and Visits Policy.

Procedures

Where a pupil, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation, the following procedures will be followed:

- Member of staff to inform member of SLT, Headteacher and/or Deputy Headteacher, immediately and the school office.
- A 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 (as advised by SLT) to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
- SLT to phone the Police or advise office or other member of staff to do so when area has been fully checked, and the child is not found.
- SLT to contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation.

- SLT may wish to consult the Surrey County Council Area Schools Officer (ASO) for guidance and support if required.
- The search will be extended beyond the school perimeter if required.
- Any member of staff who leaves the school grounds to search for a pupil must take a mobile phone and consideration may be given to the use of 'location-sharing/pinning' technology.
- Updates will be provided to parents/carers, Police, ASO as often as reasonably possible.
- Once found a member of SLT/office staff to brief Police, parents/carers and ASO.
- Consideration will be given to contacting the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for a consultation on the circumstances of the incident.
- Parents/carers will be invited into school the following school day, or as soon as reasonably practicable, for a meeting with Headteacher/senior staff member and relevant staff to discuss the incident in detail and agree/review the child's RA/BRP moving forward.
- A full and detailed report of the incident must be completed on the school's electronic child protection online management system (CPOMS), and should include date, times, significant decisions made, actions taken, when and by whom i.e. police contact, parents informed, external agencies etc.
- If the electronic recording system is unable to be accessed, then a written report will be made - see incident log proforma: Appendix 1. This written log will be uploaded to CPOMS at the earliest opportunity. The written log can also be used to take statements from members of staff who witnessed the incident but were not directly involved.

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 pupil to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in school.
- If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to themselves or other people, then staff should adhere to the Touch and use of Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy in reference to holding the pupil if appropriate.
- At all times, staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the pupil to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting them at risk by, for example, running onto a busy road.
- If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school, the school office and SLT members must be contacted immediately, and the lead person will direct the course of action.
- After dynamic risk assessment, staff may follow the pupil at a safe distance and should the child be at risk of harm, contact the police.
- The SLT lead may direct additional staff to support the search on foot and/or in a vehicle. Staff following the pupil should take a mobile phone and consideration may be given to the use of 'location-sharing/pinning' technology.
- SLT will contact the pupils' parents/ carers or advise school staff to do so.
- If the pupil is no longer visible, then the SLT will decide on the necessary next steps (see section above). They will consider the age and needs 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.
- 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 able, the pupil will be supported by the SLT so that the reasons for absconding may be discussed. At this point a decision will be made regarding appropriate further actions and support.
- Consideration will be given to contacting the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for a consultation on the circumstances of the incident.

- Parents/carers will be invited into school the following school day, or as soon as reasonably practicable, for a meeting with Headteacher/Senior staff member and relevant staff to discuss the incident in detail and agree/review the child's RA/BRP moving forward.
- A full and detailed report of the incident must be completed on the school's electronic child protection online management system (CPOMS), and should include date, times, significant decisions made, actions taken, when and by whom i.e. police contact, parents informed, external agencies etc.
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Appendix 1

Serious Incident Log

Name and role of person completing the form:
Child/children involved:
Date, time & location of incident:
Trigger: <i>What happened just before the incident?</i>
Details of incident:
Actions taken, by whom, when:
Follow up actions <i>e.g. meeting with parents, relevant professionals notified, consultation with LADO, C-SPA consultation, request for support to C-SPA, Risk Assessment developed/updated, Behaviour Response Plan developed/updated.</i>