



WESTFIELD HOUSE SCHOOL

Absconding Policy

Reviewed: September 2019

Reviewed: Annually

Next Review Date: September 2020

Person(s) responsible for Review:

Headteacher - Jo Murray

It is important that the children in our care are safe and staff supervise them at all times.

The staff should actively plan strategies and adopt measures, which reduce the likelihood of the young people running away. The atmosphere in the premises, the young people being involved in planning, being aware of daily routines and the admission procedures all are factors which need to be given particular importance to achieve this aim.

Young People who are at the point of leaving the premises

The staff should always enter into discussions with the young person with the aim to:

- Dissuade them from wanting to leave the premises
- Persuading them to stay

If this fails staff should make decisions on whether they can intervene by using external control.

- Physical intervention – See Behaviour policy

Young People who have absconded from the premises

If despite these efforts the young person does abscond then the following procedure should be followed.

- It is important to remember that children abscond for a whole variety of reasons and being absent without leave can be indicative of unhappiness, distress and even abuse. Therefore, each absconding is an individual case and has to be handled in a way which is most beneficial to the child.
- Upon suspecting a Young Person has absconded (gone missing from site) staff member will report immediately to the Head of School/attendance Officer
- Within 15 minutes, a full site search will be undertaken. This should be extensive and include 'hiding holes' and the immediate vicinity off-site. It is very important this is done calmly and without fuss. Other Young People may not be used in the on-site search.
- Where possible, staff will be dispatched in a vehicle to check roads locally.
- Site search should be thorough; however, after 30 minutes of search the Police should be called.
- The Head Teacher will ask staff to complete a Young Person 'absconding' sheets to determine the risk factors and appearance / contact details, so it is quick for the police to determine needs.

- On arrival, Police must immediately be given the missing Young Person's absconding sheet together with full details of search carried out so far. (It is very likely that the Police will want to complete a further site search themselves).
- If Young Person is located off-site by staff in a vehicle, and it is unsafe to put the Young Person in the vehicle (YP restraint behaviour), then staff should continue to follow and keep the Young Person in sight.

Options at this point are:

1. Continue to follow
2. Continue to follow and try to persuade the young person to return to vehicle
3. Call Police for support /help in supporting the Young Person to return.

Staff who are searching for the YP whether missing or located they need to give 15-minute updates to the school office whether it's via radio or telephone, as in most cases office staff will be the one communicating with parents/carers/police or other external agencies)

Absent Child/Young Person detained

- If absent child/young person is found/detained by the Police, then a confidential preliminary discussion will take place between the most appropriate officer at the appropriate place and the young person, the purpose of which will be to ascertain why they went missing.
 - If the child/young person indicates that they are being abused, then the duty inspector will inform the duty social worker and child protection procedures will commence.
 - If there appears no cause for concern, the young person will be returned to their place of residence.
 - The parent/carers or if applicable social worker of the authority or appropriate adult should be informed as soon as is practically possible.
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- When a child returns of his own volition or is found and persuaded to do so by staff, the Police, family or appropriate adult must be informed.
 - The return of the child must be handled with sensitivity and food and drink should be offered before any investigating questions begin

There is no fixed sanction. Any return will depend on the individual and the circumstance.

A record of the incident will be made on an incident report form and submitted to DSL for My Concern