



Oakfield Short Stay Primary South Absconding Policy

Oakfield Short Stay School (South)	
Published	September 2025
Review Date	September 2026

ABSCONDING POLICY

The purpose of this non-statutory document is to set out the procedures to all stakeholders should a child leave the school grounds without permission. It is closely linked to the school's 'Safeguarding Policy'.

Legislation

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.

Aim

We work actively to provide a secure, safe environment for the pupils at Oakfield Short Stay School. We want pupils to enjoy coming to school and being a part of our school community.

We recognise that it is unlikely that most pupils will abscond from the school premises, but in the event that it should happen, the procedures detailed below, will ensure that we are ready to deal with this eventuality.

Definition

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'. In the case of Oakfield, this means a child leaves the school grounds.

School Grounds

The shared school site available to pupils during the day is partially fenced and partially locked. Regular checks of the fencing and gates are carried out by the premises officer and checked by the Management Committee member with the responsibility for premises and as part of safeguarding audits.

Pupils who abscond from the school grounds

The general advice in these circumstances is that school staff should not pursue the pupil or try to force her/him back into school.

However, there may be circumstances where school staff will need to use their judgement, knowledge of the pupil and assessment of the pupil's safety in deciding what to do.

Where a pupil is seen to leave the school premises without authorisation, the following procedure will be followed:

1. **Active pursuit of the pupil should not be considered.** This may make the pupil panic possibly putting himself / herself into immediate danger. Staff will instead try to follow, keeping the pupil in sight and at a safe distance. Staff will match a pupil's actions, e.g. stopping when they stop. Any staff who leave the school grounds should take a mobile phone with them and not put themselves or the child in danger at any point. Communication via walkie Talkies will only work within a short range, so access to a mobile is paramount.
2. A pupil will not be forced back onto the school grounds. Interventions should only be attempted by staff only if the pupil is a danger to themselves or others. Any damage to property may be charged to the child's parent(s) / carer(s).

3. Staff will also consider the pupil's age, vulnerability and demeanour when considering decisions to be taken. Staff will support each other in care and decisions to be made.
4. Staff to inform Headteacher, or a member of SLT and the office **straight away**. SLT will gather all pupils data in apprehension that this may assist police should they be phoned later on. An additional member of staff should be sent out to those on pursuit to ensure they have access to a mobile phone if they were unable to access one at the time the pupil absconded. Notify Newlands Primary School staff who may be able to assist with reviewing CCTV to gain further understanding of which way child went.
5. Personal phones can be used to make contact with SLT/office in an emergency situation.
6. Consider if there is a member of staff who has a good connection with the pupil, who can support the absconding pupil.
7. If you do not have sight of the pupil, the police should be phone immediately. Those in pursuit of the pupil should be the ones to make that phone call, as the police prefer to work directly with those in active pursuit.
8. Once the child has been found, the member(s) of staff will use their professional judgement to inform how they respond to support the child.
9. A written report will be logged on CPOMs.
10. The headteacher, or lead member of SLT, will brief parents and police, if necessary.
11. Upon his/her return to school, and when calm enough to do so, the pupil will meet with a member of SLT, so that reasons for the absconding can be understood. A support plan for the individual may need to be considered along with sanctions appropriate for the pupil's needs.
12. If the pupil returns to school of their own volition, parents and police to be phoned by a member of SLT.
13. Pupils will be expected to walk back to school.

Parent & Carers

Parents/carers of pupils are responsible for supporting the work of the school. They are responsible for encouraging their children to keep to all school procedures and policies.

Once school has informed the parents that their child has absconded, parents and carers are responsible for actively supporting 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 the head teacher in order to agree subsequent actions.

All incidents will be recorded on CPOMs.