



St Anthony's School

Policy No: 32 Absconding Protocol

July 2019

KsENT Protocol for Managing Pupils Absconding from the School Site

All pupils attending Kent Special Schools are more vulnerable than those in mainstream schools due to their Special Educational Needs. They may lack basic road safety awareness or an awareness of the dangers of engaging with strangers. Many of our pupils attend schools that are several miles from home and they may be unfamiliar with the area surrounding the school they attend.

All pupils are expected to remain onsite unless they are taking part in a supervised, planned offsite activity. All offsite trips are appropriately risk-assessed and follow individual school policies. Pupils are made aware of the school boundaries and there are clear expectations that pupils must not go offsite without permission. Most schools have clear boundaries consisting of fencing/walls and gates. However, our schools are not "high security institutions" and many pupils are able to leave the site if they choose to do so. There are several reasons why pupils might leave the site, including going to the local shop, smoking, peer pressure to "run off," anxiety about something at school and avoidance of school.

In KsENT Schools, our priority is always the safety of pupils and staff. Each school will have its own policy and procedures for managing pupils who have left their site without formal permission, but all schools will follow the basic procedures outlined below:

Principles

- The SLT are responsible for all students and therefore will assume responsibility for procedures to be followed in the event of an absconding pupil.
- All staff involved in any incident will be aware of the specific needs and behaviours of the student
- All students likely to engage in this behaviour will have a specific risk assessment/plan.
- The student's welfare and safety will be the primary concern during any incident.
- The school will manage the communication of information to parents and other professionals depending upon the dynamic risk assessment by the SLT.
- If a child has been missing for a significant period of time, the Local Authority will be informed. However, if a child is missing and it is past the usual "home time," the LA will be informed straightaway.

At St Anthony's -

- A member of the Senior Leadership Team must be alerted as soon as a child is reported as missing.
- School staff will search the building and school grounds to confirm that pupil has left the site.
- Once a child is confirmed as missing, the school will begin its own log, detailing all times and events.
- A dynamic risk assessment will be carried out, taking into account the age, vulnerability and general ability of the child, as well as the likely reason for the absconding and where they may have gone.
- Parents/carers and, if appropriate other agencies i.e. Social Services will be informed and updated regularly.
- The decision as to when or whether to inform the Police will depend on the individual pupil and situation. The decision to inform the Police will usually be made in consultation with parents/carers. However, if they cannot be contacted on the day SLT will decide when to inform Police. This would usually be within 15 minutes of losing sight of pupils.

- SLT will decide on the most appropriate action. This may involve sending members of staff to track pupils from a safe distance that does not make them run into danger such as a busy road. Schools may decide to deploy school vehicles to search for pupils.
- The decision as to whether to try to engage with pupils who are in sight will depend on the individual risk assessment. All schools know their pupils well and will make the judgement according to each situation.
- If children return to school or are brought back by staff, parents will be informed straightway. If the Police have been called, they will be told when children are found.
- The school is under no legal obligation to remain open beyond the normal closure time. Once parents/carers/Police have been informed, the Headteacher may close the school at the normal closure time.
- The school will decide on the follow-up action according to the individual situation. The school may decide to impose a sanction or they may feel that a supportive approach is the best option. Parents and carers will be encouraged to be part of this process.

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