



'Doing our best to achieve our best'

Clarendon Primary School and Nursery

Absconding from School Policy

1. Introduction

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

As a school we are committed to providing a secure, safe environment where children want to attend and 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.

2. 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 have a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty requires all reasonable steps to be taken to ensure that children are safe and always remain within the care of the school throughout the school day and during school led activities.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are responsible for all decisions made when a child absconds from school.
- The class teacher, teaching assistants, midday supervisors, wider school staff, sports coaches, music teachers and any adults running after school clubs are responsible for caring for the children whilst on the school premises. They are also be responsible for seeking additional help if required.
- Parents / carers are responsible for encouraging their children to adhere to school rules, policies and procedures. Once school has informed the parents 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 their child after they have 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 wish/be able to take if notified that their child has absconded, which will vary according to the age and profile of the child. The school welcomes collaboration with families in order to support their child.

4. General control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

To prevent a child absconding from school, there are a range of measures in place. These include:

Site security

- The site has a secure perimeter and gates which can be locked.
- Gates are secured outside of stated drop off and pick up times.
- Visitors have to access and leave the school site via the school office. (The main external door to the building is locked / key coded.)

- Our nursery class has a double handled opener on the main classroom door to stop children leaving the nursery classroom without an adult.

Supervision

- The level of supervision in place is based on a number of important factors. These include:
 - Age of the pupils
 - Ability of the pupils
 - Number of the pupils
 - Activities being undertaken
 - Pupil behaviour
 - Specific identified risks, e.g. children with history of absconding, any building work taking place etc.
- We consider where adults are placed within the school site to ensure maximum supervision.
- In line with [Working together to improve school attendance](#), a register is taken at the beginning of each day and again in the afternoon.
- We have a robust system in place for children to be handed over to their parents at the end of each day. (Where children walk home without an adult, permission is firstly obtained from their parents.)
- We have a clear system in place for children who need to leave the school grounds (with permission), during the school day, e.g. to attend a dentist / medical appointment etc.
- We have a clear system in place for handing children over to after school clubs. This includes maintaining an attendance register and reporting unexpected absences to the school office so they can follow these up immediately. At the end of an after-school club, unless parents have given permission for their child to walk home alone, there is also a clear system in place to dismiss children to their parent / a designated person collecting them.
- Children who arrive at school late, have to be signed in at the school office on arrival so we know who is on site at all times.
- Staff are fully briefed on these systems.

Information to pupils

- 'Clarendon Golden rules' and behavioural expectations are shared with children throughout the school year and displayed in classrooms for children to refer to and follow.
- Clear expectations are shared with children regarding behavioural expectations. These are reinforced as required.
- In the rare instance that a child threatens to, or tries to leave school, the consequences of doing so are shared with the child in question.
- Clear instructions and information are given to the children when going offsite for a school or residential visit.
- There is a clear and consistent reward and sanction system in place across the school.
- Keeping ourselves safe forms part of our PSHE curriculum.

Risk Assessments (RA)

Where there is a foreseeable risk of a child absconding from school, a Risk Assessment will be developed in partnership with parents / carers as well as other relevant professionals. The plan will clearly detail:

- Situations which may lead to an increase in the likeliness of the child trying to abscond.
- Individual measures / strategies required to reduce the risk of a child absconding, e.g. use of time out when upset, support work in place to help the child better manage the behaviours / feelings / emotions which may lead to an increased likelihood in them trying to abscond.
- The actions that will be taken in response to absconding.

Children who abscond who have an EHC Plan / additional needs

Where a child has a special educational need or disability which makes the likelihood of absconding more likely, or where a child may find it more difficult to communicate their feelings / emotions which may increase the likeliness of them absconding, clear plans will be drawn up with our Special Needs Co-ordinator. This may include accessing other services which can help support / address identified needs. This could include registering with the [Pegasus card scheme | Surrey Police](#). (See appendix 1 for details.)

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.
- The planned visit, proposed activities and expectations will be explained to the child (usually as part of their class) to help them manage any possible worries / anxieties they may have about going.
- Should a child with known absconding risks be attending an educational visit, reviewing risks and strategies required to help manage them will be completed as part of the visit risk assessment. If appropriate and felt necessary, support strategies may include the child's parent / carer attending the visit to transport / support them to safely access the visit.
- During an offsite visit, clear means of communication between groups and robust emergency procedures will be in place.

5. Procedures

Where a child, who was present at formal registration or who was signed in late at the school office, is found to be absent from school without authorisation, the following procedures will be followed:

- A member of staff will inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team (usually the headteacher or deputy headteacher), and the school office immediately.
- A member of the Senior Leadership Team will organise a search of the building and known places where the child may go.
- If the child is not found, then all available staff (as advised by the Senior Leadership Team member) will complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the school grounds and perimeter.
- A member of the Senior Leadership Team will phone the Police or advise the office or another member of staff to do so. (This will be after the school buildings and grounds have been fully checked, and where the child has not been found.)
- A member of the Senior Leadership Team will contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation.
- A member of the Senior Leadership Team may also decide to consult the Surrey County Council Area Schools Officer (ASO) for guidance and support. (See appendix 2 for contact details.)
- If required, the search will be extended beyond the school perimeter. (Any member of staff who leaves the school grounds to search for a child must take a mobile phone so that ongoing contact can be maintained.)
- A member of staff will be tasked with providing ongoing updates to the child's parents / carers as well as other relevant parties involved, which could include the Police and Area Schools Officer.
- Once found a member of the Senior Leadership Team will brief parents and any other parties involved, including the Police and Area Schools Officer.
- Following the child absconding the headteacher or deputy headteacher will review the details of the incident and consider whether the Local Authority's Designated Officer (LADO) should be consulted on the circumstances of the incident.
- Following the incident, parents/carers will be invited into school for a meeting with the Headteacher / Senior staff member managing the incident as well as any other relevant staff. This is to discuss the incident and review the child's plan (if they have one) / agree a plan for the future.
- Following the incident, a written report (see appendix 1) will be completed and details will be added to our electronic child protection recording / monitoring system (CPOMS).

Where a child attempts or is seen to be leaving the school premises without authorisation, the following procedures will be followed:

- The staff must calmly follow the pupil to the perimeter fence or gate and try to persuade them to stay in school.
- If the child is deemed to be a high risk to themselves or other people, then staff should adhere to the school's 'Positive Touch and Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy', if it is felt the child needs to be held.
- At all times, staff must be aware / mindful to the fact that active pursuit of the child may encourage them to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the child to panic; possibly putting them at greater risk by, e.g. running onto a busy road.

- If the child has left the immediate vicinity of the school, the school office and a member of the Senior Leadership Team (usually the headteacher or deputy headteacher), must be contacted immediately. This person will then lead / direct the subsequent course of action.
- After 'dynamic risk assessment', staff may follow the child at a safe distance and, should the child be at risk of harm, contact the police.
- The Senior Leadership Team member managing the incident may direct additional staff to support the search on foot and/or in a vehicle. Staff following the child should take a mobile phone so that ongoing contact is maintained.
- The senior member of staff leading the incident response will contact the child's parents / carers or advise another member of school staff to do so.
- If the child is no longer visible, the senior member of staff leading the incident response will decide on the necessary next steps, (see section A above). As part of their decision-making process, they will consider the age and needs of the child, the prevailing weather conditions, the nature of the incident which led to the child absconding, the child's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and the outcomes of these.
- If the child returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the Police will be informed as soon as possible. Upon their return to school, and when the child is able to, they will be supported by the Senior Leadership Team member leading the incident response so that the reasons for absconding can be identified, discussed and explored. At this point a decision will be made regarding appropriate further actions and support.
- Following the child absconding the headteacher or deputy headteacher will review the details of the incident and consider whether the Local Authority's Designated Officer (LADO) should be consulted on the circumstances of the incident.
- Following the incident, parents/carers will be invited into school for a meeting with the Headteacher / Senior staff member managing the incident as well as any other relevant staff. This is to discuss the incident and review the child's plan (if they have one) / agree a plan for the future.
- Following the incident, a written report (see appendix 1) will be completed and details will be added to our electronic child protection recording / monitoring system (CPOMS).

6. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Child Protection Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Positive Touch and Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- SEND policy

Policy Review

Date agreed by governing body: January 2026
 Date due for review: January 2029

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>For example, meeting with parents, relevant professionals notified, consultation with LADO, C-SPA consultation, request for support to C-SPA, Risk Assessment developed / updated, Wellbeing Support plan developed / updated, support strategies identified and implemented.</i>

Appendix 2

Surrey County Council contact details for schools seeking further guidance and support: West Surrey Area Schools Officers

Kate Charles – 07792 587096 – kate.charles@surreycc.gov.uk
Cara Harding – 07968 834131 – cara.harding@surreycc.gov.uk

East Surrey Area Schools Officers

Adelina Mason - 07814 804432 – adelina.mason@surreycc.gov.uk
Ann Panton – 07976 924186 – ann.panton@surreycc.gov.uk

Countywide School Relationships Service

Natalie Cull – 07814 811489 – natalie.cull@surreycc.gov.uk
Nina Clarke - 07974 860640 - nina.clarke@surreycc.gov.uk

Team email: school.relationships@surreycc.gov.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

LADO@surreycc.gov.uk 0300 123 1650 Option 3

Education Safeguarding

education.safeguarding@surreycc.gov.uk

Strategic Risk Management

srm.hands@surreycc.gov.uk

Inclusion

neinclusion.service.duty@surreycc.gov.uk
nw.inclusion@surreycc.gov.uk
seinclusion.service.duty@surreycc.gov.uk
swinclusion.service@surreycc.gov.uk

Appendix 3

The Pegasus Scheme

Pegasus scheme

The Pegasus scheme is for people who find it hard to communicate with the police. For those registered with the scheme, the police will keep your pre-registered information safe on their computer system so they can access it quickly if you call them. This avoids having to repeat all your details to the call handler.

Who can register?

- Anyone who has a disability or illness which may make it hard to communicate with the police in an emergency or difficult situation.
- Anyone who lives in the local area. (Contact Surrey Police using [your local police force](#) about this.)

Please note, registration is free.

How it works

- You will be issued with a card and a personal identification number (PIN). If you need to call the police, say 'Pegasus', tell us your PIN and They'll access your details right away. The aim of this is to save time.
- You can also show your card to a police officer or member of police staff if you need assistance in person and they'll know you may need extra help and support.
- You can change or update your details at any time.
- If you agree, they will share your Pegasus information with other participating emergency services (fire, ambulance) and local authorities.

Pegasus terms and conditions

- Your information will be stored on a secure database owned by the police.
- Access to the database is controlled, but the police may share your details with their partners, such as other emergency services, so they can help you.
- If you're under 18 you must have your parent or guardian's consent.
- Once a year they will write to you to check the information.
- You can withdraw your consent and be removed from the scheme at any time by contacting the police.

You can apply for the scheme by completing a quick and easy online application form. This can be accessed using the following [link](#). Alternatively, you can download and complete the [Pegasus card application form](#) and post it to the police using the address details on the form. (Please note, applications may take up to four weeks to process.)