



# Cross Keys Learning

## Absconding Policy

This is a core policy that forms part of the induction for all staff. It is a requirement that all members of staff have access to this policy and sign to say they have read and understood its contents.

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Date agreed and ratified by board of governors	Feb 2024
Date of next full review	Feb. 2025

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and/or following any updates to national and local guidance and procedures.

## Key Contacts

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This policy will be reviewed **at least** annually. It will also be revised following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedures.

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly for all stakeholders, the process that will take place should a student abscond from school.

### Introduction

We actively work to provide a secure, safe environment, a school where students want to come to enjoy learning with others as part of a caring community. We recognise that it is highly unlikely that a student will try to abscond from our school, but this policy is written to ensure we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

**To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.** A student is considered to have 'absconded' if they intentionally/ knowingly leave the school site or the immediate area of an off-site activity 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 students. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that students are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.

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

- A) students who abscond before the end of the registration period

- B) students who abscond after registration.
- C) students who are excluded but come onto the school site.
- D) students who abscond from school but remain in the school grounds.

#### **A) Students who abscond before the end of the registration period**

Schools are required to register their students at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. This should take place within a period, of not less than 15 minutes, set aside when the register is open.

If a student absconds from the school during the period of registration, the class register should show the student as being absent.

Should the student return to school after the end of the registration period, the class register should be amended to indicate a late arrival.

It is good practice when a student absconds in these circumstances for the school to make every effort to advise the parents/carers.

#### **B) Students who abscond after registration**

Once a student has been registered as present, the registration period has ended and the class register closed, the school is "in loco parentis".

Should a student abscond after the end of the registration period, the school, technically, remains "in loco parentis".

Every attempt should be made to contact the parents/carers to advise them that their child has absconded from school. When parents/carers are contacted, it should be made clear that the responsibility for their child is being passed back to them.

Contact with parents/carers should be by telephone in the first instance. In all circumstances, it is advisable to record details of attempts to establish contact. If the parents/carers are contacted, the attendance register should be amended to show unauthorised absence.

If the parents/carers cannot be contacted, the attendance register should remain unamended. At this stage you may wish to contact your local Police Station to seek assistance. However, the responsibility for the student remains with the school.

#### **C) Students who are excluded but come onto the school site.**

If a student is excluded, either for a fixed period or permanently, they should not be on the school site.

Should an excluded student appear on the school site, they should be asked to leave. If the student refuses or is causing a nuisance or disturbance which requires action, the school should, in the first instance, make every effort to contact the parents/carers to ask them to remove their child from school property.

If the parents/carers are either not contactable or are not able to remove their child from school property, the Police should be contacted for assistance.

#### **D) Students who abscond from school but remain in the school grounds.**

The general advice in these circumstances is that the school staff should not pursue the student.

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

A student's age, vulnerability and other factors need to be taken into account. For example, it may be dangerous to let a particular student wander about the school grounds.

The demeanour of the student will need to be taken into account. If the student is upset or angry, care must be given to how they are approached.

The size of the student will also be important in judging whether to try to approach them.

The gender of the student may indicate a particular member of staff as being more appropriate to deal with the situation.

In all cases, ***staff should not place themselves in situations of potential danger.***

### **Students who return to school after absconding**

Most students who abscond will do so as a result of a specific incident which may have taken place either at school, at home or on the way to school.

For those students who return to school either by their own choice, with parental support or following intervention by a member of staff, thought should be given to their welfare. They are likely to be in need of support, understanding and perhaps some time apart from their peers. Where a student absconds from school, the school will issue a sanction for the absconding.

### **Parent & Carers**

Parents/carers of students 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/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 they have absconded as well as meeting with the head teacher in order to agree subsequent actions.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Each incident will be recorded monitored and evaluated. Individual Risk assessment for the student to be amended if needed.

### **Procedures**

If a student is suspected of leaving the school site without permission, in an emotional state:

1. The member of staff will alert a member of SLT. Staff must follow the student to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the student to stay in the school.
2. If the student(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the SLT will decide as to how to take matters further which will take into account the age of the student, the prevailing weather conditions, the nature of the incident which led to the student absconding, the student's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes.
3. If there is no doubt that the student has absconded, the school will contact the student's parent/carer to inform them and then the police if an emergency situation. Staff will not chase or follow the student as this could lead to the student wandering further afield, acting impetuously, or causing a traffic accident.

**4.** If the student is within an easy distance of the school, staff are not to engage in conversation as the child might be in a distressed state and unable to act in a controlled manner. This would mean there is still the potential for traffic accidents.

**5.** If the student appears to be missing but there is no evidence that they have left the site, a quick but thorough search of the site should be conducted before the parent / carer / police are informed.

**6.** If the student returns of their own volition, parents and (if necessary) the police will be informed. Upon their return to school, and when the student is calm, the student must be seen by the SLT so that the reasons for absconding may be discussed in detail. At this point a decision will be made as to the appropriateness of further actions. A written report will be recorded on the incident.

**7.** If possible, the student who has absconded should be brought back to school the same day. The parent, child and head teacher will then discuss the issues and any consequences. This policy will be discussed. An agreement will be written, giving details of the incident, and agreed actions. See appendix A, B and C.

**8.** If the child absconds for a second time in the same academic year, the head teacher may consider a fixed term exclusion.

**9.** In all cases of a student absconding, any work missed will have to be completed. This may include lunchtime or after school detentions.

If the head teacher / SLT member is aware that a student is not acting emotionally but has left the school grounds (e.g., by mistake), the above procedures may be adapted.

#### **Equality Statement**

At Cross Keys Learning, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all students, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the school, irrespective of race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and age (for staff only). We will adhere to the legal definitions of these protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

We aim to develop and maintain a culture of inclusion and diversity, in which all those connected with the school feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in school life.

**Appendix A:**

Agreement following a student absconding from school.

(To be completed by the head teacher or deputising teacher and attached to appendix B and C)

Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Record of incident:

An agreement has been reached following this absconding incident. Actions have been agreed in order to help this student feel happy and safe in school (Appendices A, B and C).

School will support this agreement by:

School

- 1.
- 2.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Head teacher / deputising member of staff)

## **Appendix B: Parental Agreement**

(To be completed by the parent or carer)

I have read the record of the absconding incident (Appendix A). I wish to make the following comments relating to the incident (optional):

I understand that it is always unacceptable for my child to leave the school site without permission and a repeated action of this nature might result in the school following exclusion procedures.

I understand that the following actions have been agreed in order to help my child be happy and safe in school. I know my child needs to keep to the school rules and not leave the school grounds without permission. I understand that there are agreed actions for all parties involved. For my part, I will support this agreement by:

Parent

1.

2.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent)

**Appendix C: Student Agreement**

(To be completed by the student or by an adult on behalf of the student)

I have read or listened to the record of the absconding incident (Appendix A). I wish to make the following comment about the incident (optional):

I understand that it is always unacceptable for me to leave the school site without permission and a repeated action of this nature might result in the school following exclusion procedures.

I understand that the following actions have been agreed in order to help me to be happy and safe in school. I know I need to keep to the school rules and not leave the school grounds without permission. I understand that there are actions too for the school and my parents. I will support this agreement by:

Student

- 1.
- 2.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Student)