



Absconding Policy 2020-21

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We will provide a learning environment that empowers, challenges and encourages individual success and social responsibility.



Absconding Policy – St Matthias Academy

Pupils with SEMH and autistic spectrum disorder or attachment can exhibit unpredictable behaviours if they are suffering anxiety. One of the behaviours presented can be running away and trying to leave the school environment. This will become apparent if the pupil disappears from their class, the playground, or any other part of the environment for more than the time expected for them to visit the toilet, deliver or collect something from the administration area. Their non-return will give rise to concern and the following procedures will occur.

General Responsibilities

All staff have a duty of care to the pupils at St Matthias. This includes ensuring that all doors, especially those to the outside of the building are kept closed and that any breaches/gaps in the outer boundary of the school are reported in a timely fashion to a member of the SLT. The provision will maintain that boundaries are secure and that pupils do not have easy access from school premises.

If pupils do abscond, staff are required to respond quickly and appropriately in the ways outlined below. The response will vary slightly according to when/where the pupil has absconded.

During Lesson Time

It is the class teacher that is responsible for the members of their class. If a pupil does not arrive to lesson, or leaves the lesson, then the teacher must immediately inform an LSA or free member of staff who must then follow the procedures below.

- Upon discovering a student is missing on site, an **immediate search** is to be made of the school buildings and grounds by any available staff. This search should not exceed ten minutes. All the usual haunts for that student should be searched. If the student is a known absconder this should have been recorded in their individual risk assessment and should include any known haunts for that student.
- If **after 10 minutes** the pupil has not been found then the search should be extended to the local community. Before this occurs staff must request that to the office that a phone call is made home to parents to inform them



that their child has potentially absconded. While searching, staff must take potential dangers into account and not put themselves at risk.

- **After 10 minutes** of searching the local community, if the pupil has not been found then a further **call should be made to parents** informing parents. It is at this point that police may need to be called – this decision should be made in agreement with parents and is dependent on vulnerability/age of the pupil, proximity to home etc.

In EVERY case a member of member of SLT must be involved with this decision of whether/when to call the police. Please note that the latest recommendation from the police is that pupils should be allowed a reasonable amount of time to return home before police are called. However, in certain circumstances this may not be possible (ie a vulnerable pupil who lives a very long way from St Matthias site may require a call to be made sooner).

- Staff must then either make the **phone call to the local police** station giving a clear description of the student and clothing being worn or ensure that this is being done by the office.
- The member of staff calling the Police must also immediately **fill in a CPOMS** incident form (this must be done immediately as CPOMS logs the time of recording) detailing the absconding, if the police are called this needs to be included as an ACTION with a time of call recorded. The office can carry this out on behalf of the staff member but the staff member must ensure that this is happening.

Break/Lunch time

If pupils are seen to be absconding (for example during break or lunch time) then the member of staff who is monitoring the pupil should immediately follow (pupils should never be left unattended at the Academy) and inform a second staff member that they are following the pupil so that they can inform parents that the pupil has left site. The first staff member should then follow the above guidelines about searching the local community.

If a student who has absconded is found/sighted then, where possible, a member of staff should follow the student at a safe distance and/or respond in line with guidance from the student's individual risk assessment. This is also likely to involve trying to persuade the pupil to return to school if doing so does not place the pupil or staff member in any danger (eg. if the pupil is liable to flee across a road if approached.)

Where possible, the member of staff following the student should remain in contact with either the school or the senior manager at school via a mobile phone.



Absconding from Offsite activities

During trips pupils should all be 'allocated' to a member of staff who is responsible a 'head count' of the students should be made at regular intervals and always before a minibus leaves a venue.

- If a student is discovered as missing, then a search (not exceeding ten minutes) of the immediate area is to be undertaken by all available members of staff, ensuring that all other students continue to be appropriately supervised. If the missing pupil is found/sighted then the above protocols for following a pupil in the local community should be followed.
- If the missing student is not located, then: A staff member should notify the most senior manager at the school and act on any instructions given.
- The senior manager will notify the police and provide them with as precise a description of the student as possible, the last known whereabouts of the student and any other details they may require.
- Notify, if appropriate, the venue that is being visited and ask them to initiate their lost child protocols. The senior manager will notify the student's parents and keep them updated as necessary. The member of staff initiating the search should remain in situ until the police or assistance from school arrives in case the missing student should return or be found.



Information for Pupils/Parents

What happens if you go missing?

You will be considered **missing** if members of staff do not know where you are. You have **absconded** if you deliberately go away from where you should be without telling a member of staff or without a member of staff giving you permission.

The people looking after you have a **responsibility** to know where you are and to make sure you are safe.

If you are 'missing' they will speak to your **friends, teachers and family** to see if they can help.

The **Police** may be informed that you are missing and they and the school staff will look for you.

A meeting will be held between the school and the Police to plan how to search for you. Your name, description and a photograph will be given to the Police in order to help them with their search.

What happens when you are found?

You will be returned to a safe place and will be asked about the reasons for you going missing. This is to try and find out if anything is troubling you and to see if anyone can help. You may also be visited by a Police Officer who will check that you are back. This is called a "Safe and Well Check". You will be able to speak to the Police Officer without any member of staff present if you wish to do so.

If you are worried about something or just want to talk, the national ChildLine number is 0800 1111.