

Broomhill Primary School



Absconding or Missing Child Policy

Approved by:	Mr. Craig Priday	Date: 14 th September 2026
Last reviewed on:	11 th September 2026	
Next review due by:	11 th September 2029	

Children's safety is always our highest priority both on and off the school premises. Every attempt is made through Educational Visits procedures and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of children is always maintained. In the unlikely event of a child going missing or absconding our missing child procedure is as follows.

Twice daily registration of pupils, signing out of pupils and regular headcounts are the most common strategies used by school to ensure that the school is quickly aware of any missing child. During off-site visits increased staffing levels and increased frequency of headcounts are employed.

PROCEDURES

Child going missing on the school premises

- At all times staff should keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff alert the Headteacher. In the headteachers absence, staff should alert the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- The Headteacher will organise a thorough search of the building and outdoor areas.
- The register is checked to make sure all other children are accounted for.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could leave the school grounds/building.
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The Headteacher talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Following the incident, the Headteacher will carry out an investigation.
- The Headteacher informs the Chair of Governors and School Safeguarding Team of the incident.

Regardless of how long a child has been missing for, the Headteacher should inform parents about the incident.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group or class out of school. If the Headteacher has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- At all times staff should keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated adult and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child is missing. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- Where relevant, the staff contacts the venue's staff who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- If relevant to the location, and staffing levels allow, adults accompanying the group may be deployed to be near exits to ensure missing child does not leave the immediate location/venue.
- The Headteacher is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The Headteacher contacts the parent, who may make their way to the school or outing venue as agreed with the head. The school is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been found. School will advise the parent to keep their mobile phone switched on so they can be contacted and will check the number.
- The school contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the school.
- The Headteacher contacts the Chair of Governors and reports the incident.
- Following the incident the Headteacher will carry out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately if appropriate.
- The Headteacher or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.
- The Headteacher informs the School Safeguarding Team.

An Absconding Child

Absconding is when a pupil goes beyond the fenced boundaries of the school, without permission.

Occasionally a child may choose to abscond from school. Often this will be to go to a place they feel safe or move to a position they can be in control of a situation. This policy supports all staff to ensure that pupils are safeguarded at all times and will also be applicable if a pupil absconds during an off-site activity/ trip.

Our pupils are supervised at all times within school. It is the responsibility of the staff in each class to account for the whereabouts of their pupils.

Upon discovering a pupil is missing

- School staff to undertake an immediate search around any usual locations or safe spaces that pupil would tend to use. The search should not exceed 10 minutes and the Headteacher must be informed immediately.
- If the child cannot be found, it must be assumed that they have absconded. In this situation, parents are to be informed immediately and kept up to date with the process.
- The police are to be called. This may vary depending on the circumstance and individual needs of the pupil.

If a Pupil Absconds (observed)

- Staff to inform the Headteacher immediately. In the Headteachers absence, staff should notify the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Staff observing/supporting will take radios and mobile phone.
- Where possible, a member of staff should follow (from a safe distance) the pupil, attempting to persuade them to come back onto site or monitoring the situation.
- Observing staff should note what the child is wearing and any intentions of where they may be going.
- Request further staff, if required, to assist with the situation
- SLT or admin will inform parents/carers/ social worker and keep them updated.
- The police are to be informed of children who abscond school premises and/or staff view.

The above protocol must be considered alongside the pupils' developmental level (age and maturity) and their emotional state.

The Investigation

- The Headteacher speaks with the parent(s).
- The Headteacher will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff who were involved.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report on CPOMS detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - Which staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Services or the LADO may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- The Local Authority is informed.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated staff responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. School leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the Headteacher. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Headteacher and the other should be the Chair of Governors where possible. If the chair of governors is not available another member of staff or governor will attend. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated.
- The other children may also be sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.

- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The head and Chair of Governors will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

THIS POLICY IS AVAILABLE IN LARGE PRINT IF REQUESTED