



# Missing and Absconding Policy

<b>Woodlands School, Marches Academy Trust</b>	
<b>Missing and Absconding CYP and Young People Policy</b>	
<b>Date of Adoption</b>	January 2025
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<b>Reviewed by</b>	Jules Taylor (Headteacher)
<b>Policy Lead</b>	Schmize Badger
<b>Review Cycle</b>	Annually

## 1. Introduction

This policy outlines the procedures to follow when a child or young person (CYP) goes missing from school premises or during off-site activities at Woodlands School. It reflects statutory requirements from [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(DfE\) 2024](#), [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(DfE\) 2023](#), [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(DfE\) 2024](#), and local protocols set by [Shropshire and West Midlands safeguarding teams](#), including the [West Mercia Missing Pathway](#).

Woodlands School is committed to ensuring the safety of all learners. We recognise the potential dangers and safeguarding risks associated with CYP going missing or absconding from the school site.

## 2. Definitions

- i. **Absconding:** A deliberate act of leaving the school site or off-site location without permission or supervision.
- ii. **Missing:** A CYP whose whereabouts cannot be confirmed and is not present at the expected location.

## 3. Responsibilities

- i. **Staff:** Conduct initial searches and report concerns immediately.
- ii. **DSL/Deputy DSL:** Coordinate searches, liaise with police and responsible adult(s), and update records.
- iii. **Responsible adult(s):** Support in locating CYP and reporting to the police when necessary.

## 4. High-Risk/Vulnerable Learners

- i. All learners at Woodlands School are identified as high-risk due to their Special Educational Needs and/or Disability, and their specific needs in relation to Social, Emotional and Mental Health.
- ii. Some learners have a more acute vulnerability due to other additional factors such as being Children who are Looked After, are at risk of exploitation, are predisposed to engaging in high-risk situations, or are unable to understand the risk and dangers involved in a number of circumstances or scenarios. This list is not exhaustive and so all cases will be risk assessed based on its individual merits.

- iii. CYP deemed high-risk or vulnerable will have individual protocols in place, documented on CPOMS.
- iv. Regular risk assessments are conducted and shared with staff.

## **5. Procedures for Missing or Absconding CYP**

### **5.1 On-site Absconding or Missing CYP:**

- i. A statutory register of learners must be completed each morning and afternoon in school, in addition to electronic lessons register (Arbor) completed by staff within each lesson. It is the responsibility of all staff within each lesson to ensure the whereabouts of learners within their lesson.
- ii. Upon discovering a CYP missing from a lesson or break, staff must conduct an immediate search of the premises and school grounds (no longer than 10 minutes). This may be a colleague not responsible for learning, i.e., *on-call*.
- iii. Regularly frequented areas by the CYP must be checked first.
- iv. Staff must maintain radio contact throughout the search.
- v. CCTV must be checked from last known location (if available).

### **5.2 If the CYP is not located on-site:**

- i. Notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy immediately.
- ii. Responsible adult(s) will be informed without delay. Responsible adults are taken to mean those with parental responsibility<sup>1</sup> for the CYP and may include parents, carers, kinship carers, corporate parents, or guardians, and other agencies.
- iii. The DSL will refer to any live risk assessment and Safety Support Plan (where available) and conduct a dynamic risk assessment based on the CYP's profile and vulnerability. For those assessed as being high risk and vulnerable, the police will be informed via 101. The staff member making the call should have the following information to hand: name, address, date of birth, appearance, clothing and emotional state.
- iv. A member of staff will conduct an off-site search (using school vehicles if possible in adherence to the [MAT Lone Working Policy](#)).

### **5.3 If the CYP is Located Off-site:**

- i. Staff must follow the CYP at a safe distance and avoid confrontation.

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<sup>1</sup> [S3 Children At 1989](#)

- ii. Police (999) must be contacted if the CYP places themselves or others at risk (e.g., entering roadways, railway lines).
- iii. Regular updates are provided to the DSL and responsible adult(s), including any office staff coordinating the communication around the next steps.
- iv. When searching the local community on foot, staff may be vulnerable and therefore should use a car or the school minibus whenever possible, ideally working in a pair with a colleague in such scenarios. Staff are advised that if the CYP is found walking along the main road, they are NOT to stop but to pull into the nearest safest space and wait for the CYP to walk into their direction.
- v. Once staff have located and/or seen the CYP they are to notify the office staff of the time of sighting, who must in turn communicate this update to responsible adult(s) and police (if previously alerted). Staff are advised to encourage the CYP to return to school and ensure they keep themselves safe. If the CYP agrees to travel back to school with the member(s) of staff, the protocols outlined in the [MAT Lone Working Policy](#) should be employed, i.e., CYP in the backseat. The staff member with the CYP should confirm any specific arrangements outlined in the CYP's risk assessment.
- vi. If the CYP runs off/runs away staff are not to run after them as this may create further risk of dysregulation and/or create a sense of chase. Staff will continue to remain in the area until another staff member can take over at an appropriate time. Staff are to then hand over any recent sightings/information. Responsible adults are to be updated at these points.
- vii. If the CYP does not return to school by 3.30PM, either because they refuse the transport offered by the school (with staff/taxi – whichever is appropriate), or they continue to run off and further abscond, the responsibility to locate the CYP and arrange transportation home will be that of the responsible adult(s), and the CYP will be reported as missing by the school.

#### **5.4 Unsuccessful Search:**

- i. If the CYP is not located by 3:00 pm, responsible adult(s) are advised to contact the police to report the CYP as missing.
- ii. School will provide the police with necessary details such as the CYP's appearance, last known location, and emotional state.

## **6. Off-site Activities**

### **6.1 Preparation:**

- i. A risk assessment (using EduTrips) must be completed before all off-site visits.
- ii. Learners and staff are briefed on protocols for emergencies, including missing CYP procedures.
- iii. A fully charged mobile phone should be available at all times to ensure access to communication with school.

#### **6.2 During the Activity:**

- i. Regular headcounts are conducted at key intervals.
- ii. If a CYP goes missing, staff will search the immediate area for 10 minutes.
- iii. If the CYP is not found, the most senior leader off-site will contact the school and notify the venue's security.
- iv. Police will be contacted if required.
- v. Responsible adult(s) will be informed without delay.

#### **7. Recording, Follow-up and Debrief**

- i. All incidents are recorded in Arbor and/or CPOMS.
- ii. A debrief is conducted with the CYP to understand reasons for absconding and address any safeguarding concerns.
- iii. Patterns of repeated absconding will trigger additional safeguarding measures and interventions.

#### **8. Training and Awareness**

- i. All staff will receive regular training on the procedures outlined in this policy.
- ii. New staff members will be inducted on the policy as part of their orientation.
- iii. Regular drills will be conducted to ensure readiness in case of an incident.

#### **9. Communication with Responsible Adult(s)**

- i. Responsible adults will be informed of this policy and the procedures in place.
- ii. Open communication channels will be maintained to discuss any concerns regarding a CYP's propensity to abscond.

- iii. Support will be offered to families to address underlying issues contributing to absconding behaviour.

### **10. Preventative Measures**

- i. The school will implement strategies to engage learners and address underlying issues that may lead to absconding.
- ii. Individual Safety Support Plans will be developed for learners identified as at risk.
- iii. Additional environmental modifications will be considered to reduce opportunities for absconding, as part of any debrief.

### **10. Review and Monitoring**

- i. This policy will be reviewed annually or after any incident of a CYP going missing or absconding.
- ii. Incidents will be analysed to identify patterns and inform future preventative work and measures.