Thorpepark Academy

Absconding Pupil Policy

1	Summary	Absconding Pupil Policy			
2	Responsible person	Caroline Knight			
3	Accountable SLT member	Caroline Knight/Senior Management Team			
4	Applies to	☒All staff ☐Support staff ☐Teaching staff			
5	Who has overseen development of this policy	Senior management team			
6	Who has been consulted and recommended policy for approval	Governors Staff			
7	Approved by and date	2/11/2026			
8	Version number	7			
9	Available on	Every	☐Y ☒N	Trust website Academy website SharePoint	☐Y ☒N ☒Y ☐N ☒Y ☐N
10	Related documents (if applicable)	Behaviour policy Suspension policy			
11	Disseminated to	☒Trustees/governors ☒All staff ☐Support staff ☐Teaching staff			
12	Date of implementation (when shared)	November 2026			
13	Consulted with recognised trade unions	☐Y ☒N			

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

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.
Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other education settings have a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.
In the event of the Head of School not being on the premises the next senior member of staff will take over this responsibility.

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

- Member of staff to inform the Head of School or member of Senior Leadership Team (SLT), and, main office.
- Head of School or member of Senior Management Team (SMT) or SLT organises search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.
- If the pupil is not found, then all available staff to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
- School office will also contact parents/carers and inform them of the situation immediately. If contact is made with the parents/carers they are informed that they must report the child missing to the police, the school do not, if the child cannot be found. If the parents/carers cannot be contacted the school will report the child missing to the police. The person reporting the child missing will gain as much information as possible from the teacher to give accurate information to the police.
- **Only when the parents/carers cannot be contacted then the school office will inform the police of the situation**.
- **School will contact the police when:**
    A. The parents/carers cannot be contacted.
    B. It has been agreed as part of the multi-agency risk assessment that this will be the protocol for that individual child
    C. The child is at real risk that they will suffer significant harm, or cause significant harm to another person if they are not found
    D. If a pupil is out of sight for 10 minutes regardless of whether parents/carers have been contacted.
- Consideration will be given to whether the search should be extended beyond the school perimeter. This decision will be based on staff's knowledge of the child and on the levels of risk, and on what action is best in the child's interest.
- Any staff who leave the school grounds to take mobile phone **and** walkie talkie to contact school.
- Once a pupil has been found then the lead SMT/SLT member will use their professional judgement to outline the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future.
- CPOMS report will be completed.
- Member of SMT/SLT to brief police and parents.

Where a pupil attempts to or is seen to be leaving the school premises without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

- Absconding log to be open to record all the interactions with family/social care/professionals
- Staff must follow the pupil to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in school.
- If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to himself or other people, then staff should refer to behaviour and suspension policy.
- At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the student to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example. The child's age needs to be considered at this stage. Where possible children must remain in the sight line of staff.
- If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school the school office, Head of School or SMT/SLT members must be contacted immediately and the lead person will direct the course of action.
- Staff will follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance if in view.
- The SMT/SLT lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.
- The SMT/SLT lead will contact the pupil's parents/carers.
- If the searching staff lose sight of the pupil, they must contact the school office giving details of their location and the clothes which the student is wearing.
- If the pupil has a social worker social care will need to be informed; when a child is CLA, Virtual school will also need to be informed, this is for DSL/DDSL to lead on only.
- The admin team member overseeing the absconding pupil log should ensure they keep an accurate record of the time of different stages of the absconding pupil and make themselves aware of key clothing the pupil is wearing, the time and location of the last sighting and by whom.

If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible, then the SMT/SLT will make a decision 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 pupil absconding, the pupil's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes. If the pupil returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed as soon as possible.

Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil must be seen by the SMT/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 and an individual risk assessment will be written for the pupil.

A written report logged on CPOMS.

If a child absconds from a visit/trip - Trips including residential

Where a pupil attempts to or is seen to be leaving the area of a trip/residential trip the following procedures should be followed:

- Staff must follow the pupil and must try to persuade the pupil to return
- The child's parents and academy need to be contacted immediately.
- The police need to be contacted immediately especially if the area is unknown.
- At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the student to leave the immediate vicinity of the area and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting

him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example. The child's age needs to be considered at this stage. Where possible children must remain in the sight line of staff.

- Staff will follow the pupil and engage in a local search, following the pupil at a safe distance if in view.
- The Visit lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.
- The Office lead will contact the pupil's parents/carers
- Once a pupil has been found then the lead SMT/SLT member will use their professional judgement to outline the response towards the pupil and the support the pupil will need in the future.
- CPOMS report will be completed.
- Member of SMT/SLT to brief police and parents.

Report

Report should include:

- Absconding Pupil
- Incident Report
- Name of pupil: Date: An outline of the incident (Please include time of day, staff involved and how the issue was resolved.)
- What triggers led to this incident occurring?
- What action will be taken to support the pupils to feel happy and safe in school?

The school recognises its duty of care to safeguard pupils and staff and to take reasonable steps to prevent harm. Where a pupil attempts to abscond from the setting, staff will respond in accordance with this policy, the school's behaviour and safeguarding procedures, and the Department for Education guidance Use of Reasonable Force: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies.

For some pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities, their level of need may mean they are unable to recognise danger or assess the risks associated with leaving the supervised environment; this includes the Acorn nurture class and students with a higher-level risk assessment. In such circumstances, the school's agreed procedures permit the use of reasonable force to prevent a pupil from placing themselves or others at risk of significant harm. Any physical intervention must be necessary, proportionate, and used only as a last resort when other de-escalation strategies have been unsuccessful or are not appropriate in the moment.

The decision to use reasonable force is made within the framework of this policy and the pupil's individual risk assessment and behaviour support plan, not as a personal judgement of an individual member of staff. All staff act on behalf of the school in fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities and are expected to follow approved training and techniques at all times.

Any intervention will:

- use the minimum level of force required and for the shortest possible time;
- prioritise the safety and dignity of the pupil;
- be carried out by trained staff wherever possible;
- cease immediately once the risk has reduced.