

# Pupils Absconding Policy 2023-2024

To be read in conjunction with: CME, Behaviour, Attendance and Safeguarding policies.

## **Pupils arriving before 08:30hrs:**

Where possible transport will be coordinated to arrive at school at 08:30hrs or after, and before 08:50hrs. If a pupil is known to HAVE to be dropped off before 08:30hrs, then a plan will be put in place, to have staff available.

Aspire Seating Plans are handed to the Project Team once a journey has been completed.

Where a pupil is dropped off before 08:30hrs and is seen by staff, staff members must make every effort to inform others that they have seen the pupil, so that the information does not rest with one person.

Breakfast club runs from 08:30hrs to 08:50hrs with a strong staff presence, at which point the main school gates are opened.

A Staff member in High Viz, is outside the front of school meeting pupils from transport. This is the first opportunity to witness pupils absconding from the transport or taxis.

## **Main Gate shuts at 08:50hrs and procedure:**

- 08:50hrs the gates close. If a pupil does not arrive on time for the start of the school, they will need to enter school via the main reception. Other pupils are registered on Arbor during Ready To learn.
- The next opportunity is 09:10hrs when tutor time begins. Pupils are recorded on Arbor.
- Again at 0940 for lesson 1, pupil receive an attendance mark and subsequently at the start of all other lessons.
- Lateness into school at any point in the day is recorded at reception.

The above procedure will only work, when we know pupils have arrived.

## **Pupils not arriving to Lesson:**

- If a teacher has seen a pupil onsite or has heard they are onsite, an e-mail identifying pupils as missing from lesson is sent to the education team email address.
- PWT pick up missing pupils in school corridors, not teaching areas. Time out is recorded on Arbor and the child is encouraged to return to their lesson and escorted.
- If a pupil arrives late, time out is recorded. A follow up e-mail is sent to staff, to confirm the pupil's arrival. The registers are updated.

## **If PWT cannot find pupil(s) then a more thorough internal/external search is conducted:**

If this reveals no pupil, the PWT member will take a school vehicle out to search the local streets. CCTV will be checked to see if an egress point has been identified i.e. over the fence to confirm time scales.

For highly vulnerable pupils, the police will be notified immediately on 101, following discussion with the DSL and Head Teacher.

If a parent informs the school that their child left for school but does not arrive, a joint collaboration between both parent/guardian and school try to locate the missing child. Parents are encouraged to

make all efforts to contact the child. Depending on the circumstances and vulnerability of the child, parents and carers may be encouraged to report them missing to the police immediately or after all efforts have been exhausted to find the pupil.

Admin team will call home to share information. Often, pupils have phones on them, and parents/carers can make contact and liaise with school staff. The office always ask parents to keep the lines of communication open and both parties are in dialogue.

Sometimes other pupils are spoken to about making contact with pupils, using their mobile phones if concerns are significant.

If the vehicle search reveals no pupil/s, PWT phone admin team and confirm that they cannot be found. Local shops and amenities will be visited to see if they are there. Routes to the train station and centre of the Worcester City will be covered.

- Once all options available to school have been **reasonably exhausted**, depending on resources and assets available, then a notification to the police will be made to report them as missing on 101 or 999 depending on circumstances and vulnerabilities. Clothing descriptions and safeguarding vulnerabilities should be shared and emphasised to the call handler. "This is a Vulnerable child". If the pupil has a social worker, then the named social worker should be notified at this point or the Family Front Door in their absence.

If school has details of a pupils mobile, then that number will also be called.

A constant dialogue should be maintained between parent/carers and school.

For dual registered pupils, the Home School Attendance Officer will be updated.

#### **Pupils that are located off site after absconsion:**

If located by PWT on transport, every effort is made to encourage the pupil/s back into the vehicle and returned to school. In some cases and depending on any incident that may have happened prior to absconsion, then with parental agreement the pupil will be transported home. Every effort will be made to restore relationships following an incident.

If located by the police, then school will receive the pupil and have a restorative meeting in conjunction with the police officers involved and communication with parents will be made.

Once located, the admin team will notify all parties of a safe outcome.

Depending on circumstances, the school will always try to receive pupils back to school to restore relationships and re-engage, and to keep the pupils safe.

#### **Recording:**

Any pupil who absconds the school premises will need to be recorded on CPOMS. This is so that there is an account of the episode and monitoring can take place.

Any form of communication with parents/carers or the police should be recorded in the normal way using Arbor.

**(From CME policy)**

The police classification of a person as 'Missing' or 'Absent' will be based on an ongoing risk assessment:

Absent within the police definition would not include those defined as "Away from Placement Without Authorisation above": a child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'Missing' or 'Absent' under the police definitions.

**Procedure for absence, without contact from parents/carers:**

1. 1st day of absence, if no contact is received from parents/carers, SMS sent to notify the parents/carers of absence and request for them to make contact regarding absence. If still no contact is made follow up calls are carried out to guardians and all contact. If the pupil has a social worker they will be informed of their absence.
2. 2nd day of absence with no contact – step 1 is repeated and if still no contact a safe and well home visit is carried by a member of staff. If there is a particular safeguarding concern for the absent pupil or the pupil is LAC, this step will be taken on their 1st day of absence – home visit logged on CPOMS – the referring school are notified
3. 3rd day of absence with no contact and unsuccessful safe and well home visit, steps 1 and 2 are repeated, with a second safe and well visit being carried out – the referring schools are notified
4. If on the 3rd day of absence we have still had no contact and unsuccessful home visits the pupil will be reported missing to the police. This step may be taken sooner and will be based on each individual pupils' circumstances. The referring schools are kept informed.

**Procedure for absence, with contact from parents/carers:** If a pupil is absent from school parents/carers have informed us of the reasons why, they are expected to keep in contact daily. If we do not have contact from the parents, we attempt to make contact and follow the steps above. Where a pupil has been absent for 5 consecutive days from school on 5th day a home visit will be arranged and if the absence is due to illness evidence to support the illness reasons will be requested. A home visit or outreach session may be arranged sooner than the 5th day of absence and will be based on each individual pupil circumstances.

**Notifying the local authority of pupil absence:** We notify the Local Authority of the following authorised or unauthorised absence.

10 days continuous absence (including if the child is likely to be absent for more than 15 days due to illness/injury) Irregular attendance or regular absence where attendance is not improving despite ongoing school intervention. Update to any previous notification - this should be done at regular intervals (suitable to that case) or if new information has been received.

**Did You Know?** Around 400 children and young people go missing each year in any one county - of these some go missing repeatedly.

Females are more likely to run away than males.

The peak age range for running away is 14- to 15-years old. Certain young people are more likely to runaway including those who define themselves as being gay, lesbian, disabled or having a learning disability as well as those living in stepfamilies and lone parent families.

There are strong links between running away and problems in other areas of young people's lives - such as school, drug and alcohol use, child sexual exploitation and offending.

Research shows that a quarter of young runaways felt that they were forced to leave home. One in six young runaways slept rough on the most recent occasion they were away.

Half stayed with friends.

One in eight runaways said that they had to resort to survival strategies such as stealing and begging whilst away from home.

Around one in 12 of runaways said that they had been hurt or harmed on the most recent occasion that they ran away.

Over two-thirds of runaways said that their parents or carers did not report them missing to the Police on the most recent occasion that they were away.

A further 13% were not sure, and only a fifth (19%) said that they had been reported.

*All statistics were taken from Still Running II: findings from the second national survey of young runaways, The Children's Society 2005*

**Remember** There is a distinction between young people who runaway and those who are forced to leave by their parents or carers.

Children and young people who are forced to leave will often not be reported missing.

If a child is taken overseas it may be appropriate to contact the Consular Directorate at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office which offers assistance to British nationals in distress (Tel: 020 7008 1500)

#### Circumstances for Implementation of Procedure

This procedure applies if any child goes missing or cannot be traced and they are:

- Looked After by the local authority (including placed with Foster Carers)
  - Missing from home or have run away and there is cause for concern
  - Missing from a private fostering arrangement
  - Missing from a residential school
- Circumstances for The Aspire Academy
- The Aspire Academy School will also implement the procedure of reporting a child missing from education if they are not at school and either parents cannot be contacted or parents do not know where they are. This is due to the increased vulnerability of our children.
  - We acknowledge that a child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and that such children are at risk of being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation. The Aspire Academy School has robust attendance procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. All staff should be alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Professionals should make this contact with other agencies:
  - The West Mercia Police Enquiry Centre on 101

- The Social Worker for the child (or duty officer out of hours) if a child is actively open to social care, and specifically if a child subject of a child protection referral or a Section 47 Enquiry
- A child with a Child Protection Plan goes missing or is removed from her/his address outside the terms of the Child Protection Plan
- A Child in Care who leaves or is removed from his or her placement, without this being part of the Care Plan A child about whom there are concerns e.g. one who is subject to a Child and Family Single Assessment
- A child where there are developing concerns about their safety Children's Social Care should then Inform:
  - The designated safeguarding manager if the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan
  - The Independent Reviewing Officer if the child is Looked After;
  - Any individuals known to hold Parental Responsibility for the child (not if Honour Based Violence is known or suspected);
  - All other local agencies who know the child.

Existing records in these agencies must be checked to obtain any information which might help trace the missing child, e.g. details of friends and relatives, and this information should be passed to the police officer undertaking the missing person enquiry.

The Designated Nurse for Safeguarding must be notified about a missing child, family or a pregnant woman. S/he will co-ordinate the circulation of appropriate local or national notifications.

Schools should refer to the Children Missing Education Guidance CME Guidance 2016 and refer the case to the Education Welfare Service 01905 846 760.

The social worker should discuss with their manager whether to notify members of the extended family and if so, how.

## **Strategy Meeting**

If the child has not been traced within 5 working days a Strategy Meeting should be convened.

Members of the meeting will need to consider whether to circulate details of the missing child to other local authorities and other agencies in the area.

Consideration should be given to national notification of authorities and agencies including social security, the benefits agency and child benefit agency.

A senior member of Children's Social Care should seek assistance from the Department for Work and Pensions/Inland Revenue if the police have not already contacted them.

If there is any suspicion that the child may be removed from UK jurisdiction, appropriate legal interventions should be considered and legal services consulted about options.

It should also be agreed by all agencies at this stage what action will be taken when the child is found. Actions set should be relevant to the individual case.

If the Strategy Meeting agrees details of the child/family are to be circulated to other local authorities, the Lead Social Worker should draft a short letter giving details of:

- The children in the family;
- Other family members or significant adults;
- (Where relevant) the category of Significant Harm leading to the Child Protection Plan
- The circumstances causing concern
- Action required if a child is found
- Contact arrangements for the Lead Social Worker/social worker - including out of office hours;
- Physical descriptions of key people (and photographs, if available).