



Bridgwater & Taunton College Trust

Absconding Student Policy

2021-2022

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Policy is to set out for all staff, students, volunteers, parents and Governors the process that will take place should a student abscond from any of our Academies. All staff will have received safeguarding training and will be aware of the Trust and Academy Policies surrounding this, although they are reminded to be mindful of these when following this Policy.

AIM

We actively work to provide a secure and safe environment, an Academy where students want to come to enjoy learning with others as part of a caring community. We recognise that in most cases, it is highly unlikely that a student will try to abscond from any of our Academies but this Policy is written to ensure we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

STUDENTS WHO ABSCOND

To abscond is to leave without permission. Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and in Common Law, Academies and other education settings, owe a duty of care towards their students. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that students are safe and remain within the care of the Academy at all times throughout the school day and during Academy led activities.

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

□ A student who absconds before the end of the registration period

Academies are required to register their students at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. This should take place within a period, of not less than 15 minutes, set aside when the register is open.

If a student absconds from the Academy during the period of registration, the class register should show the student as being absent.

Should the student return to the Academy after the end of the registration period, the class register should be amended to indicate a late arrival.

It is good practice when a student absconds in these circumstances for the Academy to make every effort to advise the parents/carers.

□ A student who absconds after registration

Once a student has been registered as present, the registration period has ended and the class register closed, the Academy is 'in loco parentis'.

Should a student abscond after the end of the registration period, the Academy, technically, remains 'in loco parentis'.

Every attempt should be made to contact the parents/carers to advise them that their child has absconded from the Academy. When parents/carers are contacted, it should be made clear that the responsibility for their child is being passed back to them. Procedures will be followed (as detailed later in this Policy).

Contact with parents/carers should be by telephone in the first instance. In all circumstances, it is advisable to record details of attempts to establish contact. If the parents/carers are contacted, the attendance register should be amended to show unauthorised absence.

If parents/carers cannot be contacted, the attendance register should remain un-amended. At this stage, it is advisable to contact the local Police Station to seek assistance. However, the responsibility for the student remains with the Academy.

□ **A student who is excluded, but comes onto the Academy grounds**

If a student is excluded, either for a fixed period or permanently, he/she should not be on the Academy grounds.

Should an excluded student appear on the Academy grounds, he/she should be asked to leave. If the student refuses or is causing a nuisance or disturbance which requires action, the Academy should, in the first instance, make every effort to contact the parents/carers to ask them to remove their child from Academy grounds.

If parents/carers are either not contactable or are not able to remove their child from the Academy grounds, the Police should be contacted for assistance.

□ **Students who abscond from school but remain on the Academy grounds**

The general advice in these circumstances is that Academy staff should not pursue the student or try to force them back into the Academy.

However, there may be circumstances where Academy staff will need to use their judgement and possibly knowledge of the student along with any control measures/procedures contained within the individual health care plan and/or risk assessment for the student if they have one. A student's age, vulnerability and other factors need to be considered. For example, it may be dangerous to let a particular student wander about the Academy grounds. In cases where there are foreseeable risks (from climbing, etc) the Head Teacher or their designate will ensure a site survey is undertaken to reduce risks as low as reasonably practical.

The demeanour of the student will need to be considered. If the student is upset or angry, care must be given to how they are approached.

The size of the student will also be important in judging whether to try to approach them.

The gender of the student may indicate a particular member of staff as being more appropriate to deal with the situation.

In all cases, **staff should not place themselves in a situation of potential danger.**

□ **Students for whom it is foreseeable that they may abscond**

In situations where it is foreseeable that a student may abscond without permission, it is imperative that a thorough risk assessment is carried out in advance to determine the best way to managing the individual. This will naturally include procedures to follow (with the assistance of an Educational Psychologist and Health and Safety Lead).

This procedure must be agreed in advance with all stakeholders. The risk assessment should be on the SEN module of EECLive for the relevant Academy.

STUDENTS WHO RETURN TO THE ACADEMY AFTER ABSCONDING

Most students who abscond will do so as a result of a specific incident, which may have taken place either at the Academy, at home or on the way to the Academy.

For those students who return to the Academy either by their own choice, with parental support or following intervention by a member of staff, thought should be given to their welfare. They are likely to be in need of support, understanding and perhaps some time apart from their peers.

PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/carers of students are responsible for supporting the work of the Academy. They are responsible for encouraging their child/children to keep to all Academy Procedures and Policies.

Once an Academy has informed the parents/carers that their child has absconded, parents/carers are responsible for actively supporting the Academy with the subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming to the Academy to help secure the safety of their child after they have absconded as well as meeting with the Head Teacher to agree subsequent actions.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Each incident will be recorded, monitored and evaluated and individual risk assessments amended if necessary and appropriate. The risk assessment should be on the SEN module of EECLive for the relevant Academy.

PROCEDURE

If a student is suspected of leaving the Academy grounds without permission, in an emotional state:

- The member of staff will alert the Head Teacher or their designate.

If the student has left the immediate vicinity of the Academy grounds and is no longer visible, the Head Teacher or their designate 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, and the nature of the incident, which led to the student absconding. The student's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes.

- If there is no doubt that the student has absconded, the Academy will contact the Police as an emergency situation and the student's parents/carers to inform them. Staff will not chase or follow the student closely as this could lead to the student wandering further afield, acting impetuously or causing a traffic accident.
- If the student is within an easy distance of the Academy, staff are not to engage in conversation, as the student might be in a distressed state and unable to act in a controlled manner. This would mean there is still the potential for traffic accidents. **However**, staff should be aware (through the risk assessment process) of any potential triggers and techniques to use in such events if this is a foreseeable incident.
- If the student appears to be missing but there is no evidence that they have left site, a quick but thorough search of the site should be conducted before the parents/carers or Police are informed.
- If the student returns of their own volition, parents/carers and (if necessary) the Police will be informed. Upon their return to the Academy, and when the student is calm, the student must be seen by the Head Teacher or their designate 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. A written report will be filed on the incident and a copy attached to the Incident for to be sent to the Health and Safety Lead for recording purposes.
- If possible, the student who has absconded should be brought back to the Academy the same day. The parents/carers, student and Head Teacher will then discuss the issues and any consequences. This Policy will be discussed and an agreement will be written, giving details of the incident and agreed actions. A template for this is contained on Appendices 1, 2 and 3.
- If the student absconds for a second time in the same Academic Year, the Head Teacher may consider a fixed term exclusion but should consider an individual risk assessment as well.
- The Head Teacher or their designate should consider if de-escalation techniques and safe restraint techniques should be imparted to staff through a Team Teach training course.

If the Head Teacher or their designate is aware that a student is not acting emotionally but has left the Academy grounds (eg by mistake), the above procedure may be adapted.

AGREEMENT FOLLOWING A STUDENT ABSCONDING FROM THE ACADEMY

(To be completed by the Head Teacher or their designate and attached to Appendix 2 and 3)

Student: Date:

Record on Incident:

An agreement has been reached following this absconding incident. Actions have been agreed in order to help the student feel happy and safe at the Academy (Appendices 1, 2 and 3)

The Academy will support this agreement by:

Signed: Date:
Head Teacher or their designate

PARENTAL/CARER AGREEMENT
(To be completed by the parent/carer)

I have read the record of the absconding incident (Appendix 1). I wish to make the following comments relating to the incident (optional):

I understand that it is unacceptable for my child to leave the Academy grounds without permission and a repeated action of this nature might result in the Academy following exclusion procedures.

I understand that the following actions have been agreed to help my child be happy and safe at the Academy. I know my child needs to keep to the Academy rules and not leave the Academy grounds without permission. I understand that there are agreed actions for all parties involved. For my part, I will support this agreement by:

Signed: Date:
Parent/Carer

STUDENT AGREEMENT

(To be completed by the Student or an adult on behalf of the Student)

I have read or listened to the record of the absconding incident (Appendix 1). I wish to make the following comment about the incident (optional):

I understand that it is unacceptable for me to leave the Academy grounds without permission and a repeated action of this nature might result in the Academy following exclusion procedures.

I understand that the following actions have been agreed in order to help me to be happy and safe at the Academy. I know I need to keep to the Academy rules and not leave the Academy grounds without permission. I understand that there are actions too for the Academy and my parents/carers. I will support this agreement by:

Signed: Date:
Student

