

Absconding Policy

Sept 2021

Version 4

1. Scope

This policy applies to all staff at Expanse Learning College (Hereafter referred to as the College).

2. Introduction and Rationale

This policy is written to guide staff in the event of a vulnerable and/or at-risk student going missing on the premises, going missing outside of the College, or having absconded.

Staff are reminded to read the following College policies and practice guidelines in conjunction with this policy –

- Health and Safety Policy
- Care Plan documentation
- College Security procedures
- Individual Behavioural Observation Chart
- Individual Behaviour Management Plans
- Individual Risk Assessment

3. On the College Premises

A register of students will be completed each morning and afternoon in college.

It is the responsibility of the College Manager/Deputy on site to be able to account for the whereabouts of every student.

Upon discovering a student is missing on site, an immediate search is to be made of the College buildings with all available staff. This search should **not** exceed ten minutes. All the usual haunts for that student should be searched. If the student is a known absconder this should have been recorded in their individual risk assessment and should include any known haunts for that student.

Staff should then regroup and extend the search to include the College grounds. This should not exceed a further fifteen minutes.

If at this stage the student has not been located the senior manager on site should:

- Organise all available staff to search the immediate local community. Staff must take potential dangers into account and not put themselves at risk.
- Contact the parents of the student who is missing.
- If necessary, make a phone call to the local police station giving a clear description of the student and clothing being worn.
- Not leave the premises but remain on site to co-ordinate the search, answer phone calls and provide photos and information.
- Ensure that there are adequate staff left in the building to deal with other contingencies. When searching the local community on foot, remember that you may be vulnerable (use a car whenever possible).
- Following the incident, ensure appropriate documents are completed as soon as possible.
- Arrange a meeting to discuss the circumstances of the incident and the effectiveness of the current procedures. A review must take place of the student's individual risk assessment.
- Keep all colleagues informed.

4. Off College Premises

Students involved in any out of centre activities (OOCA) are entered into relevant planning and control documents and that copies are left on site. When going off-site staff are to take their ID badges. Staff on visits out should ensure they have a fully charged company mobile phone with them.

A 'head count' of the students should be made at regular intervals and always before the transport leaves a venue. If a student is discovered as missing, then a search (not exceeding ten minutes) of the immediate area is undertaken by all available members of staff, ensuring that all other students continue to be appropriately supervised.

If the missing student is not located, then:

- A staff member should notify the Manager/Deputy at the College site and act on any instructions given.
- Notify, if appropriate, the venue that is being visited and ask them to initiate their protocol.
- The Manager/Deputy will notify the student's parents and keep them updated as necessary.

- If necessary, the Manager/Deputy will notify the police and provide them with as precise a description of the student as possible, the last known whereabouts of the student and any other details they may require.
- The member of staff initiating the search should remain in situ until assistance from College and/or the police arrives in case the missing student should return or be found.
- In such stressful circumstances it is important that staff remain as calm and collected as possible.

5. Absconding

A student is considered to have ‘absconded’ if they intentionally / knowingly leave the College site or the immediate area of an off-site activity without notifying staff.

If a student absconds then:

- Where possible, a member of staff should follow the student at a safe distance and/or respond in line with guidance from the student’s individual risk assessment.
- A senior manager at college must immediately be informed of the situation.
- Where possible, the member of staff following the student should remain in contact with either the main group or the senior manager at college via a mobile phone.
- The senior manager will then, if appropriate, allocate further staff members to go and collect the student and return them either to the venue or to college.
- The senior manager will also inform the student’s parents and keep them updated as necessary.

If a student absconds and is then deemed to be ‘missing’, procedures will follow those outlined previously for a student missing off-site. It is important that following an incident the issues that arise are addressed and staff should:

- Review the individual risk assessment for the student involved.
- Review the student’s BMP and/or BOC.
- Where appropriate, talk through the incident with the student involved.
- Complete an incident form.
- Keep all colleagues informed and discuss the incident in staff meetings and/or in supervision meetings.
- Review procedures for the individual every half term to ensure appropriate control measures are in place and that all staff are fully informed.
- Inform Governors every term about any incidents of absconding.

6. Information for Students

What happens if you go missing? What is meant by “missing”?

You will be considered missing if members of staff do not know where you are.

What is meant by “absconding”?

You have absconded if you deliberately go away from where you should be without telling a member of staff or without a member of staff giving you permission.

What will happen if you go missing?

The people looking after you have a responsibility to know where you are and to make sure you are safe. If you are ‘missing’ they will speak to your friends, teachers and family to see if they can help. If there is concern for your safety, then staff will need to search for clues as to where you are. If necessary the Police may be informed that you are missing, and they and the College staff will look for you.

What happens if you can’t be found?

A meeting will be held between the College and if necessary the Police to plan how to search for you. Your name, description and a photograph will be given to the Police in order to help them with their search.

What happens when you are found?

You will be returned to a safe place and will be asked about the reasons for you going missing. This is to try and find out if anything is troubling you and to see if anyone can help. You do not have to run away to talk to someone. If you want to talk to someone outside of the College, this can be arranged. You may also be visited by a Police Officer who will check that you are back.

Will anything else happen?

If you are injured or unwell then you will be checked by a doctor or Nurse. College staff will want to talk to you about going missing. If you have deliberately run away (absconded) then the people responsible for your safety will meet to discuss ways in which such incidents can be prevented by looking at the reasons for your actions.

Remember - You have the right to use a telephone in private. If you are worried about something or just want to talk, the national ChildLine number is 0800 1111.

7. Monitoring arrangements

The senior management team is responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy; this policy will be reviewed every 12 months but can be revised as needed.

Impact of non-compliance:

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| Staff: | Disciplinary action, Support, Action Plan |
| Student: | Not applicable |
| Legislation/organisational: | statutory and non-regulated compliance. Prosecution, Staff Retention, Poor employee performance etc |
| Compliance lead: | Pastoral & Safeguarding |
| Policy Reference: | ELCO-OPR-001 |
| Version: | 4 |
| Agreed policy location: | DatabridgeMIS |
| Does the policy require Governor approval? | No |

Approval

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Version Control

| Version | Date | Revision | Review Date |
|---------|------------|---|-------------|
| 1 | 04/01/2019 | First Issue | 03/01/2020 |
| 2 | 01/09/2019 | Policy review and transfer to the 2019-20 policy template | 31/08/2020 |
| 3 | 01/09/2020 | Reviewed | 31/08/2021 |
| 4 | 01/09/2021 | Reviewed | 31/08/2021 |
| 5 | | | |