

# Absconding Policy

Expanse Learning (Wigan) School

August 2024

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**Version:**  
8

**This Policy was approved by:**  
Board of Directors on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024

**Date for Review:**  
August 2025

## 1. Scope

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

## 2. Introduction and Rationale

This policy is written to guide staff in the event of a student going missing on the premises, going missing outside of the school or having absconded.

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

- Health and Safety Policy
- Care Plan documentation
- School Security procedures
- Behaviour Management Strategy (BMS)
- Individual Risk Assessment

## 3. On the School Premises

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

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher (or Senior Staff member) 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 school 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 school 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.
- Make a phone call to the police on the 101 number, giving a clear description of the student and clothing being worn.
- Contact the parents of the student who is missing.
- Not leave the premises but remain on site to co-ordinate the search, answer phone calls and provide photos and information. The police may want to visit the school.
- 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 or the school vehicles whenever possible).
- Following the incident, ensure appropriate documents are completed as soon as possible.
- *DatabridgeMIS Event: (ELWS) – Pastoral Incident or if applicable please also complete (ELWS) – Health and Safety Incident)*
- 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 and their BMS.
- Keep all colleagues informed.

## 4. Off School Premises

Students involved in any out of centre activities (OOCA) are entered in the "off-site Databridge events". When going off-site staff are to take their ID badges and sign out. All staff on visits out should ensure they have a fully charged mobile phone with them.

A 'head count' of the students should be made at regular intervals and always before a minibus 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 Head Teacher at the school and act on any instructions given.
- The Head Teacher 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.
- Notify, if appropriate, the venue that is being visited and ask them to initiate their lost child protocols.
- The senior manager will notify the student's parents and keep them updated as necessary.
- The member of staff initiating the search should remain in situ until the police or assistance from school 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 school site or the immediate area of an off-site activity without permission.

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 school 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 school 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 school.
- 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.
- Where appropriate, talk through the incident with the student involved. Ensure that a record is kept of the discussion held with the student. Complete *DatabridgeMIS Event: (ELWS) – Pastoral Incident or if applicable please also complete (ELWS) – Health and Safety Incident*
- 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. The Police may be informed that you are missing, and they and the school staff will look for you.

### What happens if you can't be found?

A meeting will be held between the school and the Police to plan how to search for you. Your name, description and a photograph will be given to the Police 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 school, this can be arranged.

You may also be visited by a Police Officer who will check that you are back. This is called a “Safe and Well Check”. You will be able to speak to the Police Officer without any member of staff present if you wish to do so.

### Will anything else happen?

If you are injured or unwell then you may be checked by a doctor or Nurse. Your teacher or keyworker 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

- This policy will be reviewed every 24 months but can be revised as needed.
- The Head Teacher is responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy.
- At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board

### Impact of non-compliance:

<b>Staff:</b>	Disciplinary action
<b>Student:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Legislation/organisational:</b>	Suspension, Temporary Exclusion, Permanent Exclusion
<b>Compliance lead:</b>	Reputational damage, statutory and non-regulated compliance.
<b>Policy Reference:</b>	Headteacher/Director of Schools
<b>Version:</b>	ELWS-POL-OPER-0001
<b>Agreed policy location:</b>	8
<b>Review Schedule:</b>	Company Webpage and Employee Intranet
<b>Does the policy require Governor approval?</b>	12 Months

### Version Control

Version	Date	Revision	Review Date
1	04/01/2019	First Issue	03/01/2020
2	04/02/2019	Transferred to new policy template	11/07/2019
3	01/09/2019	Policy review and transfer to the 2019-20 policy template	31/08/2020
4	01/09/2020	Policy Review	31/08/2021
5	01/09/2021	Policy Reviewed	31/08/2022
6	01/09/2022	Policy Reviewed	31/08/2023
7	22/08/2023	Policy Reviewed	21/08/2024
8	22/08/2024	Policy Reviewed	21/08/2025