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St Peter's Church of England Middle School

Procedures where a student absconds

This policy was adopted: February 2024

The policy is to be reviewed in: February 2025

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Chair of Local Governing Body: Jane Whitehorn

SPMS Procedures where a Student Absconds

A. Rationale:

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Schools 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 school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.

Absconding is when a student goes beyond the fenced boundaries of the school without permission. A small number of our students have difficulties managing their anxiety, and on occasion, seek to abscond as a result. Other students may abscond for other reasons. In any circumstance, these absconding procedures will be followed by all staff to ensure in so far as is reasonable, the safety of students and staff.

The absconding procedures will also be followed if a student absconds during on off-site activity/trip.

B. Steps taken by the school to account for the whereabouts of students

1. Registers are taken every morning between 8.30 and 8.40 following arrival in school. The parents or carers of any identified absentees will receive an email from the school to report the absence.
2. Registers are taken for each lesson throughout the day. It is the responsibility of the staff in each lesson to account for the whereabouts of their students. At break and lunchtime, support staff are assigned specific duties to monitor students at risk of absconding.

C. Procedure if a student absconds

1. Upon discovering a student is missing, an immediate search of the school premises is undertaken by school staff. The initial search will not exceed 10 minutes and a member of SLT must be informed immediately. If the student cannot be found, it must be assumed that they have absconded. If appropriate, further staff members will be allocated to assist with the situation.
2. If the initial search in step 1 does not result in finding the student, parents/ carers/social workers are to be informed immediately and kept up to date with the process.
3. If the student has been seen outside the school, where possible, a member of staff should, from within the school boundary, attempt to persuade the student to come back onto site, or keep a safe eye on the situation.
4. Once the student has been missing for 20 minutes, or earlier if the situation becomes unsafe, the police are to be called.

Each member of staff has a handheld radio which can be used to alert the office in the event of a student absconding.

Individual Circumstances:

The response to a student absconding must take account of the individual circumstances of the case. Consideration of the student's developmental level (age and maturity) and their emotional state will be considered. For example, if a student has no road awareness or is a danger to themselves or others, physical intervention may be necessary to prevent the

absconding. If they did abscond, the police would be informed earlier due to the higher level of risk. The response for older students who may live locally would be different again. Either way, parents/ carers/ social worker will always be informed as soon as possible, and a member of staff will follow to the school boundary, if able to do so, to ensure safety. In all events, the student's individual risk assessment and IEP are to be followed.