

CATCOTT PRIMARY



ABSCONDING POLICY

'...where learning takes you to greater heights...'

Approved by: LGB

Date: January 2026

Last reviewed on: January 2026

Next review due by: January 2027

1. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out, for all staff, volunteers, children, parents/carers and governors, the procedures that will be followed should a child abscond from **Catcott Primary School**.

At Catcott Primary School, we work proactively to provide a secure and safe environment where children feel happy, valued and confident to learn as part of a caring community. While it is highly unlikely that a child will abscond from our school, these procedures ensure that all staff are prepared to respond swiftly and appropriately should such an incident occur.

All staff receive safeguarding training and are familiar with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This policy must be read and followed in conjunction with those procedures.

2. Definition of Absconding

For the purposes of this policy, **absconding** refers to any incident where a pupil leaves the school site **without permission, without supervision, and without the knowledge of school staff**.

To abscond means to "leave without permission".

Under **Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)** and under **Common Law**, schools owe a duty of care to their pupils. This duty requires Catcott Primary School to take all reasonable steps to ensure pupils are safe and remain under the supervision of the school throughout the school day and during school-led activities.

The safety measures implemented will reflect:

- The age of the pupil
- The level of vulnerability
- Any known risks associated with individual pupils

3. Absconding Scenarios Covered by This Policy

This policy applies to the following situations:

- Pupils absconding **before the end of registration**
- Pupils absconding **after registration**
- Pupils who are **excluded but return to the school site**
- Pupils who remain **on site but outside supervision**
- Pupils for whom absconding is **foreseeable**

4. Procedures for Specific Absconding Scenarios

a) Pupils Absconding Before the End of Registration

- Registers are taken at the start of each morning and afternoon session, within a registration period of at least 15 minutes.
- If a pupil leaves the site during the registration period, they should be marked **absent**.
- If the pupil returns after the registration period has closed, the register should be amended to show a **late arrival**.
- Parents/carers will be informed as soon as possible.

b) Pupils Absconding After Registration

- Once a pupil has been registered as present and the register is closed, Catcott Primary School is acting **in loco parentis**.
- If a pupil absconds after registration:
 - Parents/carers must be contacted immediately by telephone.
 - Parents/carers should be informed that responsibility for the child is being passed back to them.
 - All attempts to contact parents/carers must be recorded.
- If parents/carers are successfully contacted, the attendance register should be amended to show **unauthorised absence**.
- If parents/carers cannot be contacted:
 - The register should remain unchanged.
 - The school may contact the local police for advice or assistance.
 - Responsibility for the pupil remains with the school until they are located.

c) Pupils Who Are Excluded but Return to Site

- Pupils who are excluded (fixed-term or permanent) must not be on the school site.
- If an excluded pupil returns:
 - They should be asked to leave immediately.
 - Parents/carers should be contacted and asked to remove the pupil.
- If parents/carers are unavailable or unable to attend, or if the pupil causes disruption or refuses to leave, the police should be contacted for assistance.

d) Pupils Remaining on Site but Outside Supervision

- Staff should **not pursue** or attempt to physically restrain a pupil.
- Professional judgement should be used, taking into account:
 - Age and vulnerability of the pupil
 - Known behaviours and risks
 - Individual risk assessments, where applicable

- The demeanour of the pupil (e.g. distressed, angry) should guide how staff approach the situation.
- Staff should not place themselves at risk.
- Where risks are foreseeable, the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or a member of SLT will ensure that a site risk assessment is undertaken to reduce hazards.

e) Pupils for Whom Absconding Is Foreseeable

- Where absconding is considered a foreseeable risk:
 - A detailed individual risk assessment must be completed in advance.
 - Trigger factors, preventative strategies and clear procedures must be identified.
- Risk assessments should be completed using the **Secure Medical module of EEC**, using the ISP template.
- This process should involve all relevant stakeholders and, where appropriate, external professionals.

5. Return and Reintegration

- Most absconding incidents occur following a specific trigger or event.
- Pupils who return to school may require emotional support and time to regulate.
- When a pupil returns:
 - Parents/carers (and police if involved) will be informed.
 - Once calm, the pupil will meet with a member of the SLT to discuss the incident.
 - Further actions will be agreed in line with the child's needs and the Behaviour Policy.
- A written incident report will be completed (Appendix A).

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

- All absconding incidents will be formally recorded and reviewed.
- The Headteacher will be informed of all incidents.
- Records will be used to:
 - Review individual risk assessments
 - Identify patterns or concerns
 - Inform updates to this policy

7. Missing Child Procedures

1. Class teacher informs the Headteacher or a member of SLT and the school office immediately.
2. SLT checks the signing-in/out records to confirm the pupil has not been collected legitimately.
3. An initial search of the school building and known locations is conducted.
4. If the pupil is not found, a full sweep of the school site and grounds is carried out discreetly.
5. If the pupil remains missing, the school office contacts the police.
6. Parents/carers are contacted and all attempts to contact are recorded. At this point, parents must be made aware that responsibility for their child is now handed over to them.
7. Decisions regarding extending the search beyond the site are made based on risk and the child's best interests.
8. Any staff leaving the site must take a mobile phone.
9. Once the pupil is found, the SLT will decide on:
 - Communication with pupils
 - Communication with parents
 - Any media considerations
10. A reintegration meeting will take place with parents/carers and SLT.

Appendix A

Incident Record: Absconding from Catcott Primary School

To be completed by the Headteacher or deputising teacher.

Child:

Date:

Signed:

Record of Incident:

Time	Incident / What happened?