



Absconding Policy

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Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to set out the procedures for all stakeholders should a student leave the premises without permission. This policy is closely linked to our 'Safeguarding Policy'.

Under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and in common law, schools owe a duty of care towards their students. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that students/service users are safe and remain within the care of Gloverspiece at all times throughout the school day and during school-directed activities.

Aim

We work actively to provide a secure, safe environment for the students and service users at Gloverspiece. We want students/service users to enjoy coming to school and being a part of our community. We recognise that it is unlikely that a student/service user should abscond from the premises, but if it should happen, the procedures detailed below will ensure that we are ready to deal with this eventuality.

Definition

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'. This could mean a child leaves the building or farmyard, yet remains, in the grounds, or leaves the site.

The Site

Gloverspiece

The site available to students/service users at the site at Gloverspiece during the day includes the: school (barn) building, main farmyard, forest school field, patio area, farm track down towards the orchard, and specific animal fields/enclosures (as outlined in our animal handling procedures). The two main exits from the site are the main gated entrance and the public footpath running through the site which utilises a stile.

Dimore

The site available to students accessing our Dilmore site during the day includes the: school (bungalow) building, the forecourt area, the animal accommodation (with permissions/supervision), the field area and any other workshop spaces as signposted. The main entrance/exit to the site is through the main driveway leading onto Dilmore Lane.

Gatehouse

Children accessing our site Gatehouse site are only able to freely access the interior spaces within the building (apart from those designate as out of bounds e.g. office, kitchen etc.). When open to children, the outdoor garden spaces are securely locked and children are supervised with a high staff ratio. The enclosed entrance to the front of building is securely fenced and locked.



Control measures

To prevent a student/service user from absconding from the sites, the following measures are implemented:

- Site Security:
 - Gloverspiece and Dilmore - Typically, the main gated entrances are left unlocked during operating hours, however, where staff consider there to be a greater risk or likelihood of absconding, the gate can be closed to provide a visual deterrence.
 - Gloverspiece - The gate leading onto the patio area is secured with two bolt/mechanisms which are aimed at slowing down students/service users when attempting to leave the patio area.
 - Gatehouse – the outdoor garden areas (when accessible to children) are securely fenced and locked to prevent any absconding.
- 'Adequate Supervision':
 - Due to the nature and location of our site, the maintenance of 'adequate supervision' is imperative to safeguard students/service users.
 - For this reason, 'adequate supervision' is clearly defined for staff in our Staff Code of Conduct and this reflects specific difference in expected supervision across our Gloverspiece and Dilmore sites.
 - At Gloverspiece - Staff members must ensure that the students/service users for which they are responsible always remain within their eyesight.
 - At Dilmore – Staff members must ensure that they are aware of where all students are at any moment in time through effective deployment of staff and regular supervision.
 - Additional factors are considered when providing supervision for students/service users including their age; the number of individuals being supervised; the activity being undertaken; their presenting behaviour; and specific identified risks (e.g. individuals with a history of absconding).
 - At Gatehouse – Children are supervised on a high child:staff ratio in line with the EYFS Statutory Framework.
- Staff Communication:
 - All members of Gloverspiece Staff are advised to keep their mobile phone devices on them and are provided with the contact details of the DSL and Leadership Team should they need to contact them in case of absconding.
- Individual Risk Assessments:
 - Where there is a foreseeable risk of absconding, there should be an Individual Risk Assessment in place for that student/service user in the prescribed format.
 - The risk assessment should detail the individual control measures required to reduce the risk of absconding.



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External visits

The security of each visit location should be assessed and supervision levels altered accordingly. Our staff training ensures that there is an identified Visit Leader in charge of making a detailed risk assessment to include known risks of absconding students. The Visit Leader will deploy staff and volunteers to ensure close supervision of all pupils with regular head counts taking place.

Parents/Carers/Social Workers will always be informed if their child absconds from Gloverspiece. All incidents will be recorded on an 'Absconding Form'. The safety and supervision of all children is of equal priority and safe staffing levels for all children will be maintained at all times.

Students/Service Users who abscond from School/Farm Area but remain within the grounds.

In these circumstances, the staff member(s) responsible for their supervision will remain in proximity to the individual and will pursue them if: a) they feel there is a risk of absconding from the grounds, or b) if they conduct a dynamic risk assessment and deem there to be a significant risk to the welfare of the individual (e.g. moving vehicles, animals etc.)

Responsible staff will remain at a safe distance, keeping the student/service user in sight and a member of the leadership team should be informed. Interventions should be attempted by staff only if the student's is a danger to themselves or others. Any property damage may be charged to the student's parent(s) or carer(s).

Students/Service Users who abscond from the school grounds.

Where a student/service user is seen to leave the premises (Gloverspiece or Dilmore) without authorisation, the following procedure will be followed:

- 1) Active pursuit of the individual should commence when they have left the site. Whilst this may make the individual more heightened, due to the locality of the settings, keeping them in sight is imperative. Staff may consider the use of reasonable force wherever they deem there to be a significant risk to the individual or others.
- 2) Any staff who leave the site must take a mobile phone with them.
- 3) Staff must inform a member of the leadership as soon as possible who will direct the course of action. Where appropriate at least two staff may join the search in a vehicle, with a mobile phone to remain in contact with Gloverspiece.
- 4) If immediate attempts to encourage the individual's return to the site are unsuccessful, the police will be notified on 111. If there is an immediate risk to the individual or if there is a crime taking place, the accompanying staff will report this to the police via 999.
- 5) If the searching staff lose sight of the student/service user, they must contact a member of leadership giving details of their location and the clothes the student/service user was wearing.



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- 6) The member of leadership will inform parents/carers. Every attempt to contact parents and police should be recorded (typically on the Absconding Form)
- 7) Once the student/service user has been found, the member(s) of staff will use their professional judgement to inform how they respond to support them.
- 8) A written report will be completed by the appropriate staff (see 'Absconding Form').
- 9) The Headteacher will brief parents and police, if necessary.
- 10) Upon their return to Gloverspiece, and when calm enough to do so, the student/service users will meet with the Headteacher so that the reasons for the absconding can be understood. A support plan for the individual may need to be considered along with sanctions appropriate for the student's/service user's needs.

If a child absconds/leaves with authorisation from our Gatehouse site, accompanying staff will utilise a positive physical intervention to return the child back to the secure area of the site. This is due to the age and capacity of the children accessing that site.

Suitability of Placement

As outline in our school's admission policy, due to the rural, open nature of our settings, we are unable to manage absconding behaviour on an ongoing basis. Where this behaviour occurs on more than two occasions, a placement /EHCP review may be necessary so as to review the suitability of their placement with us.