



Child Going Missing or Absconding from School Policy

Date policy last reviewed: June 2026

Statement of Intent

The safety and welfare of all children is the highest priority of Radwinter CofE Primary School. This policy outlines the procedures to follow in the event that a child goes missing or absconds from the school site.

This policy applies to all staff, including temporary staff, volunteers and those leading extended school provision.

1. Scope and Clarification

This policy relates specifically to:

- A child who cannot be located whilst on the school site
- A child who leaves the site without permission (absconds)

This policy does not replace Children Missing Education (CME) procedures, which are addressed separately in the school's attendance and safeguarding policies.

2. Related Policies and Guidance

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Attendance Policy (including CME procedures)
- Health and Safety Policy

3. Aims

- To ensure swift and effective action is taken if a child goes missing or absconds
- To locate the child as quickly as possible
- To minimise risk to the child and others
- To ensure all staff understand their roles and responsibilities
- To ensure robust recording and follow-up

4. Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff

- Maintain appropriate supervision at all times
- Be aware of pupils' whereabouts
- Act immediately if a child is missing
- Carry an emergency card at all times as part of their lanyard

Headteacher / Senior Leader on Duty

- Take overall responsibility for managing the incident
- Make decisions regarding escalation
- Liaise with parents, police, and external agencies

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Review all incidents
- Ensure safeguarding procedures are followed
- Decide if further referrals or actions are required

5. Communication Systems

The school uses:

- **Internal phones** which can be used to alert the office and senior leaders instantly
- **Panic buttons** to alert the office and senior leaders instantly
- **Emergency cards** carried in staff lanyards to request immediate assistance

- **Emergency whistles** which are located on all staff members' lanyards and used to request immediate assistance when outside of the school building

All staff must be familiar with and use these systems without delay in an emergency.

6. Immediate Actions – Child Missing

If a child cannot be located, this must be treated as a safeguarding incident.

Step 1: Raise the Alarm

- Inform the Headteacher or senior leader immediately
- Provide:
 - Child's name
 - Last known location
 - Time last seen
- Activate communication system:
 - Use internal phone,
 - Press panic button,
 - Send emergency card to the office, or
 - Blow emergency whistle

Step 2: Secure and Search

- Ensure all other pupils are safe and supervised
- Conduct an **immediate and thorough search**, including:
 - Classrooms
 - Toilets
 - Storage areas
 - Outdoor spaces including sheds and Forest School
 - Boundaries and exits

Step 3: Escalation

If the child is not found quickly:

- The Headteacher / senior leader will:
 - Contact parents/carers immediately
 - Assess risk and vulnerability
 - Contact the police:
 - **999** if immediate danger is suspected
 - **101** if risk is not immediate but the child remains missing
 - Notify any involved social worker, if applicable

7. If a Child Absconds from Site

- Staff must not put themselves or the child at risk
- Do not physically restrain unless necessary to prevent immediate harm and in line with policy
- If staff fear that a child is likely to run out of the school grounds, a swift and urgent check must be made to ensure exit routes are secure – e.g. gates around drop off and pick up time
- Staff must not physically restrain a child who is climbing in an attempt to leave the school premises
- If the child is visible:
 - Follow at a safe distance
 - Attempt verbal reassurance and de-escalation
 - Alert staff using panic button or emergency card
- Inform a senior leader immediately
- Police must be contacted if there is concern for safety

8. Missing at Transition Times or Extended Provision

Procedures apply equally during:

- Breaks and lunchtimes
- Start and end of the school day
- After-school clubs and wraparound care
- Educational visits (following EV procedures)

Senior staff must be informed immediately in all cases.

9. When the Child is Found

- Inform the Headteacher/senior leader immediately
- If police have been contacted, update them without delay
- Ensure the child is safe and appropriately supervised

A safeguarding review must take place:

- Record incident log of concern form
- Speak with child (age appropriate)
- Identify any underlying causes
- Inform parents/carers
- Consider:
 - Risk assessment
 - Behaviour or support plan
 - Safeguarding or Early Help referral

10. Recording and Reporting

All incidents must:

- Be recorded promptly and accurately
- Include timeline of events and actions taken
- Be reviewed by the DSL

Serious incidents may require reporting to:

- Local Authority
- Safeguarding partners

11. Prevention and Risk Reduction

The school will:

- Ensure secure site and supervision
- Identify children at risk of absconding
- Put individual risk assessments in place where needed
- Share relevant information with staff

12. Pupils with Additional Needs

If a child has SEND or other vulnerabilities:

- Individual risk assessments must be in place
- Strategies must be shared with staff
- Behaviour may be linked to unmet needs or distress

13. Post-Incident Review

Following any incident:

- The Headteacher will review circumstances

- Adjustments will be made to prevent recurrence
- Staff training may be updated
- Parents/carers may be invited to a meeting

14. Monitoring and review

Following an event of a child going missing or absconding from school, the relevant procedures will be reviewed to ensure they were effective and amended where necessary.

This policy will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis by the Headteacher and DSL. The next scheduled review date for this policy is June 2028.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all staff and parents.