

Procedure for Vulnerable Students Who Abscond

1. Introduction

The purpose of this procedure is to set out clearly the process that will take place should a Pre 16, vulnerable or student with a high level of need abscond from the College. For the purposes of this procedure, the definition of absconding is to leave a college campus suddenly and without permission during College hours. The procedure is applicable to campuses which have Supported Learning provision, (Broadstairs, Folkestone and Canterbury) and Junior College provisions but there may be students within all colleges to which the procedure would also be applicable; in such cases, the College Principal will determine who is responsible for carrying out the steps defined in this procedure.

Whilst most of the College's campuses have secure perimeter fences, the purpose of these is to minimise opportunities for unauthorised persons to enter with the intention to steal, cause damage or threaten the safety and wellbeing of staff and students. The College does not, and cannot legally, impose deprivation of liberty by keeping students in secure locations and students may leave the premises at any time. However, education providers have a duty of care towards their students which requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that students are safe and remain within the care of the College staff whilst at College and during trips, visits and external activities.

This is particularly pertinent to students with a high level of learning need who may abscond as part of their inherent condition. In addition to high needs learners, it is important to note that no 14-16 learner (direct entry or electively home educated) is permitted to leave site during the college day. Without the necessary support and guidance outside College, these students may be extremely vulnerable. The College will therefore ensure that when such students abscond or attempt to abscond, every reasonable endeavour is made to ensure that the student is located and returns to learning activities within the College.

2. Preventative measures

The College will take the following measures to minimise the instances of students (who are known absconders) absconding:

- Photograph and behaviour support plan for the student who is a known absconder to be discussed with local estates team.
- Individual risk assessments for students to be reviewed and updated in accordance with the student's needs and information shared with all staff who work with the student;
- Suitable and sufficient staff to student ratios;
- Regular checking and head count of students;
- Registers taken within the first 10 minutes of a lesson and any unauthorised absence to be investigated immediately;
- Suitably qualified and experienced staff working with and supervising students who have a tendency to abscond;
- Providing students with stimulating and enjoyable learning activities;

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- Providing learning environments in which students feel comfortable and secure;
- Being vigilant to signs of absconding and taking appropriate and timely action;
- Notification to Safety and Security staff of any students who has a tendency to abscond;
- Timely and appropriate support and signposting for students with mental health issues;
- Having clear and effective communication channels between staff and management to manage any instances of absconding.

3. Procedure

3.1 Where it is known that the student has absconded, and they may be on campus

- Member of staff to immediately alert:
 - Duty Manager/Duty Officer
 - Head of Inclusive Learning/ Leader for Junior College (dependant on students department).

Description of student to be provided, along with photograph and details of what they are wearing.

- Duty Manager/Duty Officer to alert the local estates team who will appoint member of staff to monitor CCTV footage and direct the nearest staff to cover all exit/entry points. Description of student will be provided to staff.
- Department Head or delegated deputy to advise College Principal or designated senior SLT member of incident and contact the parent.
- Duty Manager/Duty Officer to manage systematic search of campus.
- Department Head to provide staff to assist with search of campus.
- Duty Manager/Duty Officer to direct staff who are searching campus. If they are available, two-way radios will be provided to facilitate communication. One member of staff will be assigned to check and cover each campus zone and will remain in the area until advised to stand down.
- Staff will check the student's last known location, known hiding points, calm down areas and areas student may regularly go to if absconding.
- Staff to report back to Duty Manager/Duty Officer who will give regular updates on progress to Facilities/Estates Manager, Head of department, College Principal and/or designated senior SLT member.
- When the student is located, they will be escorted back to their area and settled back into learning activities.
- Staff on search duties and those covering entry and exit points will be instructed to stand down.

3.2 Where it is known that a student has absconded and has left the campus

- Head of department or delegated deputy to notify College Principal and/or designated senior SLT member and Facilities/Estates Manager.
- College Principal to alert Director of External Affairs.
- Facilities/Estates Manager to appoint member of staff to review and download CCTV footage of student leaving campus. Ongoing monitoring of CCTV footage to be undertaken in case student returns to campus.

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- Head of department to contact Police, parent/carer and where required KCC Social Services. Police to be provided with photograph of student, description of what they are wearing, student's date of birth and details of any behavioural matters and inherent conditions which may assist the search.
- Where necessary, Facilities/Estates Manager to set up incident room for Police and other professionals in relevant campus board room.
- Police to conduct external search and maintain contact with Head of department and/or Head of Inclusive Learning. Staff will not participate in the external search unless advised otherwise by the Police.
- Where staff are engaged in external search operations, they may use their personal mobile 'phones to maintain communications. Staff must download or transfer any incident related images and communications to the Head of department who will retain them on OneDrive to help inform post incident analysis. Staff will delete any such data from their personal devices immediately after the data has been downloaded/transferred.
- Head of department to be the communication link for all updates and to keep parent/carer informed of updates unless the Police advise that in the interests of the student's safety and welfare, they should manage and facilitate communications.
- When the student is located by the Police, they will be escorted back to campus and settled back into learning activities or returned to the parent/carer depending on the circumstances.

3.3 Post incident actions

After the incident is resolved and, in all cases, the following steps will be undertaken:

- College Principal/Pre 16 Senior Lead to hold a case review meeting within 24 hours of the incident resolution to identify if any improvements are needed to be made to the process. If this incident occurs immediately before a non-working day, the meeting will be held on the next working day.
- Members of staff engaged in the incident to write an incident report within 24 hours of the incident's resolution. The reports will be collated by the Head department and/or Head of Inclusive Learning to inform the creation of a summary incident report.
- For High Needs absconding cases, summary incident report to be sent to Social Services contact and copy to be kept on student's file.
- Student's risk assessment and behaviour support plan to be updated with details of incident and any further preventative measures that will be taken to mitigate future instances of absconding.

Related policies and procedures

Safeguarding and preventing terrorism and extremism policy

Additional Learning Support policy

Managing Challenging Behaviours policy and Process

Support Plan to Manage Risk Process

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