

Junior College Missing and Absconding Procedure

1. Introduction, purpose and scope:

The purpose of this Procedure is to set out the actions that must be taken when a Junior College student (aged 14-16) goes missing from campus or absconds from College during the College day. Education providers have a duty of care under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance (KCSIE) to take reasonable steps to protect students and promote their welfare. This Procedure applies to all EKC Group campuses providing Junior College provision.

Definition:

Absconding is to leave a college campus suddenly and without permission during college hours.

Missing is when a student whose whereabouts are unknown and who cannot be located following reasonable enquiries

1.1 The purpose of this Procedure is to set out clearly the process that will be followed if a Junior College student, goes missing from campus or absconds from the College. This Procedure applies to campuses with Junior College provisions. In such cases, the College Principal will determine who is responsible for implementing this procedure.

1.2 The College will ensure that every reasonable step is taken to locate the student, protect their welfare, and return them safely to appropriate care and support.

1.3 Repeated incidents of a Junior College student going missing from campus, leaving site without permission, or patterns of absence may indicate a wider safeguarding concern. This may include, but is not limited to, exploitation, neglect, mental health concerns, substance misuse, contextual safeguarding risks, or other vulnerabilities. Such incidents must not be treated solely as behaviour matters and must be considered in line with the Group Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Procedure.

2. Preventative measures

2.1. Whilst most of the Group's campuses have secure perimeter fencing, the purpose of these 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 Group does not have legal powers to physically prevent a student from leaving campus. However, where a student leaves without permission or notification, they will be treated as having absconded and this procedure will be implemented.

The Junior College will take the following measures to minimise the instances of students going missing from campus or absconding:

- The relevant Safeguarding Team will be made aware of students whose risk profile indicates that they may abscond. Relevant risk information will be recorded through approved processes, discussed with the local Estates Team, and shared with appropriate staff. Photographs, support plans, and identified additional needs will be reviewed as appropriate.
- Students identified as being at risk of going missing from campus or absconding will have their individual risk assessments, support plans, communication needs, supervision arrangements and travel or collection arrangements reviewed regularly and updated as required.

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- Staff will remain alert to known triggers or patterns that may increase the risk of a student going missing from campus or absconding, including distress, dysregulation, conflict, timetable changes, transport issues, unmet need, or changes in mental health presentation.
- Safety and Security staff or Duty Manager will be notified of any students who have a known tendency to abscond.
- Individual risk assessments will be reviewed and updated in accordance with the student's needs, and relevant information will be shared with all staff who work with the student.
- Suitable and sufficient staff to student ratios will be provided at all times
- Regular checking and head count of students will take place.
- Registers taken within the first 10 minutes of a lesson and any unauthorised absence to be investigated immediately;
- Staff working with or supervising students who have a tendency to abscond will be appropriately qualified and experienced.
- Providing students with stimulating and enjoyable learning activities in learning environments which are maintained in ways that help students feel comfortable and secure.
- Staff will remain vigilant to signs of absconding and taking appropriate and timely action;
- Timely and appropriate support and signposting for students with mental health needs: Clear and effective communication channels will be maintained to manage and escalate any instances of absconding.

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3. Staff response when a student is missing from campus or absconds

3.1 Where a student is identified as absent without authorisation and there is reason to believe they may have absconded; staff must take immediate and proportionate action in line with safeguarding procedures. The incident must be reported immediately to:

- The Duty Manager/Duty Officer
- The Safeguarding Team / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL, or the Duty Manager if a safeguarding team member is not immediately available
- The Head of Junior College and SLT Lead for Junior College who will liaise with the College Principal.

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3.2 Staff must promptly check the college site, including classrooms, communal areas, toilets, outdoor spaces and other accessible areas.

The Duty Manager/Duty Officer will coordinate the on-site response and ensure relevant staff are directed to appropriate campus locations, including entry and exit points where required.

A Description of the student should be provided to staff, 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 review and then monitor CCTV footage and direct the nearest staff to cover all exit/entry points.

The Department Head or Head of Junior College to advise College Principal or designated Junior College SLT lead member of the incident and contact the parent/carer.

3.3 If, at any stage, there is concern that the student may be at risk of significant harm, self-harm, suicide, exploitation, coercion, abuse, neglect, or any other immediate safeguarding risk, the incident must be

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treated as a safeguarding matter as well as a missing student incident, and action must be taken in line with the Group Safeguarding Procedure without delay

3.4 Duty Manager/Duty Officer to coordinate a systematic search of campus.

- Duty Manager/Duty Officer to direct staff who are searching the 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 standing 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 to enable regular updates on progress to the Estates team, Head of department, College Principal and/or designated Junior College SLT lead.
- 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.

4 Where it is known that a student has left the campus or their whereabouts are unknown.

4.1 The Head of department or Head of Junior College to notify the Safeguarding Team immediately together with the College Principal and/or designated Junior College SLT Lead member and Estates Team. The College Principal to alert Chief Communications Officer.

4.2 The Estates Team will appoint a member of staff to review and download CCTV footage showing the student leaving campus where available.

4.3 Ongoing monitoring of CCTV footage to be undertaken in case student returns to campus.

4.4. The Head of department, in liaison with the Safeguarding Team who will the Police, parent/carer and where required Children's Services or the students allocated social worker. If the student is believed to be at immediate risk of harm, emergency services must be contacted via 999 immediately. In other cases where the student's whereabouts are unknown and the Police are contacted, the Police should be provided with a photograph of the student, a description of what they are wearing, the student's date of birth, details of any health, behavioural or communication needs which may assist the search and parent/carer contact details.

4.5 Where the student is known to be open to Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Youth Justice, CAMHS, or any other relevant external professional or safeguarding agency, the Safeguarding Team will ensure that appropriate information is shared promptly, and follow-up action is coordinated in line with Group safeguarding procedures.

4.6 Where necessary, the Estates Team will set up an incident room for the Police and other professionals in relevant campus board room.

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4.7 Police to conduct external search and maintain contact with Head of department and/or the Junior College SLT lead. Staff must not leave the college site to search for, follow, or recover a student who has absconded. Responsibility for off-site searching and recovery rests with external agencies, such as parents or carers, the Police, or other appropriate professionals. This reflects the need to ensure staff safety, maintain appropriate supervision of other students, and comply with risk and insurance requirements.

4.8. In exceptional cases, any action beyond the college site must only be authorised by the DSL, nominated deputy, or senior leadership, and supported by a clear, recorded risk assessment. Staff must not act independently outside these arrangements.

4.9 Information relating to the incident must be shared on a need-to-know basis, using approved Group systems and communication channels, and in accordance with the Group Safeguarding Procedure and Data Protection Policy. Data protection requirements must not prevent the appropriate sharing of information where this is necessary to safeguard or protect a student from harm.

4.10 Staff must use approved Group communication channels wherever possible. Personal mobile phones must not routinely be used in relation to safeguard incidents. Any exceptional use must be strictly for immediate safety reasons, be agreed by the Safeguarding Team, DSL, or senior manager wherever possible, and be appropriately recorded. Any information or images obtained must be transferred securely in line with Group safeguarding and data protection procedures and must not be retained on personal devices.

4.11 The 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.

4.12 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.

5 Post incident actions

5.1 Following resolution, the following steps will be taken:

- College Principal/ Junior College Senior Lead to hold a case review meeting within 24 hours of the incident being resolved to identify whether any improvements are required to the process.
- If an incident occurs immediately before a non-working day, the meeting will be held on the next working day.
- Members of staff involved in the incident must complete the Microsoft safeguarding form within 24 hours, even where verbal reporting has already taken place.
- Relevant actions, decisions, and follow-up activity must be recorded through approved safeguarding systems and confidential comments in line with Group safeguarding procedures.
- The Safeguarding Team and relevant leaders should review the incident promptly to identify any additional support, referral, contextual safeguarding concerns, or changes required to risk management arrangements.

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- For students with an allocated social worker, high levels of vulnerability, or other cases where external safeguarding agencies are involved, relevant information and follow-up actions will be shared in line with safeguarding procedures and recorded on the student's approved safeguarding record.
- The student's risk assessment and behaviour support plan will be updated with details of the incident and any further preventative measures required to reduce the risk of future absconding.
- Where there have been repeated incidents, high levels of vulnerability, or significant risk concerns, the Safeguarding Team and relevant leaders must review whether further action is required, including changes to supervision arrangements, timetable, provision, reasonable adjustments, support strategies, or referral to external services.
- Post-incident review must also consider whether there are any wider concerns relating to attendance, children absent from education, contextual safeguarding, exploitation, mental health, or other emerging patterns of risk.
- Parents, carers, and relevant professionals should be involved in follow-up planning where appropriate, unless doing so would increase risk to the student or is not in line with safeguarding advice.

Related policies and procedures

Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding Procedure

Additional Learning Support policy

Managing Challenging Behaviours policy and Process

Support Plan to Manage Risk Process

Data Protection Policy

CCTV Procedure

Health and Safety Policy

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Educational Visits / Trips policy or procedure

Any relevant attendance procedure linked to children absent from education or vulnerable learners

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