



BALLYORAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pupil Absconding Policy

December 2018

Vision & Ethos

Our vision states that school should be a 'safe learning environment.' The health, well-being and safety of our pupils while at school is of paramount importance to the Board of Governors and staff of Ballyoran Primary School.

The purpose of this non-statutory document is to set out the procedures to all stakeholders should a child leave the premises without permission. It is closely linked to the school's 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy'.

Preventative Measures

The following steps have been taken to ensure the safety of pupils when in school:

- Risk Assessment in place and reviewed and updated as necessary
- The front doors of the School, Nursery and Community Learning Centre are protected by electronic access controls
- Visitor access control - during school hours all visitors to school must enter by the front door and report to reception, sign the Visitors' Book and get a Visitors' Pass which must be worn at all times
- Parents are not permitted to go past reception
- A security fence is in place around the perimeter of the entire school site, it is regularly checked by the Building Supervisor
- A closed circuit television system operates inside and outside the school premises
- Secure doors and windows
- High levels of supervision both in the classroom and in the playgrounds

Definition

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

Pupils going missing

If a pupil who has been in school and marked as present, goes missing, the following procedures will be followed:

- The Principal or in his absence, the Vice Principal will be informed immediately.
- The Principal will co-ordinate a thorough search of the school building and grounds, using as many staff as possible.
- The class teacher will speak to peers to ascertain when and where he/she was last seen and pass this information on to the searchers.
- If the pupil is not found, gather as many staff as possible to re-search the grounds as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.
- If this is unsuccessful parents and PSNI will be contacted by office staff. Every attempt to contact parents and police should be recorded by office staff.

- The Principal will then make the decision as to whether the search should be extended beyond the school grounds. The decision may also be influenced by staff's knowledge of the child who has absconded.
- Any staff who leave the school grounds should never be on their own and take a mobile phone with them and not put themselves or the child in danger at any point.
- CCTV footage will be looked at if appropriate.
- Once the child has been found, the member(s) of staff will use their professional judgement to inform how they respond to support the child.
- The Principal will brief parents and police, if necessary.
- Upon his/her return into school, and when calm enough to do so, the pupil will meet with a member of the Safeguarding Team, so that reasons for the absconding can be understood. A support plan for the individual may need to be considered along with consequences, in line with the school's Positive Behaviour Management Policy, appropriate for the pupil's needs.
- An Incident Report will be completed by the Principal.

Pupils who Abscond from School, but remain within the School Grounds

- In these circumstances, a pupil will not be pursued by staff or forced back into the school.
- Staff will remain at a safe distance, keeping the child in sight.
- Interventions should only be attempted by staff if the pupil is a danger to themselves or others.
- Any damage to property may be charged to the child's parent(s) / carer(s).
- Staff will also consider the pupil's age, vulnerability and demeanour when considering decisions to be taken.
- Staff will support each other in care and decisions to be made.
- Parents will be contacted if necessary.

Pupils who Abscond from the School Grounds

Where a pupil is seen leaving the school premises without authorisation, the following procedures will be followed:

- Teacher to inform Principal, or in his absence, the Vice Principal immediately.
- Active pursuit (chase) of the pupil will not be considered. This may make the pupil panic possibly putting himself / herself into immediate danger.
- Staff (more than one) will instead try to follow, keeping the pupil in sight and at a safe distance.
- Any staff who leave the school grounds should take a mobile phone with them and not put themselves or the child in danger at any point.
- Consider if there is a member of staff who has a good connection with the pupil, who can support the absconding pupil.

- School office to phone parents and police immediately. Every attempt to contact parents and police should be recorded.
- If found before the Police/Parent arrives, staff will request that the pupil returns to school.
- If the pupil returns to the safety of school, the secretary will contact the police to inform them that they are no longer required. The parent will also be contacted and informed, however they will still be expected to come to school to discuss the incident.
- When the police arrive they will take control of the search from staff.
- Once the child has been found, the member(s) of staff will use their professional judgement to inform how they respond to support the child.
- The Principal will brief parents and police, if necessary.
- Upon his/her return to school, and when calm enough to do so, the pupil will meet with a member of the Safeguarding Team, so that reasons for the absconding can be understood. A support plan for the individual may need to be considered along with consequences, in line with the school's Positive Behaviour Management Policy, appropriate for the pupil's needs.
- An Incident Report will be completed by Principal.

Parents will always be informed if their child absconds from the school.

Staff health and safety as well as that of the child are of paramount importance and staff will do all that is reasonable but will never put themselves at risk.

Record Keeping & Reporting

Incident Reports will be written after any occasion where a pupil has absconded.

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be informed.

After any incident where a child has absconded, the Principal will complete a review of school security including an update of the Risk Assessment.

There will be a discussion at SLT and a report will be given to the Board of Governors at their next meeting.

The Principal will liaise with the EA's Healthy and Safety and Security Officer as and when appropriate.