The Hub Educational Services CIC
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ABSCONDING POLICY

Article 3

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

Article 28

Every child has the right to an education

Implemented	April 2024
Presented by	Vanessa Brooks
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THE HUB EDUCATIONAL SERVICES CIC

ABSCONDING POLICY (Updated 2026)

1. Policy Statement

The Hub Educational Services CIC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every pupil. Absconding — leaving supervision or the site without permission — presents significant risks to a child's safety, wellbeing, and education. This policy sets out clear, legally compliant procedures to prevent absconding and to respond effectively when it occurs. All actions taken by staff must be rooted in the best interests of the child, in line with Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and must reflect the nurturing ethos of The Hub, where behaviour is understood as communication and wellbeing is central to learning.

This policy is informed by Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024–2026), Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), Behaviour in Schools (DfE 2022), Restrictive Intervention Guidance (2026), Children Missing Education statutory guidance, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Independent School Standards, and the procedures of the Leicestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

2. Definitions

Absconding refers to any situation where a pupil leaves the supervision of staff without permission. Internal absconding occurs when a pupil leaves a classroom, building, or designated area but remains on the AP site. External absconding occurs when a pupil leaves the AP grounds or an off-site provision, including transport, educational visits, or curriculum activities such as swimming. Absconding also includes attempts to leave or situations where a pupil goes out of staff sight in a way that increases risk.

3. Principles

The Hub's approach to absconding is grounded in safeguarding, nurture, and proportionality. Staff recognise that absconding may be a sign of distress, dysregulation, unmet need, or a communication of emotional overwhelm. Responses must therefore balance safety with sensitivity, ensuring that pupils are supported rather than punished.

All actions must be reasonable and proportionate to the level of risk. Staff must consider the child's age, SEND needs, vulnerabilities, emotional state, and history. Absconding is treated as a safeguarding incident and may indicate wider concerns such as exploitation, neglect, or emotional harm. Every incident must be recorded and reviewed to ensure learning and improvement.

4. Preventative Measures

4.1 Site Security

The Hub maintains a secure environment to minimise opportunities for absconding. External doors remain locked during the school day, and only authorised staff may unlock them. The perimeter is

checked daily, and visitors follow strict signing-in procedures. Staff remain vigilant to any changes in site layout, building work, or environmental factors that may increase risk.

4.2 Effective Supervision

Supervision levels are determined by a range of factors including age, SEND needs, known flight-risk behaviours, activity type, staffing levels, and the physical environment. Staff ensure that transitions between activities are calm, structured, and supported, as these are common points where absconding may occur.

4.3 Information to Pupils

Expectations around movement, boundaries, and safety are taught explicitly and revisited regularly. Pupils are supported to understand why boundaries exist and how staff keep them safe. Visual supports and clear routines are used where appropriate to help pupils feel secure and confident.

4.4 Individual Risk Assessments

Where there is any foreseeable risk of absconding, an Individual Absconding Risk Assessment (IARA) is completed. High-risk pupils also have a Personal Movement Plan outlining supervision levels, triggers, safe spaces, and agreed strategies. These plans are reviewed after every incident and updated whenever new information emerges.

4.5 SEND and Vulnerability

Pupils with SEND, SEMH needs, trauma histories, impulsivity, or low awareness of danger may require enhanced supervision. Staff consider sensory needs, emotional regulation, communication differences, and attachment-related behaviours when planning support. Additional measures may include increased staffing, controlled transitions, access to safe spaces, and pre-emptive regulation strategies.

4.6 Educational Visits

Educational visits require careful planning to ensure safety. Venue security is assessed in advance, and pupils with a history of absconding receive enhanced supervision. Staff carry mobile phones and emergency contacts, and regular headcounts take place throughout the visit. Transport risk assessments explicitly consider absconding risk.

5. Immediate Actions When a Child Absconds

5.1 General Principles

When a pupil absconds or attempts to abscond, staff must act immediately. They must not chase a pupil if doing so increases risk, but should maintain visual contact where safe. The On-Call DSL or Director must be informed at once, and staff must ensure that remaining pupils continue to be safely supervised.

5.2 Internal Absconding

If a pupil leaves a classroom or building but remains on site, staff maintain safe visual contact and calmly encourage the pupil to return. The On-Call DSL coordinates a search of known locations, calm-down areas, and hiding points. Staff avoid escalating the situation and focus on keeping the pupil in sight and safe.

5.3 External Absconding

If a pupil leaves the site or goes out of sight, the situation becomes high-risk. Staff maintain visual contact if safe and immediately alert the On-Call DSL or Director. A coordinated search begins, and parents/carers are contacted within ten minutes. Police must be contacted immediately if the pupil is high-risk, cannot be located within ten minutes, is near roads or water, has a history of absconding, is under ten, or has SEND needs that increase vulnerability. Staff leaving the site must take a mobile phone and remain in communication with the AP.

6. When the Pupil Is Found

Once the pupil is located, staff ensure they are safe and calm. A Director meets with the pupil to explore the reasons for absconding in a supportive, restorative conversation. Parents/carers are informed, and police are updated if they were involved. An Absconding Incident Report is completed the same day, and all relevant risk assessments and movement plans are updated. The AP considers whether additional support, curriculum adjustments, nurture interventions, or multi-agency involvement are required.

7. Recording and Reporting

Absconding incidents must be recorded on the AP's safeguarding system on the same day. Records must include a detailed timeline, staff actions, risk level, SEND vulnerabilities, location and duration, police involvement, parent communication, pupil voice, and follow-up actions. Absconding may trigger an Early Help referral, a review of an EHCP, a multi-agency meeting, or a safeguarding referral if concerns escalate. Staff must consider whether the incident indicates a risk of the pupil becoming a Child Missing Education (CME).

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Directors and DSLs lead the response to absconding incidents. They coordinate searches, contact police and parents, complete follow-up actions, and ensure accurate recording. Staff are responsible for maintaining safe supervision, following procedures, keeping visual contact where safe, and reporting immediately. Parents and carers are expected to attend follow-up meetings, support risk-reduction strategies, and share relevant information about triggers or vulnerabilities.

9. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation changes, a serious incident occurs, Ofsted or ISS require amendments, or local safeguarding procedures change.