

POLICY

POLICY TYPE

MAT Policy to adopted in full across all schools	
LGC Policy to be reviewed and approved locally	✓



Approval Date:	2026/27 – AUTUMN TERM
Review Date:	2027/28 – AUTUMN TERM

*"Share the Love of God,
every day in everything
we learn, do and say"*

ST PHILOMENA'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ABSCONDING POLICY

Policy Statement

St Philomena's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing a safe, caring and inclusive environment where every child is valued, respected and supported. Our Catholic mission is at the heart of all we do, and we recognise our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of every pupil in our care.

The school recognises that any incident involving a child going missing, absconding or leaving supervision without permission is a serious safeguarding concern requiring an immediate and coordinated response. The priority in all situations is to ensure the child's safety, minimise risk and take appropriate action to support their wellbeing.

This policy applies during the school day, wraparound care, educational visits and any school-led activity.

Definitions

Missing child: A pupil whose whereabouts are unknown and who cannot be accounted for by staff.

Absconding: A pupil intentionally leaving supervision, a classroom, the school site or a school-led activity without permission.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to act immediately if a child is missing or attempts to leave school without permission. Concerns must be reported without delay to the Headteacher OR senior leader.

The Headteacher/DSL is responsible for coordinating the response, assessing risk, liaising with parents/carers and external agencies where required, and ensuring appropriate safeguarding records are maintained.

Staff involved in an incident must follow instructions, support searches where appropriate, maintain supervision of other pupils and record factual information.

Prevention and Risk Reduction

St Philomena's Catholic Primary School works proactively to reduce the risk of absconding through effective supervision, secure site management, accurate registration procedures, safeguarding training, appropriate staffing levels and positive behaviour support.

Where a child is identified as being at increased risk of absconding, the school will put appropriate measures in place, which may include individual risk assessments, increased supervision, pastoral support, trusted adults, SEND support strategies and working with parents/carers and external professionals.

Procedure When a Child is Missing or Absconds

When a child is reported missing, staff will immediately check likely locations including classrooms, toilets, playgrounds, intervention areas and other areas within the school site. The last known location, time seen, clothing, emotional state and any known risks will be established.

The Headteacher, DSL or senior leader will be informed immediately. A coordinated search of the school site will take place while ensuring that other pupils remain safely supervised.

If the child is not found promptly, has left the school site, is considered vulnerable, or there is an immediate risk of harm, the police will be contacted without delay. Parents/carers will be informed as soon as appropriate and kept updated.

All actions, decisions, communication and outcomes will be recorded on the school safeguarding recording system.

When a Child is Found

When a child is located, their immediate safety and wellbeing will be checked. The child will be supported by a trusted adult and, when appropriate, given the opportunity to discuss what happened and why they left.

Following an incident, the school will review the circumstances, consider any safeguarding concerns, update risk assessments or support plans where required, and identify any actions to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Educational Visits and Off-Site Activities

Any missing child incident during an educational visit or school-led activity will be treated as a safeguarding emergency. Staff will follow the same principles, ensuring immediate checks, appropriate supervision of the remaining pupils, contact with school leaders and escalation to emergency services where necessary.

Recording and Review

All absconding and missing child incidents will be recorded in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures. Records will include the incident details, actions taken, decisions made and any follow-up support provided. This policy will be reviewed regularly as part of the school's safeguarding arrangements.