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**Absconding Policy**

**Policy Ref: ARK15v1**

Produced by the Head of Centre, Deputy Head of Centre

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| **Date:** | 16/03/21 | **Date:** | 16/03/21 |

**Record of Changes:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Issue Date** | **Changes** | **Initials** |
| V1 |  | Initial issue | SS |
|  |  |  |  |
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**Date of Next Review:**

July 2022

1. **Definitions**

Throughout this policy document **The Ark Wigan Ltd** is referred to as ‘The Ark’.

1. **Introduction**

This policy is written to guide staff in the event of a student going missing on the premises, or having absconded.

1. **Policy Statement**

The procedures outline the process and procedures for the following key areas:

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* On the Educational Training Centre grounds
* What to do in the case of Absconding

Staff are reminded to read the following policies and practice guidelines in conjunction with this policy:

* Health and Safety Policy
* Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
* Behaviour Policy

1. **On the Educational Training Centre grounds**

A register of students will be completed each morning and afternoon in the Educational Training Centre.

It is the responsibility of the Deputy Head of Centre to be accountable for the whereabouts of every student.

Upon discovering a student is missing on site, an immediate search is to be made of the educational training centre, with all available staff. This search should not exceed ten minutes. If the student is a known absconder this should have been recorded in their individual risk assessment and should include any known haunts for that student.

Staff should then regroup and extend the search to include the educational training centre grounds. This should not exceed a further fifteen minutes.

If at this state the student has not been located, the Deputy Head of Centre, or another senior member of staff on site should:

* Organise all available staff to search the immediate local community. As we are in the centre of Wigan, staff must take potential dangers into account and not put themselves at risk.
* Make a phone call to the commissioning school or organisation, giving a clear overview of the situation.
* Work with the commissioning school or organisation to:

1. Contact the parents/carers of the student who is missing.
2. Ensure that there are adequate staff left in the building to deal with other contingencies.
3. Following the incident, ensure appropriate documents are completed as soon as possible (Safeguarding incident).

* Remain at the educational training centre to co-ordinate the search, answer phone calls and provide any information that is needed to the commissioning school or organisation.
* Arrange a meeting to discuss the circumstances of the incident and the effectiveness of the current procedures. A review must take place of the student’s individual risk assessment.
* Keep all colleagues informed.

1. **Absconding**

A student is considered to have ‘absconded’ if they intentionally/knowingly leave the educational training centre or the immediate area.

If a student absconds then:

* Where possible, a member of staff should follow the student at a safe distant and/or respond in line with the student’s individual risk assessment.
* The Deputy Head of Centre (or a member of senior management on site) at the educational training centre must immediately be informed of the situation, who should then immediately inform the commissioning school or organisation of the situation.
* Where possible, the member of staff following the student should remain in contact with either the Deputy Head of Centre or senior member of staff at the educational training centre via a mobile phone.
* The Deputy Head of Centre (or senior manager on site), if appropriate, allocate further staff members to go and collect the student and return them to the educational training centre.
* The Deputy Head of Centre (or senior manager on site) must work with the commissioning school or organisation to:

1. Keep them informed of the current situation.
2. Contact the parents/carers of the student who has absconded.

If a student absconds and is then deemed to be ‘missing’, procedures will follow those outlined by the commissioning school or organisation.

It is important that following an incident, the issues that have arose are addressed and staff should:

* Review the individual risk assessment for the student involved.
* Where appropriate, talk through the incident with the student involved. Ensure that a record is kept of the discussion held with the student via the safeguarding incident sheet.
* Keep all colleagues informed and discuss the incident in staff meetings and/or supervision meetings.
* Review procedures for the individual every half term to ensure appropriate control measures are in place and that staff are fully informed.
* Work with commissioning schools or organisations to gather as much information as possible about the student to add value to the individual risk assessment.
* Present a review of incidents of absconding to commissioning schools or organisations every term.

1. **Information for Students**

**Q - What happens if you go missing? What is meant by ‘missing’?**

A – You will be considered missing if a member of staff does not know where you are.

**Q – What is meant by ‘absconding’?**

A – You have absconded if you deliberately go away from where you should be without telling a member of staff or without a member of staff giving you permission.

**Q – What will happen if I go missing?**

A – The people looking after you have a responsibility to know where you are and to make sure you are safe. If you are ‘missing’ they will speak to your school, parents etc to see if they can help. If there is concern for your safety, staff will work with your school to help search for any clues as to where you are. Your school or parent/carer may inform the police that you are missing, and they may look for you.

**Q – What will happen if you can’t be found?**

A – A meeting will be held between your school and the Police to plan how ot search for you. Your name, description and a photograph will be given to the Police to help them with their search. Your school should update the Deputy Head of Centre here at The Ark, where appropriate.

**Q – What will happen when you are found?**

A – You will be returned to a safe place and will be asked about the reasons for you going missing. This is to try and find out if anything is troubling you and to see if anyone can help. You do not have to run away to talk to someone. If you want to talk to someone outside of school or the Ark, this can be arranged.

You may also be visited by a Police Officer who will check that you are back. This is called a ‘Safe and Well Check’. You will be able to speak to the Police Officer without any member of staff present if you wish to do so.

**Q – Will anything else happen?**

A – If you are injured or unwell then you will be checked by a doctor or Nurse. Your teacher or keyworker will want to talk to you about going missing. This may be done in school or The Ark. If you have deliberately absconded, then the people responsible for your safety will meet to discuss ways in which such incidents can be prevented by looking at the reasons for your actions.

Remember – you have the right to use a telephone in private. If you are worried about something or just want to talk, the national Childline number is 0800 1111.

1. **Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months but can be revised as needed. The Head of Centre is responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy.