



ABSCONDING

POLICY

1. PURPOSE

To ensure appropriate action is taken in relation to managing a student who runs away from a class, school or a school approved activity.

2. AIMS

- To take immediate steps to establish whether a student has left the school grounds or a school approved activity
- To take all reasonable steps to discharge the “duty of care” that is owed to the student
- To notify the Victoria Police if there is a reasonable concern for the safety of a student or others
- To notify parents/guardians of the student as soon as reasonably possible
- To report the incident to the DET’s Security Services Unit (SSU), as soon as practicable.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

If a staff member reasonably suspects a student has left the class, school grounds or a school-approved activity, such as an excursion or camp, without authorisation, they should immediately notify a member of the school’s Leadership Team or Teacher with Duty of Care. The reasonable steps to be taken will vary and depend on the individual circumstances of the case and the individual student.

In determining what reasonable steps to take, relevant considerations will include:

- location of the school/activity, and its proximity to external dangers e.g. busy roads or railway lines
- the student’s level of intellectual disability that may affect their ability to appreciate the associated risks of their behaviour or actions
- the age of the student
- the student’s prior behaviour or previously exhibited vulnerabilities
- the student’s mental state immediately prior to leaving the school grounds/activity i.e. whether they were highly distressed and whether they indicated an intention to hurt themselves or others
- time that has elapsed since the student has left the school grounds/activity
- whether other students under the care and supervision of school staff can be appropriately supervised whilst appropriate action is taken to manage the student who has run away

Depending on the individual circumstances of the case, reasonable steps to be taken may include:

- Contacting Victoria Police and advise them of the missing student, their age, disability, vulnerabilities or mental state
- Contacting the parents/guardians of the student to advise them that the student has left the school grounds/activity and obtain any additional information that may assist in locating the student
- Searching for the student, particularly if information is available on their potential whereabouts

Geelong East Primary School has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse

- Following the student and maintaining visual contact until the student returns to the school grounds/activity, or is in the company of the police or their parents/guardians
- Making contact with the student and encouraging them to return to the school/activity, go to a safe place, stop the behaviour putting them at risk, or remain with a suitable and responsible adult
- Restraining the student in appropriate circumstances and in accordance with DET's Restraint of Student Policy. e.g where the student is about to step in front of a car or otherwise harm themselves.

After an incident in which a student has run away from the school grounds/activity, school staff should take the following steps:

- Report the incident to the parents/guardians (if this has not already been done)
- Report the incident to the Department's SSU
- Document the incident and the staff response to the incident
- Consider whether it is appropriate to conduct a Student Support Group meeting
- Consider whether it is appropriate to develop or review a student's Positive Behaviour Support Plan.

3. References and Resources

- DET's Restraint of Students Policy
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/restraint.aspx>
- DET's Police Protocols
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/police.aspx>
- HVS Duty of Care Policy
- HVS Accident and Incident Reporting Policy
- Victoria Police Ph: 000
- Department's Security Services Unit (SSU) on Ph: (03) 9589-6266

4. Evaluation

This policy was ratified in August 2019 and will be reviewed as part of the school's four-year review cycle. It can be located on the school website or a copy obtained from the front office.