

Student Absconding Policy – August 26

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Purpose.....	2
Definition of Absconding	2
Prevention and Risk Reduction.....	3
Individual Risk Assessments	3
Responding to an Absconding Incident	4
Immediate Response	4
If the Student Remains on the Site	4
If the Student Leaves the Site	4
Off-Site Activities	5
Safeguarding Considerations	5
Return, Recovery and Review.....	6
Recording and Reporting	6
Annex 1: Absconding Boundaries for Unit 11 Bury Farm Site	8

Introduction

AS2Educate is committed to safeguarding the welfare of every child and young person. We recognise that when a student leaves the provision, or a supervised activity, without permission they may be exposed to significant safeguarding risks including exploitation, criminal activity, road traffic accidents, missing episodes, self-harm or other serious harm.

The safety and welfare of the student is always the primary consideration. Staff will respond promptly, calmly and proportionately, taking account of the individual circumstances, known risks and safeguarding needs of the child, whilst ensuring the continued safety of other students and staff.

AS2Educate adopts a trauma-informed and relationship-based approach to behaviour. We recognise that students who leave supervision without permission are often communicating distress, anxiety, dysregulation or unmet need rather than displaying deliberate non-compliance. Our response therefore seeks to understand and reduce future risk whilst maintaining appropriate safeguarding procedures.

This Policy reflects the principles and requirements of:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- Children Missing Education (DfE);
- Children Act 1989 and 2004;
- Education Act 1996;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; and
- AS2Educate's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Positive Handling Policy and Behaviour Policy.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- safeguard children and young people who leave supervision without permission;
- minimise the likelihood of absconding through effective planning and positive relationships;
- provide clear procedures for staff responding to incidents;
- ensure responses are proportionate, timely and safeguarding focused;
- support students following incidents to reduce future risk;
- ensure accurate recording, reporting and review of all incidents; and
- support compliance with statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

Definition of Absconding

For the purposes of this policy, absconding refers to any occasion where a student leaves the supervision of AS2Educate staff without permission during the school day, educational visits or other supervised activities.

This includes:

- leaving the AS2Educate site without authorisation;
- leaving a supervised activity or educational visit;
- crossing the agreed site boundaries without permission;
- refusing to remain within agreed safe supervision.

Absconding should always be regarded as a potential safeguarding incident until the student's safety has been confirmed.

Prevention and Risk Reduction

AS2Educate believes that prevention is the most effective way to reduce absconding.

Staff will promote safety through:

- positive relationships;
- trauma-informed practice;
- predictable routines;
- consistent boundaries;
- emotional regulation support;
- positive behaviour support;
- effective supervision;
- personalised behaviour strategies;
- appropriate staffing ratios;
- regular communication with families.

Staff should understand each student's:

- known triggers;
- communication needs;
- medical needs;
- sensory needs;
- emotional regulation strategies;
- previous absconding history;
- safeguarding vulnerabilities.

Individual Risk Assessments

Where a student presents a foreseeable risk of leaving supervision without permission, an Individual Risk Assessment will be completed.

Risk assessments will be reviewed:

- following any significant incident;
- following safeguarding concerns;
- following changes to behaviour or medical needs;
- after involvement from external agencies; and
- at least annually.

Parents, carers and relevant professionals will be involved wherever appropriate.

Responding to an Absconding Incident

Immediate Response

Staff should remain calm and immediately undertake a dynamic risk assessment.

Staff will:

1. Confirm that the student has left the supervised area.
2. Conduct a rapid search of the immediate area.
3. Inform the Provision Manager or senior member of staff immediately.
4. Ensure all other students remain safe and supervised.
5. Assess the level of risk, considering:
 - age;
 - vulnerability;
 - medical needs;
 - known behaviours;
 - weather conditions;
 - time of day;
 - known locations;
 - immediate safeguarding concerns.

If the Student Remains on the Site

Staff will:

- continue searching calmly;
- use agreed de-escalation strategies;
- avoid confrontation;
- maintain communication with the student where possible;
- continue dynamic risk assessment.

At AS2Educate, a student will be considered to have absconded if they cross the agreed site boundaries detailed within Annex 1.

If the Student Leaves the Site

Where safe to do so, staff should:

- maintain visual observation from a safe distance where this does not place anyone at risk;
- communicate calmly and encourage the student to return voluntarily;
- avoid confrontation or actions likely to increase the risk;
- only consider physical intervention where it is lawful, necessary and proportionate to prevent immediate harm, in accordance with the AS2Educate Positive Handling Policy;
- notify the Provision Manager immediately;
- inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay;
- inform parents or carers as soon as reasonably practicable unless doing so would place the student at increased risk of harm. In such circumstances, the DSL will determine the

appropriate course of action in consultation with Children's Social Care or the Police where necessary;

- contact the Police where appropriate.

Police should be contacted:

- via **999** where there is an immediate risk to life or serious harm;
- via **101** where the student is missing but there is no immediate emergency.

Staff must never:

- enter private property without permission;
- place themselves or others at unnecessary risk; or
- undertake actions that could escalate the situation or compromise their own safety.

Off-Site Activities

Where a student leaves supervision during an educational visit or other off-site activity, staff will:

- maintain supervision of the remaining students;
- notify the Provision Manager immediately;
- undertake a dynamic risk assessment;
- request assistance from venue staff where appropriate;
- contact parents and the police where necessary;
- maintain communication between staff until the student is located safely.

Where commissioned transport providers, activity providers or partner organisations are involved, AS2Educate will maintain communication with those responsible for the activity to support the safe recovery of the pupil and ensure safeguarding responsibilities are coordinated appropriately.

Safeguarding Considerations

Every absconding incident will be treated as a safeguarding incident. Staff and the DSL will consider whether the incident may indicate wider safeguarding concerns, including:

- child criminal exploitation;
- child sexual exploitation;
- county lines;
- grooming;
- trafficking;
- neglect;
- domestic abuse;
- self-harm;
- suicidal ideation;
- mental health concerns;
- substance misuse;
- children missing education.
- unmet SEND or medical needs.

Where concerns are identified, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed without delay.

Where physical intervention becomes necessary to prevent immediate harm during an absconding incident, staff must act in accordance with the AS2Educate Positive Handling Policy. Restrictive physical intervention must only be used where lawful, necessary, reasonable and proportionate, and must cease as soon as the immediate risk has reduced.

Return, Recovery and Review

When a student returns, their immediate welfare will be prioritised.

A senior member of staff will:

- check the student's physical and emotional wellbeing;
- seek medical attention where required;
- provide emotional reassurance;
- undertake a restorative conversation when appropriate;
- explore the reasons for leaving;
- consider the student's views;
- identify support required.

Parents or carers will normally be informed of the outcome as soon as reasonably practicable. Where there are safeguarding concerns indicating that informing parents may place the pupil at increased risk of harm, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will determine the appropriate course of action in consultation with Children's Social Care and/or the Police where necessary.

Recording and Reporting

Every incident must be recorded as soon as practicable and before the end of the working day wherever possible.

Records will include:

- date, time and location;
- staff involved;
- chronology of events;
- searches undertaken;
- actions taken;
- agencies contacted;
- police incident reference (where applicable);
- parent/carer communication;
- time the student was located;
- welfare assessment;
- safeguarding concerns identified;
- follow-up actions.

The Provision Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead will review every incident to:

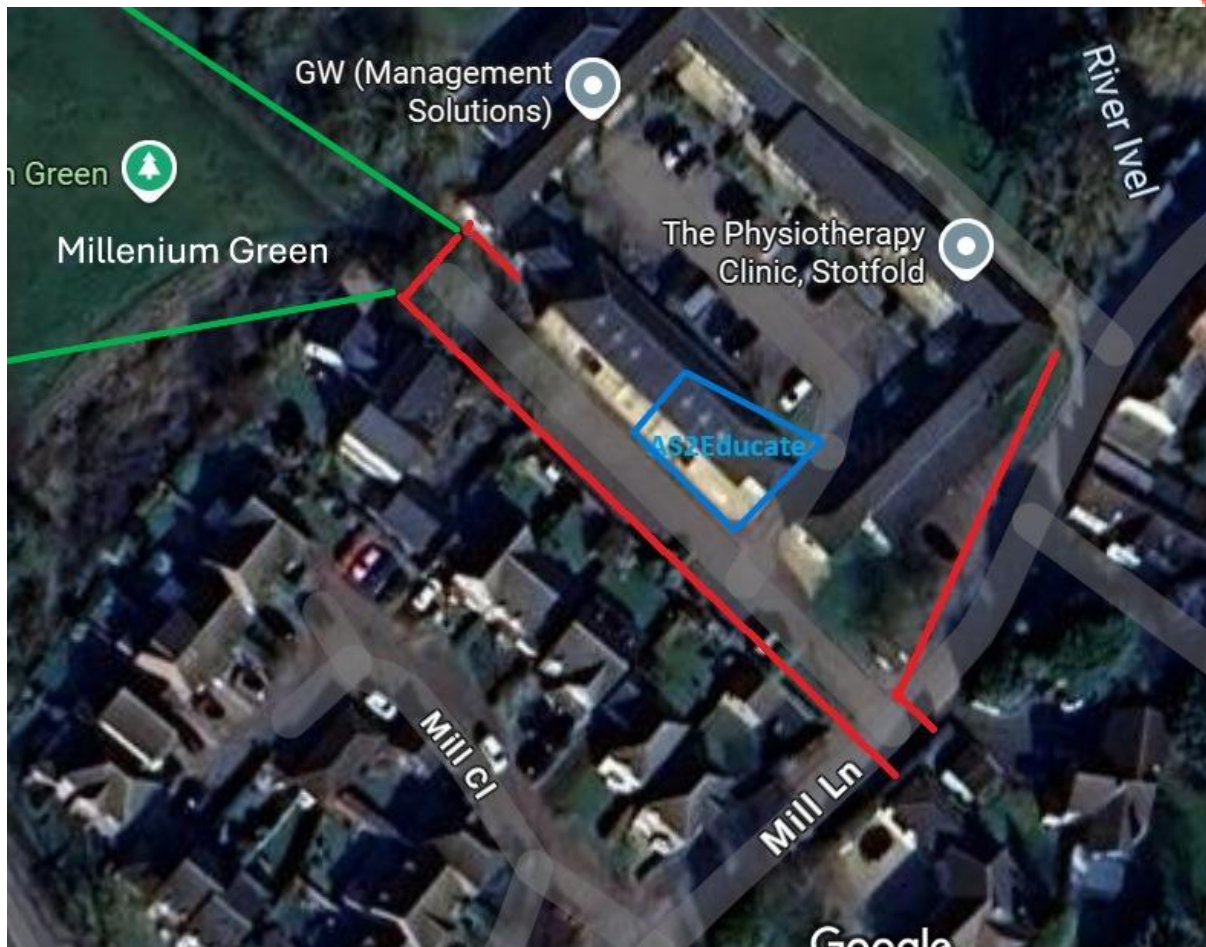
- identify lessons learned;
- consider whether additional safeguarding action is required;
- identify patterns of repeated absconding or emerging risks;

- determine whether Individual Risk Assessments, Behaviour Support Plans or safeguarding plans require amendment;
- consider whether additional support or intervention is required for the pupil;
- identify any organisational learning or changes to practice.

Where appropriate, incidents will also be shared with the placing Local Authority, social worker, Virtual School Head or other commissioning organisation in accordance with safeguarding responsibilities, contractual arrangements and information sharing procedures.

Annex 1: Absconding Boundaries for Unit 11 Bury Farm Site

Any student who crosses the following boundary lines without permission will be considered to have absconded:



- Beyond the red outlined car park border and turning left or right onto Mill Lane
- Past the red lined border onto Millenium Green

Reviewed by:	Richard Fihosy and Claire Ames
Policy Commencement Date:	02.10.2021
Ratified by:	Provision Manager and DSL
Review:	Annual
Next Review:	Autumn Term 2026
Review Date 08.03.24 Richard Fihosy	Page and Sections Page 1 - Former Director's name was deleted.
Aug 25	Full Policy Review