

Students Running Away From School Policy/Guidelines



Purpose of this policy: To ensure that St Patrick's PS School staff take appropriate action in relation to managing a pupil who runs away from school or a school approved activity.

Staff must:

- take immediate steps to establish whether the student has left the school grounds or a school approved activity
- take all reasonable steps to discharge the duty of care that is owed to the student
- notify the PSNI if there is a reasonable concern for the safety of the student or others
- notify the parent, guardian or carer of the student as soon as reasonably possible

If a staff member reasonably suspects that a student has left the school grounds or a school-approved activity, such as an excursion or camp, without authorisation, they should immediately notify a member of the leadership team so that all reasonable steps can be taken to discharge the duty of care owed to that student. 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 include the following:

- the location of the school or the school approved activity and its proximity to external dangers such as busy roads, rivers or railway lines
- **whether the student has a disability that may affect their ability to appreciate the risk associated with their behaviour and actions**
- the age of the student
- the student's prior behaviour or previously exhibited vulnerabilities, difficulties or troubles
- the student's mental state immediately prior to leaving the school grounds or the school approved activity i.e. whether they were highly distressed, whether they were drug or alcohol affected, whether they had indicated an intention to hurt themselves or others
- the time that has elapsed since the student has left the school grounds or school approved activity

- whether other students who are under the care and supervision of the school staff can be appropriately supervised whilst appropriate action is taken to manage the student who has run away from school or the school approved activity.

Depending on the individual circumstances of the case, the reasonable steps to be taken may include **one or more** of the following:

- contacting the PSNI to advise them of the missing student and the particular age, disability, vulnerabilities, or mental state of the individual student
- contacting the parent, guardian or carer of the student to advise them that the student has left the school grounds or school-approved activity and to obtain any additional information and assistance that may assist in locating the student
- searching for the student, particularly if there is information available as to the student's potential whereabouts
- following the student and maintaining visual contact until the student returns to school or school-approved activity, or is in the company of the police or their parent, guardian or carer
- making contact with the student and encouraging them to return to the school grounds or the school approved activity, go to a safe place, stop the behaviour that is putting them at risk, or remain in the company of a suitable and responsible adult
- restraining the student in appropriate circumstances and in accordance with the Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling policy. For example, where the student is about to step in front of a car or otherwise seriously harm themselves.

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

- Report the incident to the parent, guardian or carer (if this has not already been done)
- 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 a Behaviour Support Plan.
- Consider completing a Risk Assessment/Risk Management Plan.

REVIEWED BY BOG - 21ST NOVEMBER 2019

NEXT REVIEW - NOVEMBER 2021