

ABSCONDING FROM SCHOOL POLICY

RATIONAL

River Gum Primary School works actively to provide a secure, safe environment, a school where students want to come to enjoy learning with others as part of a caring and inclusive community. We recognise that it is unlikely that a student will try to abscond from our school, but these procedures are in place to ensure we are ready to deal with this eventuality should it occur.

PURPOSE

- To ensure River Gum Primary School takes appropriate action in relation to managing a student who runs away from school or a school approved activity.
- To ensure River Gum Primary School complies with DET enrolment policy and guidelines.
- To ensure River Gum Primary School discharges its duty of care to students.
- To ensure River Gum Primary School has strategies in place to support Child Safe Standards 2 & 6.

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 and a decision will **be made by a member of the leadership team (or appropriate delegate)**:

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

- The location of River Gum Primary School or River Gum Primary School approved activity and its proximity to external dangers such as busy roads 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 River Gum Primary School grounds or River Gum Primary 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 River Gum Primary School grounds or school approved activity.
- Whether other students who are under the care and supervision of River Gum Primary School staff can be appropriately supervised whilst appropriate action is taken to manage the student who has run away from school or River Gum Primary 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 Victoria Police 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 River Gum Primary 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 River Gum Primary School grounds or River Gum Primary 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 Restraint of Student policy. For example, where the student is about to step in front of a car or otherwise harm themselves.

IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION A: If a student absconds from the classroom the following procedures apply:

1. One staff member is to follow the student and keep a close watch (and if possible to take a mobile phone with them). The other staff member(s) present will supervise the other students present, and ensure their Team Leader/Leadership Team alerted via phone.
2. If the child absconds when there is only one staff member present, she/he must stay with the class and alert their Team Leader/ Leadership Team.
3. The Leadership Team (or nominee) will then request other staff to help search River Gum Primary School grounds and/or contact parents/carers (when appropriate). In



these circumstances, school staff will not pursue a student or force him/her back into River Gum Primary School building.

4. School staff will use their judgement, knowledge of the student and assessment of the student's safety in deciding what to do. This will include taking into account the student's age and vulnerability. The demeanour of the student will also need to be taken into account. If the student is upset or angry, care should be taken in approaching the child. The size of the student will also be taken into account.
5. In all cases, staff should not place themselves in situations of potential danger of injury.
6. Once a student has been found, the Leadership Team, in consultation with the student's teacher/team leader, will use their professional judgement as to outline the response towards the student and the support the student will need in the future.
7. The Leadership Team/ Team Leader/ Classroom Teacher will brief parents, the police, and ensure the appropriate documenting of the incident occurs.

SECTION B: Where a student attempts or is seen to be leaving school premises without authorisation the following procedure should be followed:

1. A member of staff will alert Leadership Team; this lead person (or their nominee) will direct the course of action.
2. A member of staff who knows the student well and has a good relationship with the student will follow the student to the perimeter fence, exit or gate and will try to persuade the student to stay in River Gum Primary School. As active pursuit may encourage a child to leave the site and may also cause the student to panic; possibly putting the student at risk by running onto a road; staff will not chase but will try to keep the student in sight at a distance.
3. The Leadership Team may request additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to enable contact with River Gum Primary School.
4. The Leadership Team will contact the student's parents/carers. The call or attempted calls will be documented. When appropriate, a member of the administration (school office) team will also call the police to log the incident and make a log of this call, and also, when appropriate, contact the Department's Security Services Unit.
5. If the searching staff member loses sight of the student, she/he must contact River Gum Primary School office giving details of their current location and the clothes that the student is wearing.
6. If the student has left the immediate vicinity of River Gum Primary School grounds and is no longer visible then the Leadership Team will make a decision as to how to take matters further, which will take into account the age of the student, the nature of the incident which led to the student absconding, the student's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes. As noted in point 5, the police will be notified, and their involvement requested if required.



7. If the student returns of their own volition, the parents/carers, police and the Department's Security Services will be informed.
8. Once a student has been found, the Leadership Team, in consultation with the student's teacher/ team leader, will use their professional judgement as to outline the response towards the student and the support the student will need in the future.
9. The Leadership Team will brief parents/carers, the police, and ensure the appropriate documenting of the incident occurs.

MONITORING

- Each incident will be monitored and evaluated.
- In all circumstances, once the student has been located, an incident report needs to be recorded, and consideration given to the holding of a Student Support Meeting (SSG) and the creation or revision of an individual Behaviour Support Plan (including the development of individual risk assessments).

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)
- Report the incident to the Department's Security Services Unit Ph:1800 126 126
- 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/ revise a Behaviour Support Plan.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of River Gum Primary School's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (no current DET A-Z Index reference).

REFERENCE

- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007*
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/runningaway.aspx>
- Child Safe Standards
- Duty of Care



REVIEW CYCLE

PREPARED BY	ROBYN TRZECIAK
REVIEWED IN	JUNE 2020
REVIEWED BY STAFF	JUNE 2020
REVIEWED BY C.C	N/A
REVIEWED & RATIFIED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL	JUNE 2020
NEXT REVIEW DATE	JUNE 2023

