

Learn with Confidence

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[Learnwithconfidence.co.uk](https://www.learnwithconfidence.co.uk)

Missing Child Policy

Version 1.2

1. Policy Statement

Learn with Confidence (LwC) is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all students, both on-site and during off-site activities. This Missing Child Policy outlines the procedures to follow if a child goes missing or absconds, ensuring a prompt, coordinated response that prioritises safety and minimises harm.

LwC recognises that some students — particularly those with SEND, EBSA, PDA profiles, trauma histories, or SEMH needs — may be at increased risk of absconding. This policy includes tailored measures to support these learners.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Off-Site Visit Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Mental Health Policy
- Positive Relationship (Behaviour) Policy

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- *Ensure the safety and wellbeing of students by responding swiftly and effectively to incidents where a child goes missing.*
- Provide clear procedures for staff to follow on-site and off-site.
- Comply with safeguarding legislation, WSCC Missing Child procedures, and CME (Children Missing Education) requirements.
- Work collaboratively with parents, carers, police, and external agencies.
- Reduce the likelihood of absconding through proactive support and personalised understanding of each learner.

3. Relevant Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by:

- Children Act 1989
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- WSCC Missing Child & CME Procedures
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

4. Roles and Responsibilities

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4.1 Leadership Team

The LwC Leadership Team will:

- Ensure all staff are trained in missing-child procedures.
- Review this policy annually.
- Liaise with police, WSCC, and external agencies when required.
- Ensure personalised information is gathered for learners at higher risk of absconding.

4.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL (or Deputy DSL) must:

- Be notified **immediately** when a child is missing.
- Lead the safeguarding response.
- Decide when police must be contacted based on risk.
- Record all actions in the safeguarding system.
- Liaise with parents, carers, and external agencies.
- Ensure CME procedures are followed if absconding becomes a pattern.

4.3 Staff

All staff must:

- Follow the procedures in this policy.
- Use Knowing and Understanding Me information to support learners.
- Supervise students in line with the Attendance and Off-Site Visit Policies.
- Report safeguarding concerns to the DSL immediately.
- Support calm, trauma-informed responses to absconding.

4.4 Parents and Carers

Parents/carers must:

- Provide up-to-date contact details.
- Inform LwC of any known absconding risk or behavioural concerns.
- Be available during sessions and off-site visits.

4.5 Students

Students must:

- Follow staff instructions.
- Adhere to expectations in the Positive Relationship (Behaviour) Policy.

5. Procedures for Managing a Missing Child Incident

5.1 Immediate Safeguarding Response

A missing child is a **safeguarding incident**.

Staff must:

- Notify the DSL immediately.
- Begin a coordinated search.
- Keep other students safe and supervised.
- Record time-stamped actions.

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5.2 Risk-Based Police Notification

Police must be contacted **immediately** if:

- The child is under 10
- The child has SEND, EBSA, PDA, trauma, or SEMH vulnerabilities
- The child is at risk of exploitation, self-harm, or danger
- The child is near roads, water, or unsafe environments
- The child has a history of absconding
- The child is missing during an off-site visit
- Staff have any reason to believe the child is unsafe

For **low-risk absconding**, staff may conduct a short search (maximum 10 minutes) before escalating.

5.3 If a Child Goes Missing from the LwC Centre

Step 1: Immediate Search

Staff conduct a quick, thorough search of:

- All rooms
- Toilets
- Corridors
- Outdoor areas
- Nearby safe locations

Step 2: Notify DSL

DSL leads safeguarding response.

Step 3: Contact Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are informed promptly.

Step 4: Police Notification

Police contacted immediately if risk is high. For low-risk cases, escalate after 10 minutes.

Step 5: Documentation

Record the incident in the safeguarding log, including:

- Time child noticed missing
- Actions taken
- Staff involved
- Police reference number
- Parent/carers communication

5.4 If a Child Goes Missing During an Off-Site Visit

Step 1: Stop the Activity

Take an immediate roll call.

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Step 2: Search

One staff member searches; others supervise the group.

Step 3: Notify Venue Staff

Venue security or management must be informed.

Step 4: Notify DSL and Parents

Immediately.

Step 5: Police Notification

Police contacted immediately if risk is high. Otherwise escalate after 10 minutes.

Step 6: Return Group to LwC

If safe, remaining students return to the centre.

Step 7: Documentation

Full safeguarding report submitted.

6. Knowing and Understanding Me – Identifying Learners at Risk of Absconding

Learn with Confidence does not use traditional "risk assessments" for absconding. Instead, every learner completes a **Knowing and Understanding Me** form when they join the provision. This document captures key information about the learner's needs, behaviours, triggers, communication preferences, sensory profile, and any factors that may increase the likelihood of absconding.

Staff work directly with families, commissioning schools, and the learner to gather further information. This ongoing dialogue ensures that the Knowing and Understanding Me form remains accurate, up to date, and reflective of the learner's current needs. All relevant information is also added to the learner's **Learning Record**, which provides a holistic overview of their support needs and is shared with staff and external agencies (e.g., schools, the Local Authority) when appropriate.

For learners who may be at higher risk of absconding — including those with SEND, EBSA, PDA profiles, trauma histories, anxiety, or previous incidents — the Knowing and Understanding Me form will include:

- Situations, environments, or triggers that may increase flight risk
- Strategies that help the learner feel safe, regulated, and supported
- Supervision considerations
- Calm-response approaches tailored to the learner
- Communication preferences
- Any multi-agency involvement relevant to safety planning

This information guides staff in providing consistent, trauma-informed support and ensures that preventative measures are in place. The Knowing and Understanding Me form and Learning

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Records are reviewed regularly and updated whenever new information is shared by the learner, family, or external professionals.

7. Knowing and Understanding Me – Absconding Indicators

The **Knowing and Understanding Me** form is the primary tool used at Learn with Confidence to identify learners who may be at increased risk of absconding. It captures:

- Personal history, strengths, and interests
- Communication preferences
- Sensory profile and environmental needs
- Emotional regulation strategies
- Triggers, stressors, and situations that may increase anxiety or dysregulation
- Any previous incidents of absconding or attempts to leave safe spaces
- Relevant SEND, EBSA, PDA, trauma-related or SEMH information
- Multi-agency involvement

Absconding Indicators

Indicators that may suggest a learner is at higher risk include:

- Becoming overwhelmed in busy or unpredictable environments
- High anxiety during transitions, arrival, or departure
- History of leaving classrooms, homes, or school settings
- PDA-related avoidance or flight responses
- Trauma-related triggers leading to withdrawal
- Leaving to self-soothe or regulate
- Difficulty communicating distress verbally
- Sensory needs causing movement away from stimuli
- Previous attempts to leave the building or off-site location

How Staff Use This Information

Staff use Knowing and Understanding Me information to:

- Plan supervision
- Reduce environmental triggers
- Position staff appropriately
- Support safe arrival/departure
- Use calm, trauma-informed responses
- Communicate effectively during distress
- Ensure consistent practice across all units

Information is shared with staff, commissioning schools, the LA, and external professionals where appropriate.

8. Preventative Measures

- Clear behaviour expectations
- Mental health and SEND support
- Staff training
- Enhanced supervision for high-risk learners

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- Trauma-informed practice

9. Return-From-Absconding Procedure

When a child is found:

- Offer reassurance and calm support
- Avoid blame
- DSL conducts a return conversation
- Update Knowing and Understanding Me and Learning Record
- Inform parents/carers
- Consider multi-agency involvement
- Support staff and learners involved

10. Children Missing Education (CME)

Repeated absconding or prolonged absence may indicate a child is at risk.

LwC will:

- Follow WSCC CME procedures
- Notify the commissioning school or LA immediately
- Work with external agencies to ensure the child's safety
- Record all actions in the safeguarding system

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation changes
- Safeguarding guidance changes
- An incident identifies a need for improvement

All missing-child incidents will inform future updates.

Version Control			
Version No.	Date	Author	Notes
1.0	15 th October 2024	K Perry	Initial Draft
1.1	01.09.2025	KP	
1.2	5.9.26	KP	Updated