

Nathalia Primary School Policy

Students Absconding or Going Missing from School

Policy

This policy sets out the requirements for schools in the event of a student running away, or going missing from school or a school approved activity.

Summary

If a school staff member reasonably suspects that a student has left the school grounds or a school-approved activity, or has otherwise gone missing, schools must:

- take immediate steps to establish whether the student has left the school grounds or the school approved activity
- take all reasonable steps (which will vary depending on the circumstances of the case and the individual student) to discharge the duty of care that is owed to the student
- notify Victoria Police if there is a reasonable concern for the safety of the student or others
- notify the parent or carer of the student as soon as reasonably possible
- report the incident to the Department's Incident Support and Operations Centre on [1800 126 126](tel:1800126126), as soon as practicable, including to access place-based supports

Details

Schools must take immediate appropriate action in the event of a student absconding or going missing from school or a school approved activity.

In determining what reasonable steps to take, schools should consider the following:

- the location of the school or the school approved activity and its proximity to external dangers such as busy roads
- the student's age, vulnerability (e.g. a disability or medical condition), and mental state immediately prior to leaving the school grounds or the school approved activity, i.e. whether they were highly distressed, drug or alcohol affected
- the appropriate supervision of other students, whilst action is taken to ascertain and/or establish the safety of the missing or absconding student

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 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 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 Department's policy [Restraint and Seclusion](#) — for example, where the student is about to step in front of a car or otherwise harm themselves

After the incident, once the student returns to school, staff should take the following steps:

- report the incident to the parent or carer (if this has not already been done)
- report the incident to the Department's Incident Support and Operations Centre on 1800 126 126, including to access place-based supports
- document the incident and the staff response to the incident
- if there is a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect, take appropriate action in accordance with the [PROTECT](#) protocol
- consider whether it is appropriate to
 - conduct a Student Support Group meeting
 - develop a Behaviour Support Plan
- contact the student and encourage them to make positive choices regarding their behaviour, if appropriate

Related policies

- [PROTECT protocol](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)

Relevant legislation

- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 \(Vic\)](#)