



## Missing Persons policy

### 3.1 MISSING PERSONS

A missing person is defined as:

*'Anyone whose whereabouts are unknown and the circumstances of the disappearance presents a risk of harm to the missing person or any other person'.*

#### Our Code of Behaviour states

**'Students must have permission from the school authorities before they leave the school. Students are expected to remain in bounds and their whereabouts known to staff at all times'.**

#### Purpose of this policy

To ensure that staff in Coláiste Abbáin take appropriate action in relation to managing a student who goes missing from school or a school approved activity.

#### Policy

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 parent, guardian or carer of the student as soon as reasonably possible.
- notify the community guards if there is a reasonable concern for the safety of the student or others

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 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:**

1. Searching for the student, particularly if there is information available as to the student's potential whereabouts.
2. As soon as is practicable phoning 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.
3. If necessary contact the community guards to advise them of the missing student and the particular age, disability, vulnerabilities, or mental state of the individual student.
4. 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.
5. 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.

**After an incident in which a student went missing on 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.
- Principal / Deputy Principal will consider whether it is appropriate to refer the student to the Student Support Team or impose a sanction.
- Hold a meeting with student and parents/ guardians on their return to school after imposed sanction.
- All incidents will be brought to the attention of the Board of Management.

### **How do you report a missing person?**

To report a missing person in the case of emergency, contact any Garda Station and provide as much relevant information as possible including:

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Height
- Build
- Hair colour
- Date person was last seen
- Where person was last seen
- What person was wearing when last seen
- Any other relevant personal details or information
- A recently taken photograph if available

Ratified by the Board of management on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018