

RUNNING AWAY FROM SCHOOL POLICY

Rationale

- Schools 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 Victoria Police 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
 - report the incident to the Department's Security Services Unit on (03) 9589-6266, as soon as practicable.
- 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:
 - 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 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 Restraint of Student policy. For example, where the student is about to step in front of a car or otherwise harm themselves.

Purpose

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

Implementation

- This 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 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.
- Depending on the circumstances, specific action that may be appropriate includes:
 - If two staff members are present, one will remain with the class or group and the other to follow the student. If possible take a mobile phone.
 - If the staff member can make contact with the student, the student will be encouraged to calm down, return to class, talk to a trusted adult.
 - Advise the Principal/Assistant Principal who will arrange for a search of the school grounds and buildings.
 - 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. In all cases, staff should not place themselves in situations of potential danger of injury.
 - If the student is seen to leave the school grounds, staff will not pursue the student. In these circumstances, the Principal/Assistant Principal will contact the parent/carer or emergency contact person or failing this, the police.
 - A decision will be made about the point at which the police are notified.
- After an incident in which a student has run away from the school grounds or school-approved activity, the Principal/Assistant Principal will take the following action:
 - report the incident to the parent/carer (if this has not already been done)
 - report the incident to the Department's Security Services Unit
 - 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
- Please refer also to the school's Duty of Care Policy and the Emergency & Incident Reporting Policy.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update early July 2017).

<u>Ratification Date</u>	<u>Review Date</u>	<u>Policy Number</u>	<u>Version Number</u>	<u>Date Produced</u>
April 2018	2021	100	1	September 2017

Reference:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/runningaway.aspx