

Physis- a Greek word meaning the natural energy for growth, change and development.



Absence Without Authority 2017



**Physis Heathgates
Academy**

Physis Quantum is a specialist provider of exciting and innovative services to
Children and Young People in educational settings.

Absence Without Authority Policy 2017

1. Introduction
2. Defining Absence Without Authority
3. Guidance for Staff
4. Balancing the Needs of Children and the Community

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy document is intended only for the use of the employees of Physis Quantum and should be treated as confidential.

1.2 Distribution outside of Physis Quantum should only occur with the written consent of the CEO.

1.3 All Physis Quantum employees are expected to read this policy and their understanding of this policy will be assessed during the Induction Process, regularly during Supervision, and during mandatory training events.

1.4 Employees will be expected to abide by and work within this policy framework at all times, both during and after their employment, as stipulated in their Contract of Employment.

1.5 This policy was last revised on 31.01.17 and it will be reviewed bi-annually and/or in accordance with changes in company structure, relevant legislation and guidance.

Due to be Reviewed January 2019

2. Defining Absence without Authority

2.1 This procedure is concerned with the protection of the children and young people at Physis Heathgates Academy

2.2 'Absence Without Authority' in this instance is used to describe a child or young person placed at **Physis Heathgates Academy** who has left the property - or activity away from the property - without the knowledge or express permission of those responsible for their education, care and protection.

2.3 All children and young people placed at **Physis Heathgates Academy** should be considered as both vulnerable and as presenting a potential risk to themselves and / or others if they abscond. – unless it has been clearly established and recorded otherwise following an approved and agreed assessment process.

2.4 Our response as an organisation to unauthorised absences should always be considered, professional, and co-ordinated, that is:

Searching for the child or young person who has gone missing.

Reporting the absence, in a timely and agreed manner, to the police, parents, social workers and others as agreed.

Taking appropriate action to obtain information concerning the whereabouts of that child or young person.

Taking appropriate action to ensure the safety of that child or young person. Returning the child or young person to **Physis Heathgates Academy**

Responding to the individual needs of the child or young person as agreed in the Care and Placement Plan.

2.5 Statutory Guidance on **Children who Runaway and go Missing (2009)** highlights the research findings into why children and young people runaway from care settings. This includes running away from a difficult situation such as abuse, bullying or running to dangerous situations such as sexual exploitation and abuse. It is therefore imperative to see beyond the immediate behaviour and to explore the reasons why the child or young person is absent from **Physis Heathgates Academy** without authority in order to develop a proactive response to remedy the situation.

2.6 As a general rule children and young people will must not be sanctioned for being absent without authority.

2.7 When a child or young person returns to **Physis Heathgates Academy** it is important that they are able to talk to someone about why they went missing. This must be facilitated in a way that does not pre-judge the reasons - and in certain circumstances - may need to be facilitated by someone who is independent from the staff team, for example, the child or young person's social worker.

2.8 Following these discussions the child or young person's Care Plan and Placement Plan may need to be amended.

2.9 **Physis Quantum** will undertake discussion with the Placing Authority to identify and agree what action should be taken to prevent the child or young person going missing in future.

2.10 In situations where it is considered likely that a child or young person is likely to continue to go missing from **Physis Heathgates Academy**, we are under a duty to ensure that any agreed action and / or monitoring to attempt to prevent further unauthorised absences is in accordance with both:

- the permitted measures described in our **Behaviour Management Policy**
- and within the scope of the Statement of Purpose for **Physis Heathgates Academy** .

2.11 We are not a secure unit and cannot therefore lock doors on a regular and consistent basis as a means of preventing children and young people leaving **Physis Heathgates Academy** without permission.

2.12 Any safeguarding issues that come to light in relation to an unauthorised absence will be immediately reported in line with the **Physis Quantum Child Protection Policy**.

2.13 A written record will be made of all incidents in regard to the circumstances, and actions taken, that involve a child or young people being absent without authority from **Physis Heathgates Academy**.

2.14 This record be kept in the child or young person's Daily Living File.

2.15 When a sanction is deemed the appropriate response to a child or young

person being absent without authority from **Physis Heathgates Academy**, the sanction will be within the permitted measures available to staff, as detailed in **Physis**

Quantum's policy relating to Behaviour Management Policy.

2.16 If a member of the staff team attempts to prevent a child or young person from leaving **Physis Heathgates Academy** they must not exceed the measures detailed in **Physis Quantum's Behaviour Management Policy**.

2.17 In a situation that a child or young person goes missing from **Physis Heathgates Academy** - and alleges they have suffered abuse whilst at **Physis Quantum** – an immediate referral will be made to the Shropshire Children Safeguarding Board - in line with the measures detailed in **Physis Quantum's** policy relating to Child Protection.

2.18 The Project Manager/ Head Teacher will operate and regularly review a system to monitor the attendance of children and young people at school.

2.19 Children and young people who attend the **Physis Heathgates Academy** are subject to monitoring systems built-in to the current care practices at **Heathgates Farm and Chapel House**.

2.20 Children and young people placed at **Physis Heathgates Academy** who attend mainstream education – or any other educational provision – will be subject to a monitoring system devised specifically in relation to this arrangement and in accordance with the current care plan of the individual child or young person and in consultation with school concerned.

3. Balancing the needs of Children, Young People at Physis Heathgates Academy and the wider community

3.1 Children and young people placed at **Physis Heathgates Academy** – like all other children and young people in our society - have a right to experience a childhood free of stigma and abuse. This remains true even when the children and young people we support have presented earlier episodes of inappropriate / harmful inter-personal behaviours.

3.2 Securing the opportunity for children and young people to experience the specialist interventions, intensive support and high quality resources we deliver at **Physis Heathgates Academy** - to achieve these essential developmental milestones – and maximising the chances of re-integration into an offence-free life as productive members of the community - is frequently one of the primary reasons that children and young are placed with **Physis Quantum**.

3.3 The wider community, however, also has the right to live free from harassment and criminal offence.

3.4 Balancing these rights and responsibilities is taken very seriously by **Physis Quantum** – and not least in relation to our commitment to establishing Child Protection and Safeguarding as a fundamental bedrock of our practice, that is:

- A thorough risk assessment is completed prior to a child or young person being admitted to **Physis**.
- The history of absconson is carefully factored into this assessment.
- If a child or young person presents a high risk of absconding it is possible that they will not be admitted to **Physis** unless other positive factors clearly outweigh this risk.
- Children and young people who are settled in their placement, and actively engage with the therapeutic programme, usually pose a much lower level of risk to the community.
- Competent, well trained and vigilant staff reduce this level of risk yet further.

3.5 If a child or young person does abscond from **Physis Heathgates Academy**, staff

will carefully consider the risk presented to the community, that is:

- The exact nature of the child or young person's offending history?

- Whether the child or young person has had recent opportunity to engage with those who are vulnerable and / or on a regular basis?
- Currently and / or recent events in the child or young person's life?

3.6 In situations in which a child or young person placed with **Physis Heathgates Academy** has been assessed as posing a significant threat to themselves and others it may be advisable to physically prevent a child from absconding. This could include locking a door, standing in front of a child, or even physical restraint as indicated in line with **Physis Quantum's Behaviour Management Policy**.

3.7 Advice and guidance in relation to these matters will be specific to each child or

young person in our care, that is:

- Clearly recorded in the child or young person's care plan by the Project Manager.
- Approved by the Head Teacher.
- Discussed with the staff team in a team meetings and individually through the supervision process.
- Regularly reviewed by the Project Manager and Head Teacher.

4. Guidance for Staff

4.1 All children and young people placed at **Physis Heathgates Academy** will have a **Daily Living Care Plan**.

4.2 Individual members of the staff team at **Heathgates Farm and full time staff at Physis Heathgates Academy** must ensure they are familiar with - and confident in relation to - the specific arrangements in place for each child and young person in placement and with particular reference to unauthorised absences, that is, to be clear when an individual child or young person should be considered to have absconded and the procedure to be followed. This will be checked periodically within the supervision process.

4.3 **Physis Heathgates Academy** has an **Unauthorised Absence file** as part of its recording systems. The layout of this file makes recording incidents of unauthorised absence straightforward, easy and logical. Times should be recorded exactly and not as rough estimates.

The layout of this book also indicates exactly who should be notified.

4.4 In the event that a child or young person is absent without authority, the nature of the absence, age of child or young person, and circumstance surrounding the absence must be taken into account when determining the appropriate actions members of the staff team should take.

4.5 In all cases of Unauthorised Absence the Project Manager or On-Call Manager should be immediately informed to ensure appropriate levels of reflection, guidance and advice are available in deciding how to most appropriately respond to the situation.

4.6 In situations where a child or young person is in the process of leaving **Physis Heathgates Academy**, or away from an organised activity, every attempt should be made by the staff team to keep the child or young person within line of sight.

4.7 The staff team should organise the following activities, unless it is believed the child or young person, members of the staff team, or other children and young people in placement, that is:

Search the grounds and immediately surrounding area of **Physis Heathgates Academy**. Conduct a search of the surrounding neighbourhood.

4.8 It is very important, wherever possible, that other children and young people in placement do not become involved in the incident and clear decision need to be made concerning which members of the staff team will remain actively engaged with the remaining children and young people while others deal with searches, communication and recording.

4.9 The Head Teacher, Project Manager or On-Call Manager will advise the staff team when to inform the police, the child's parent(s), and placing authority.

4.10 When a missing child or young person has been located, their collection and return to **Physis Heathgates Academy** will be discussed and authorised by either the Head Teacher, Project Manager or On-Call Manager, with the action to be taken having consideration of the child or young person's attitude towards the return alongside the needs, safety and wellbeing of the other children and young people in placement.

4.11 Staff can expect to collect a child or young person at any time of day or night and from any location – following advice and authorisation from the Head Teacher, Project Manager or On-Call Manager.

4.12 The current legal status of children and young people - and the implications for members of the staff team going to pick up a child or young person - will be clarified by the Project Manager or On-Call Manager Staff, that is:

- A child or young person who is voluntarily accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act (1989) may not be able to be returned to the **Physis** against their wishes – albeit the placing authority may initiate other actions following refusal to return by a child or young person.
- A child or young person on a Full or Interim Care Order (Section 31 of the Children Act (1989)) may not be permitted to remain anywhere apart from at **Physis Quantum**.

4.13 All absences without authority must be recorded as an incident and in writing. The report will detail the circumstances leading up to the incident, all the action taken by the staff team, the circumstances of the child or young person's return, any reasons given by the child or young person for absconding, and any action to be taken in light of this.