

Children Missing from Education Policy

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Statement of intent

All children are entitled to a full-time education, regardless of their circumstances. Unfortunately, children missing from education (CME) risk underachieving, and not being in education, employment or training (NEET) in later life, and it can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including abuse and neglect. Pupils with EHCPs are particularly vulnerable to CME, so the school will work closely with the LA SEN team to ensure continuity of provision whenever there is a risk of missing education.

The LA has a legal duty to identify when there are CME and help them back into education. This policy highlights what our school will do to help the LA with its duty.

For the purpose of this policy, a “child missing from education” is defined as a child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school, not placed in alternative provision by an LA, and not receiving a suitable education elsewhere. This definition also encompasses children who are receiving an education, but not one that is suitable, including children who are not receiving full-time education suitable to their needs, e.g. age, ability, aptitude, SEND.

This policy does not address pupils who are considered to be absent from education, which is where a registered pupil is not attending regularly, including where they are persistently or severely absent from school. Procedures for addressing instances where pupils are not attending regularly are instead set out in the school’s Attendance Policy.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended in 2016)
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended in 2018)
- The School Information (England) Regulations 2008 (as amended in 2018)
- The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended in 2014)
- DfE (2022) ‘Working together to improve school attendance’
- DfE (2024) ‘Keeping children safe in education 2024’
- DfE (2018) ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’
- DfE (2016) ‘Children missing education’
- DfE (2021) ‘School Admissions Code’

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Admissions Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Attendance Lead is responsible for ensuring that:

- Pupils are entered on the admissions register.
- In the event of a pupil failing to attend the school on the agreed or notified date, undertaking reasonable enquiries to establish the reason for this absence, and considering notifying the LA at the earliest opportunity.
- An accurate and up-to-date admissions register is kept by encouraging parents to inform them of any changes.
- Monitoring pupils' attendance through a daily register.
- An agreement is made with the LA determining what intervals are best to inform them of pupils who are regularly absent from school, or who have missed 10 days of education or more without permission.
- Notifies the LA CME officer and SEN Casework Officer where a pupil has been absent for 10 consecutive school days (authorised) or 20 consecutive days (unauthorised).
- Ensures that any removal from roll only occurs following written confirmation from the LA SEN team.
- Full-time education is arranged for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed-period exclusion.
- Providing information to the LA regarding standard transitions, if requested to do so by the LA.
- The school holds more than one emergency contact number for each pupil.

All staff are responsible for:

- Being alert to the potential need to implement early help for a pupil who is frequently missing or goes missing from care or home.
- Being aware of the school's procedures for managing unauthorised absence and children missing from education.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated to the DSL or deputy DSL.

The LA is responsible for:

- Establishing the identities of children in the area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving education provision otherwise, in line with the LA's duty under the Education Act 1996.
- Providing full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a suspension.

- Serving notices on parents to assure the LA that their child is receiving a suitable education, when concerns regarding this are brought to the LA's attention.
- Issuing School Attendance Orders to parents who fail to assure the LA that their child is receiving a suitable education, and the LA believes that the child should attend school.
- Prosecuting parents that do not comply with a School Attendance Order.
- Prosecuting or fining parents of school-registered children who fail to ensure their children attend school regularly.
- Ensuring that children identified as not receiving suitable education are returned to full-time education either at the school or elsewhere.
- Ensuring that the school demonstrates prompt action and effective early intervention procedures to ensure children are safe and receiving suitable education.
- Applying to court for an Education Supervision Order for a CME.
- Ensuring that children who return to full-time education are appropriately supported, taking into account the reasons why they missed education in the first place.
- Arranging suitable provision for pupils with SEN statements or EHC plans where their parent chooses for them to be home educated, and reviewing this annually.
- Liaising and sharing information with other agencies to support children who miss education.
- Sharing the fact that a pupil has a social worker with the school.
- Referring to the LA's CSCS where there is concern for a child's welfare, as well as the police if there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed.

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their children, if of compulsory school age, are receiving suitable full-time education.
- Notifying the school in writing where they will be home-schooling their child, in order for the child to be removed from the admissions register.
- Where requested, meeting with the school, LA, and other key professionals to consider whether home education would be in the best interests of their child, particularly where they have SEND, are vulnerable, or have a social worker – ideally, this would be done before a final decision has been made.
- Notifying the school regarding any absences or changes to the pupil's education arrangements.

3. Reasons for children missing education

There are a number of reasons as to why children with SEND miss education, including the following:

- Placement breakdown due to unmet needs
- Extended medical absence or treatment
- Delays in securing appropriate specialist provision
- Family relocation, including overseas moves
- Elective Home Education chosen by parents

Aside from these reasons, if a child is missing from education, particularly repeatedly, this can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, such as the following:

- Abuse and neglect, including child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE), potentially involving county lines
- So-called 'honour-based' abuse, including FGM and forced marriage
- Mental health issues
- Risk of substance abuse
- Risk of travelling to conflict zones

Staff will be aware that early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding relating to CME and to help prevent the risks of a pupil going missing in the future. All staff will be made aware of unauthorised absence procedures and this policy to ensure they know how to respond to possible cases of CME.

4. Children at particular risk of missing education

As there could be many reasons for a child to be missing from education, the school will use its professional judgement on a case-by-case basis. The following list, however, indicates groups of pupils who are most at risk of missing education and the procedures the school will follow in response:

- Pupils at risk of harm or neglect – where this is suspected, local child protection procedures will be followed; however, if a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral will be made immediately to children's social care services (CSCS), and the police if appropriate. The LA officers responsible for CME will check whether a referral has been made, and will contact CSCS if this is not the case. Should there be a reason to suspect a crime has been committed or the child's safety is at risk, the LA will contact the police.
- Pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families – when a pupil from a GRT family leaves the school without naming their next destination school, the school will contact the LA. If necessary, the school will consult the LA Traveller Education Support Services or named CME officer for advice on the best strategies to ensure minimal disruption to the pupil's education.
- Children of service personnel – the school will contact the Ministry of Defence Children's Education Advisory Service for advice to ensure continuity of education for these pupils.
- Missing children and runaways – should the school suspect a child has gone missing or run away, an appropriate staff member will consult the DfE for advice on missing children.
- Children who cease to attend school – where the reason for a pupil who has stopped attending a school is not known, the LA will investigate the situation.
- Children of migrant families – the school will remain vigilant to the increased risk of a child missing education if they are part of a new migrant family who may not yet have settled into a fixed address, or may have arrived into an LA area without the authority becoming aware.

Further on the above pupils with EHCPs may be at greater risk of CME if they:

- Have complex medical needs or disabilities requiring frequent hospitalisation
- Experience high levels of anxiety or behavioural challenges impacting attendance
- Are in the care system or on a child protection plan
- Come from families who move frequently, including overseas relocations

In all such cases, the school will work closely with the SEN Casework Officer and safeguarding partners to ensure continuity of provision.

5. Induction and training

The safeguarding response to children who go missing from education will be explained to staff during their induction.

All staff will receive annual safeguarding and child protection training, including an update on the various safeguarding concern possibilities that CME could represent, any changes to the early help process and staff members' role in this process.

6. Working with others

Families moving from one Local Authority area to another can sometimes lead to a child with an EHCP being lost in the system and consequently missing education. When a child moves, the placing Local Authority will liaise with the receiving Local Authority to ensure this does not happen, and the school will support this process by providing prompt and accurate information.

The Local Authority will raise awareness of its CME procedures with schools and agencies working with children and families. The school will ensure that staff are aware of these procedures and apply them when necessary.

The school uses a secure management information system (Arbor MIS) to transfer pupil information when a child moves to another education setting. If a pupil with a social worker is absent from school without explanation or appears to be missing from education, the school will inform the social worker immediately.

7. Safeguarding

Children with EHCPs are at greater risk of harm if they miss education. Extended or repeated absence can be a sign of unmet need, family stress, neglect, or exploitation. Staff will treat unexplained absence as a safeguarding concern.

Where a pupil is missing from education, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Attendance Officer will coordinate enquiries with parents and agencies. If there are grounds to believe a child may be at risk of harm, the DSL will make a referral to children's social care and, where appropriate, contact the police.

The DSL will record all actions taken and ensure that safeguarding and attendance systems are updated. No pupil will be removed from roll until the Local Authority has confirmed the next stage of provision and safeguarding checks are complete.

For the purpose of this policy, “reasonable enquiries” are defined as limited, investigative powers that the school may action to determine a child’s whereabouts and whether they may be in danger. These may be the following:

- Make reasonable enquiries within the school’s remit: phoning parents/carers, checking known contact numbers, emailing, speaking with known relatives we already have on file, checking with transport providers, or contacting agencies already linked to the child (e.g. social worker).
- Log attempts and escalate promptly to the Local Authority CME team and SEN Casework Officer if the child cannot be located.
- Treat the absence as a safeguarding concern, escalate to DSL, and refer to social care/police if there’s immediate risk of harm.

Please note: This list is not exhaustive – the school and LA will use their judgement towards what reasonable enquiries are appropriate, once all the facts of the case have been taken into account.

The Attendance Lead will record that they have completed these procedures and, if necessary, inform the DSL who will make a referral to CSCS or the police.

8. Admissions register

The school will maintain an accurate and up-to-date admissions register at all times through Arbor MIS. As all pupils attending the school have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the register will be managed in close partnership with the Local Authority SEN team as well as the CME officer.

- Each pupil will be recorded on the admissions register on the first day agreed with the Local Authority as the official placement start date.
- The Local Authority will be notified within five days of any new admission, and the details recorded will include all information required by the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended).
- Where parents/carers notify the school of a change of address, either within the UK or overseas, the school will record:
 - The full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live
 - The new address
 - The date from which the pupil is expected to live at this address
- Where parents/carers indicate that the pupil will attend another school, or that they intend to home educate, the school will notify the SEN Casework Officer without delay.
- Parents will be regularly reminded to inform the school of any changes to their circumstances so that the admissions register remains accurate.

9. Removing a pupil from the admissions register

The school will inform the LA of any pupil who will be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parent and are being educated outside the school system, e.g. home-schooled.
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within a reasonable distance of the school.
- Have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither they nor their parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order, and the school does not reasonably believe they will be returning at the end of that period.
- Have been permanently excluded.
- Have died.
- Have been registered at another school where it is not indicated this should be the case.
- Are registered at more than one school, but have failed to attend the school and the proprietor of any other schools concerned have consented to the deletion.
- Have been granted authorised leave but have failed to attend school within 10 school days after the period of authorised absence ended, and:
 - There is reason to believe the pupil is not unable to attend school.
 - The LA and school are unable to determine the pupil's whereabouts after making joint reasonable enquiries.
- Have been continuously absent from school for a period of at least 20 school days, and:
 - The absence was not authorised.
 - There is reason to believe the pupil is not unable to attend school.
 - The LA and school are unable to determine the pupil's whereabouts after making joint reasonable enquiries.

Because every pupil at the school has an EHCP, no pupil will be removed from the admissions register without direct consultation and agreement with the placing Local Authority.

If a pupil's name is to be removed from the admissions register, the school will provide the LA with the following information:

- The full name of the pupil
- The full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives
- At least one telephone number of the parent with whom the pupil lives
- The full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable
- The name of the pupil's new school and their expected start date, if applicable

- The grounds for removal from the admissions register under Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended), as outlined in this policy.

Where the name of a pupil with a social worker is to be removed from the admissions register, the school will inform the pupil's social worker.

10. Process for CME and Pupil Tracking Forms

The school works with the Local Authority to ensure that [CME forms](#) and [Pupil Tracking Form](#) are used consistently and appropriately.

When a parent/carer notifies the school by phone, email, or in person that their child will be leaving the school permanently, moving abroad, or living at a new address for a prolonged period, the staff member receiving the information must:

- Request and record the **full new address** (including country if abroad) and the date the pupil is expected to live there.
- Confirm whether the child will be attending another school, and if so, obtain the name and start date of the new school.
- Pass this information promptly to the Attendance Lead/DSL for action.

This responsibility applies to whoever takes the initial call or message. It is essential that the information is gathered at the first opportunity to avoid delay.

A CME form will be completed when a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established, when they have been absent for 10 consecutive authorised days or 20 unauthorised days, when the family has moved without confirming a new school, or when there are safeguarding concerns about the child being missing from education.

A pupil tracking form will be completed when a child is transferring to another Local Authority or school, when they are awaiting a new placement following Local Authority decision, or when they are moving between providers and oversight must be maintained.

In all cases, the DSL will oversee the decision to complete either form, and records will be kept on Arbor and in safeguarding systems. No pupil with an EHCP will be removed from the admissions register until the Local Authority has confirmed next steps in writing.