



Children Missing from Education Procedures

Definition and Overview

The statutory guidance [Children Missing Education \(September 2016\)](#) sets out the key principles to enable local authorities and schools in England to implement their legal duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, children missing education (CME).

1. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have;
2. Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life;
3. Effective information sharing between parents, schools/academies and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education. Local authorities should focus their resources effectively in intervening early in the lives of vulnerable children to help prevent poor outcomes.

Risks

These 'missing' children can be vulnerable; A child being absent from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

It is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage these children back into appropriate education provision as quickly as possible. It is important to establish the reasons for the child being missing at the earliest possible stage.

There are many circumstances where a child may be absent or become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- Failure to start appropriate provision and never enter the system;
- Stopped attending, due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal by parent/carers;
- Failure to complete a transition between schools;
- Children from families who are highly mobile;
- Are at risk of harm or neglect
- Are at risk of forced marriage or FGM
- Come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families

- Come from the families of service personnel
- Go missing or run away from home or care
- Are supervised by the youth justice system
- Cease to attend a school
- Come from new migrant families.

Children who remain disengaged from education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk.

Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education.

When families move between local authority areas it can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education. Where a child has moved, local authorities should check with other local authorities – either regionally or nationally – and share information in order to ascertain where a child has moved. Once the location of the child is established, the relevant local authority must ensure that the child is receiving an education either by attending a school/academy or the provision of electronic or distance learning packages where these are available.

Research has shown that many children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. It is therefore important that schools inform the local authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education. Although many are settled, some GRT families move regularly and their children can be at increased risk of missing education. Local authority Traveller Education Support Services (TESS), where these exist, or the named CME officer within the local authority, can advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring the minimum disruption to GRT pupils' education.

Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently – both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice. Schools and local authorities should contact the MoD [Children's Education Advisory Service \(CEAS\)](#) for advice on making arrangements to ensure continuity of education for those children when the family moves.

Children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education. Local authority Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are responsible for supervising those young people (aged 8 to 18). YOTs should work with the local authority CME officer to ensure that children are receiving, or return to, appropriate full-time education.

Indicators

Schools/academies

As a result of daily admissions registration, we are particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If a member of St. Nicholas C of E (VC) Primary School's staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents / carers, what has happened.

If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the Headteacher should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability by making reasonable enquiries, and refer any concerns about the child to the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub.

We should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance. It is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority.

In the more general circumstances of a child going missing who is not known to any other agencies, the Headteacher should inform the Education Welfare Officer of any child who has not attended for 10 consecutive schools days without provision of reasonable explanation.

We have a safeguarding duty in respect of our pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. Further information about our safeguarding responsibilities can be found in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', the statutory guidance and our Child Protection Policy.

We are required to notify the local authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. Schools/academies will need to provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

We must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the regulations, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

In line with the duty under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, the expectation is that the school and the local authority will have in place procedures designed to carry out reasonable enquiries. The type of procedures may include the appropriate person checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords – private or social housing providers – and other local stakeholders who are involved. They should also record that they have completed these procedures. If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral (see [Referrals Procedure](#)) should be made to children's social care (and the police if appropriate).

Other Agencies

Where any agency in contact with children and families believes that a child is not on the roll of a school or receiving education otherwise, then this information should be passed to the Pupil Tracking Officer with any details they have of the child in question. If they have concerns about the welfare of the child they should refer to Children's Services.

Pupil Tracking Officer

The Pupil Tracking Officer (or CME Officer) should ensure through the Education Welfare Officer that reasonable enquiries are made - e.g. home visits, liaison with Children's Services and / or Housing - and notify the school if it appears that the child has moved out of the area.

If no information is forthcoming within 2 days, the Pupil Tracking Officer should alert her / his manager, who should inform Children's Services and the Police in writing.

Protection and Action to be Taken

The Headteacher should inform the Pupil Tracking Officer and the child's social worker immediately a child subject to a Child Protection Plan is missing.

In the following circumstances a referral to Children's Services and / or the police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime;
 - The child is subject of a Child Protection Plan;
 - The child is subject of Section 47 enquiries;
 - The child is looked after;
 - There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
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- There is a history of the family moving frequently;
- There are serious issues of attendance.

Where a child on roll at St. Nicholas C of E (VC) Primary School is missing, the child's name may not be removed from the roll until s/he has been continuously absent for at least 4 weeks and both the school and the education service have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil and her/his family. After 4 weeks the child's Common Transfer file should be uploaded to the Department for Education secure site for the transfer of pupil information when a pupil moves between schools. The CME Officer in the Local Authority must also be informed.

In these circumstances the child's name is kept on a centrally held register, and should be clearly identified as missing from education.

Where the child's name has been removed from the school roll, but s/he has not been located, the Headteacher should arrange for the pupil's records to be retained until the child is located. They may be held centrally according to local arrangements.

Where a Headteacher has been notified by a parent that a pupil is receiving education other than at school, and has removed the child's name from the school roll, notification must be given to the education service within 10 school days; the pupil's records should then be transferred to the education service to be stored in accordance with local arrangements.

If a school receives a new pupil without receiving information about the pupil from his or her previous school, the school should contact the Pupil Tracking Officer.

If the Pupil Tracking Officer becomes aware the child has moved to another school/academy s/he should ensure that all relevant agencies are informed and arrangements made to forward records from the previous school.

Issues

A child missing from education is not in itself a child protection matter, and there may be an innocent explanation for this. However, regular school attendance is an important safeguard and unexplained non-attendance can be an early indicator of problems, risk and vulnerability (see Attendance Policy).

Schools should endeavour to deal with this problem in three ways:

- By preventing poor school attendance and truancy;
- By acting once absence has occurred to establish children's safety and try to get them back to school;
- By taking action to trace children whose whereabouts are not known.

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Review Date	Sept 2024
To be reviewed	Headteacher and Governors
Authorised by	Headteacher and Governors