



Absence and Children Missing In Education

Guidance and Procedures

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Signed By: A Hibbert
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CME

Definition:

Children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

CME include children who:

- are in the process of applying for a school place
- have been offered a school place for a future date but have not yet started
- are receiving elective home education (EHE) that has been assessed as unsuitable
- have been recorded as CME for an extended period, for example where their whereabouts is unclear or unknown

CME are not children who:

- are receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (e.g. are electively home educated or in AP)
- are EHE but the local authority has not had an opportunity to assess suitability
- are registered at a school, even if they are persistently or severely absent.

The Local Authority (BCP) are legally required to identify and track Children Missing in Education and maintain a CME register.

Tracking pupils who don't have an educational placement is also part of our collective responsibility and ongoing commitment to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people.

Children can go missing when they have not been registered at a school, or when they fall out of the education system. For example:

- Fail to start education and therefore never enter the education system.
- Stop attending, for example due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal from school.
- Fail to transfer between schools, either locally or from one area to another.

The LA have a robust tracing process in place which involves border checks, local authorities, health and housing checks.

The Children Missing in Education Officer tracks and follows up with all children who do not receive a suitable education. This is to ensure they are helped to access education as quickly as possible.

There is ongoing communication between agencies and the public to refer any child they believe is not in education.

Safeguarding:

In addition to under achieving educationally, CME are may also be at additional risk of abuse, human trafficking and child sexual exploitation.

This provides information on schools' duties regarding children missing education, including information schools must provide to the local authority when removing a child from the school roll. Keeping Children Safe in Education states:

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school or college's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

- *Where reasonably possible, schools and colleges should hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil or student. This goes beyond the legal minimum and is good practice to give the school or college additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.*
- *Further information on schools' duties regarding children missing education, including information schools must provide to the local authority when removing a child from the school roll at standard and non-standard transition points can be found in the department's statutory guidance: Children Missing Education."*

The Children Missing Education statutory guidance for local authorities was revised and updated in September 2025.

The main changes to the Children Missing Education guidance as of September 2025 include:

- Clarification of definitions: The guidance has been updated to include new examples of CME, such as children in temporary accommodation and those receiving unsuitable EHE.
- Emphasis on risk categories: There is a greater focus on children at risk of harm, exploitation, or radicalisation.
- Reinforcement of legal duties: The guidance reinforces Section 436A of the Education Act 1996, which requires local authorities to identify CME and ensure they receive suitable education.
- Stronger expectations for data sharing: There are stronger expectations for schools to share data proactively with relevant agencies and local authorities.

- Support for inquiries into pupil whereabouts: Schools must cooperate with reasonable enquiries when a pupil's whereabouts are unknown.
- Focus on safeguarding and vulnerable pupils: The revised guidance places greater emphasis on safeguarding and ensuring that internal policies align with this integrated approach.
- Updates to attendance registers and notifications: New requirements regarding the removal and addition of pupils to attendance registers have been introduced.
- These changes aim to improve the identification and support of children missing education, ensuring that every child of compulsory school age receives the education they are entitled to

Previous changes were that all schools (including academies and independent schools) must notify their Local Authority when they put a child on their roll and when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admissions register.

As of September 2019 we were required to:

- notify the Local Authority of any child added to their admission register (except at standard transition point)
- notify the Local Authority of any child they are about to remove from the school admissions register, including those who leave at standard transition points (with the exception of those pupils completing their statutory education at year 11).

Fundamentally, CME is about safeguarding so as a school we will continue to send in a reporting form (appendix 2) for every child that leaves our school and for every child that fails to start at our school (either at transition stage or in-year). The reporting of CME is a statutory duty and there is an expectation that we make every effort to provide as much information as possible with regard to where the child is going. A destination country is not sufficient.

There is an expectation that schools will provide the following information:

- The full name of the pupil
- The full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides
- At least one telephone number of the parent
- The pupil's future address and destination school, if applicable
- The grounds under which you expect to remove the child from the admission register (as detailed on the reporting form).

As a School we have a statutory duty to refer pupils who are continuously absent for 10 school days or more. However, We will not wait 10 days if we have concerns. If there is an urgent safeguarding concern this should be directed to social care immediately. If a follow up action, for example, a home visit, is required by the LA then there is an expectation that we will have tried to make contact using all emergency contact details, asked classmates etc. We may have conducted a home visit ourselves. Requests should ideally be made via 5-19 Services Business Support team or cases can be discussed with our Education Social Worker or the duty worker in their absence.

The following factors increase the effectiveness of the CME process:

- Where the school has tried to make contact with the family, using all contact details available.
- School provide full details including emergency contacts.
- The Local Authority being informed swiftly. If families have genuinely moved their post is often re-directed for a period of time. This gives an opportunity to make contact with them. The form needs to be sent electronically to Admissions to prevent any delay. If urgent, please mark as such and copy to cme@bcpcouncil.gov.uk
- Full forwarding details (either for home or school) when a family has moved. An address needs to be somewhere post can be sent to. Email addresses are useful but should not be used as a substitute for an address where that is available.
- It is helpful when schools tell the Local Authority in advance that a family is leaving but they are having difficulty obtaining the new contact details. This gives the opportunity to contact the family before they leave.
- Publishing your 'pupil leaving' expectations on your website will mean that parents are very clear what information they are expected to provide, and why.

Taking a pupil off roll

The school will follow the guidance set out in the Government "Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance" when removing a pupil from the school Roll.

Where one of the grounds for deleting a pupil's name from the admission register is met, as set out in regulation 9 of the [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#), the pupil's name must immediately be deleted. A school cannot retrospectively delete a pupil's name from the admission register. The decision to delete a pupil's name is for the individual school in line with the regulations. Schools must ensure all requirements under the relevant ground are met before the pupil's name is deleted.

For grounds H and I (this is where a pupil has not returned within 10 school days following a leave of absence, or has been continually absent for 20 school days unauthorised), joint reasonable enquires between the school and local authority to locate the pupil and find out their circumstances are required before a pupil's name can be deleted. When a pupil is located and their circumstances established, before their name is deleted, both parties must agree there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again.

For ground G, if a pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school, and the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again, the pupil's name must be deleted from the admission register even when a new school place has not yet been secured.

Leavers at standard transition points

Schools are required to advise the LA of all leavers at standard transition point (with the exception of those completing their statutory education at year 11).

Schools should email School Admissions their list of leavers, ideally prior to the summer holiday. The list can be of a format most convenient for the school but must include full name, date of birth, and destination (if known). Schools are not expected to complete CME forms for these leavers.

Putting a child on roll

Schools are required to notify the Local Authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. The notification must include all the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point – at the start of the first year of education normally provided by that school.

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school, regardless of whether the pupil attends or not. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and notify the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity, this includes those children at standard transition point.

When adding a pupil's name, the notification to the Local Authority must include all the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil. This should be emailed to School Admissions.

Absence:

What are a school's responsibilities when a child is absent?

In our school, all unexplained absences are followed up on the morning of absence. Where there is known risk to a child or family this absence is discussed with the DSL (or deputy in her absence). A decision is made as to the level of risk and appropriate action taken. This could include further contact with all adults on the child's contact list; contacting other known family members; asking another child to make contact (in the case of older pupils known to have mobile phones); contacting the local PCSOs or 101. Concerns will be reported to social care through the MASH or to the police.

As a school we always consider and assess the child's safeguarding risk for an absent pupil. We consider the risk for them at their own address; for example, is there a risk of forced marriage, child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, radicalisation, honour based violence? Are there known existing risk factors? Is there already additional support, such as the involvement of children's social care? If the judgement is the child is at risk of harm, then contact should be made with the police or social care via the MASH or directly with the attached social worker.

If a pupil is absent, all schools have a responsibility to contact the parent or carer **on the first day of absence** and continue to make every effort to locate the pupil.

When we have identified the child is not in school, the procedure below is followed:

Day 1 - Phone call

A staff member trained to do so, telephones the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent or carer that the child is safe at home.

We prioritise pupils in Y5 and Y6 who we know have permission to walk to school and those we know to have additional safeguarding risk factors (such as CP or CiN).

Response from parent	Next step from school
There is no answer at the home or on mobile numbers	Call back. Risk assess after 2 hours – or sooner for pupils known to be at risk. Priority carer will be contacted by email and text as available and if necessary all given contacts will be tried. It may be appropriate to ask another child to make contact (in the case of older pupils known to have mobile phones) or to contact the local PCSOs or 101 to carry out a home visit. School staff may make a home visit if deemed safe and appropriate. The family would usually be advised by email or phone call that this course of action will be taken if there is no contact and a minimum of 2 staff members will attend the house,
The parent/carers answered the call, the child is safe with them	Ask for reason for absence and record on our school's attendance management system
The person answering is not the parent/carers and the school is not reassured that the child is at home or safe	The school's designated lead for child protection should be consulted on a risk assessment and the degree of vulnerability of the child
The parent/carers answered the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned	School to advise the parent to: • Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing • Contact all people and places the child is known to talk to and visit to tell them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child, by providing information which may shed light on the child's whereabouts or actively searching for the child • Contact the family GP and Accident and Emergency Centres near where the child lives and goes to school, in case he/she has sustained an injury and been taken in for medical treatment • Report back to school if the child is found or remains missing

If the judgement on Day One is that there is reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm the school will contact Police and/or children's social care immediately.

If the judgement on Day One is that there is no reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm school continues to make enquiries and informs Education Inclusion & Partnership on Day Ten that the child is missing education.

At each point If there is no satisfactory response, according to level of risk, a decision will be made whether to wait, following procedures below, or to take further action such as Police or MASH referral or home visit at this point.

Where there is already an allocated social worker, they should be notified of unplanned absences and as a matter of priority if parents cannot be contacted.

Day 2 - Follow up phone call

A subsequent telephone call must be made from the school landline.

Day 3 – Write/email parents

Write or email to the parent in plain English, asking for contact to be made with the school immediately. Please give the parents/carers 3 working days to make contact and if you are aware that English may not be the parent's first language, copy the letter into a language that may be more accessible.

Day 5/6 - Home visit

Arrange a visit to the home address ensuring that risk assessments are in place.

Once you have completed these checks (or within 10 days, whichever is earlier)

If the child has not been seen and the parents or carers have not made contact either, schools must report the child as missing from education.