



## Mill Lane Community School & The Windmill Community Nursery



*Growing, Thriving, Flying*

### **Child Missing Education Guidance**

#### **Definition & Overview**

The statutory guidance [Children Missing Education \(September 2016\)](#) outlines the legal duties of local authorities relating to section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to identify children missing education (CME). Local authorities (LA's) should be able to demonstrate that they have considered this guidance or provide reasonable grounds if they have not done so. 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.

CME are those of compulsory school age who are not registered at a school and not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (EOTAS). They are at significant risk of underachieving; being victims of abduction, enforced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), criminal and sexual exploitation by individuals or gangs, radicalisation (including travel to conflict zones), and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. (Refer to [Children Missing from Care, Home and Education Procedure.](#))

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education. Local authority resources should be focussed on effective and early intervention in the lives of vulnerable children to help prevent poor outcomes.

#### **Risks**

'Missing' children can be vulnerable: it is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage them back into appropriate education as quickly as possible. It is important to establish the reasons for them being missing at the earliest possible stage.

Possible reasons why a child is missing education include:

- failure to start entering appropriate provision or complete transition between schools;
- illegal exclusion or withdrawal by parent/carers;
- refugee and asylum seeking families not placing their children in the education system;
- high mobility of families;
- children experiencing mental health problems;
- children under physical threat and exploitation;
- experience of abuse and neglect.

Family mobility between local authority areas can lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system. Where a child has moved, the LA should check with other LA's, regionally or nationally, in order to ascertain where a child has moved. Once the location of the child is established, the relevant LA must ensure that they are receiving an education either by attending a school or through electronic or distance learning packages. Some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families move regularly and their children can be at increased risk of missing education. Research has shown that these families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. It is therefore important that schools inform the LA when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition stage from primary school. Although many are settled, 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 also likely to move frequently 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.

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) work with young people (aged 10 to 18 years) who are involved with the Criminal Justice System. YOTs should work with the local authority CME officer to ensure that children they are working with are receiving, or return to, appropriate full-time education.

### **Schools Responsibilities**

**Safeguarding** in respect of pupils includes investigating any unexplained absences and missing pupils. All schools are required to notify the local authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to or removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point. In the case of removal from the register the expectation is that the school has procedures in place designed to carry out reasonable enquiries including: checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords (private or social housing providers) and other local stakeholders who are involved. Outcomes of investigation should be recorded 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).

Schools must monitor **attendance** closely and address poor or irregular attendance. Pupils' poor attendance should be referred to the LA. If any child has not attended for ten consecutive school days without provision of reasonable explanation, the child is not known to any other agencies, and there are no immediate safeguarding concerns, the Head Teacher must investigate and inform the Pupil Tracking Officer and Education Welfare Officer.

As a result of registration procedures, staff are particularly well placed to be alert to **when a child might have gone missing**. In this case effort should be made by the Safeguarding lead, together with the class teacher, to establish with the parents/ carers, what has happened. If this is not possible assessment should be made through reasonable enquiries of the child's vulnerability and where appropriate referral to Children's Social Care (see also [Referrals Procedure](#)).

Where a child on a school roll is missing, the child's name must not be removed from the school roll until they have been continuously absent for at least four school weeks and both the school and the education service have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil and their family. After four school 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 and school must note on S2S. In these circumstances the child's name is kept on a centrally held register, and should be clearly identified as missing education.

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

### **Local Authority Responsibilities**

Where any school cannot trace an enrolled child this information should be passed to the Pupil Tracking Officer in the LA. together with any details of investigation carried out. If the concerns are about the welfare of the child referral should be made to Children's Social Care.

**The Children Missing Education Officer** (CME) must ensure that reasonable enquiries are made e.g. home visits, liaison with Children's Social Care 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 two days, the CME Officer should alert their manager, who should inform Children's Social Care and the Police in writing.

### **Protection & Action To Be Taken**

1. Head Teachers must inform the CME Officer and the child's social worker immediately if child who is Looked After or subject to a Child Protection Plan is missing.
2. In the following circumstances a referral to Children's Social Care and / or the Police must 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;
  - there is a history of the family moving frequently.
3. Where a Head Teacher 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.
4. If a school receives a new pupil without receiving information about the pupil from their previous school, the school must contact the previous school to receive records.
5. If the CME Officer becomes aware the child has moved to another school they should ensure that all relevant agencies are informed and ensure the receiving school makes arrangements made to receive records from the previous school.

### **Issues**

A child missing from education is not in itself a child protection matter, and there may be a reasonable 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.

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.

Agreed by Full Governing Body of Mill Lane Community School

Signed by the Chair



S A Watkinson

**Policy Reviewed: January 2023**

**Next Review: January 2026**