

Children Missing In Education (CME) Policy

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1. Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline what is meant by a child missing in education (CME) and the steps which will be taken by academies in the Trust to ensure that children who fall into this category are dealt with in the correct way according to National legislation and local procedures.

It outlines the responsibilities for managing Children Missing Education within the Trust in alignment with the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' statutory guidance and the objectives of Lincolnshire County Council.

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with:

- Trust Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Academy Site Specific Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Academy Site Specific Attendance procedure
- Admissions Policy
- Supporting learners with medical conditions policy
- Exclusion policy
- Learner with Health Needs who cannot attend school policy
- Alternative Provision Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disability policy

2. The Law and the National Framework

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

- DfE (2023) 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2022) 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' with the upcoming statutory guidance published 29th February 2024 which applies from August 2024.
- DfE (2022) Summary of table of responsibilities for school attendance with the upcoming statutory guidance published 29th February 2024 which applies from August 2024.
- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Children Act 1989
- The 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).

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this document a Child Missing Education is defined as:

- Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is not attending school, not placed in alternative provision by the Local Authority, and who is not receiving a suitable education elsewhere suitable to their needs, that is, their age, ability, aptitude, SEND.
- And any child who is not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately, or in alternative provision) and who has been out of any education provision for a substantial period of time (practice nationally is four weeks). This includes children who are awaiting a school place and children in receipt of unsuitable education, including the children that local authorities are supporting to place into suitable education.
- An elective home educated (EHE) child whose education is deemed unsuitable should be classified as CME.

For the purpose of this document a Child at Risk of Missing Education is therefore defined as:

- Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is on roll of a school but has less than 50% attendance in a school term
- Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is subject to a modified/reduced timetable for more than one school term (six weeks)
- Children on reduced timetables.

4. Why Children miss education

Children go missing from education for a variety of reasons.

The most common ones are:

- Failing to register at school at age five
- Unsuccessful transition from nursery to primary and primary to secondary
- Cease to attend, due to exclusion (formal withdrawal)
- Child not attending following mid-year transfer of school
- Parent/carers unable to find a school place after moving into the Local Authority
- Parent/carers failing to provide adequate learning whilst home educating.

Often families become disengaged from the education system as a whole, with the main factors leading to this being:

- Child being a victim of bullying
- Frequent moves of house including periods of homelessness or periods in a refuge
- Transience/family mobility
- Child experiencing family breakdown
- Frequent absence leading to low attendance (particularly Year 10 and Year 11)
- Disaffection resulting in parents withdrawing the learner
- Involvement in youth offending
- Child being a victim of exploitation.

There are particularly vulnerable groups, who have been identified as being more likely to become children missing education. Those are:

- Young people who have committed offences
- Children who are being exploited
- Children living in women's refuges
- Children of troubled families i.e. suffering bereavement, trauma, domestic abuse, homelessness etc
- Young runaways
- Children with special educational needs
- Refugee and asylum-seeking children
- Children who are new to the country
- Travelling families
- Looked after children
- Teenage parenthood
- Children with mental health issues
- Young carers
- Children who are permanently excluded from school
- Young people being forced into marriage
- Young people victims of female genital mutilation
- Child trafficking
- Young people involved in substance misuse.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Academy

- The Head Teacher, Attendance Champion and Designated Safeguarding Lead in each academy will implement and monitor the CME policy and ensure that all staff have the training and knowledge to support this.
- The school staff will report and act on attendance concerns promptly and support initiatives to reduce CME.
- The academy will enter learners on the admissions registers at the beginning of the first day on which it has been agreed by the academy, or the day that the academy has been notified, that the learner will attend.
- In the event that a learner fails to attend the academy on the agreed or notified date, the academy will undertake reasonable enquiries with the support of the Trust Attendance Team if required to establish the reason for this absence and will notify the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity, typically within 5 working days.
- The academy will hold more than one emergency contact number, an email address and a current home address for each learner.
- The academy will keep an accurate and up-to-date admissions register by encouraging parents to inform them of any changes.
- The academy will monitor learners' attendance through a daily electronic register and make daily contact with parents/carers for every day of absence through a combination of telephone calls, text message, emails and home visits.
- If there is an unexplained absence the academy will make attempt to make contact with the parents/carers and conduct home visits if necessary.
- The school may investigate the circumstances leading to a child's absence and take appropriate action, including involving other agencies if necessary.
- Maintain detailed records of actions taken place in response to all absences.
 - The academy will continue to make reasonable enquiries following a child being logged as CME with the local authority. Once a pupil has been logged as CME, the academy will:

- Remove learners, after or before 20 consecutive school days, from the roll and cease the CME process once they have sufficient evidence of the child leaving the area and being educated elsewhere.
- Remove learners from roll after 20 consecutive school days if they have had no further confirmation that they are living in the area and therefore should be attending the academy.
- Complete a leavers file (CML) for the local authority so that they can be tracked until they have arrived at their destination school.
- Remove learners from the admissions register, where they have been absent for 10 consecutive school days following an authorised absence, or where they have been absent for 20 consecutive school days without authorisation (in accordance with Regulation 8 (1), paragraphs f and h (iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2016.) This only applies if the academy does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the absence is due to illness or unavoidable cause.
- Notify the local authority of pupils removed from the admissions register as per Regulation 8.
- Arrange appropriate full-time education from the 6th school day of any fixed term exclusion.
- The Academy will be alert to learners who may require Early Help because they are frequently missing or go missing from home or care. They will:
 - Work with families to address barriers to regular attendance and may offer Early Help Assessments and follow the Emotionally Based School Avoidance pathway to help identify what support is needed. They will participate in multi-agency meetings and initiatives to address CME and improve individual and overall school attendance.
 - Ensure all staff are aware of the academy policies and procedure for when children go missing from education or at risk of missing education and unauthorised absences.
 - Ensure all staff are aware that CME can be an indicator of safeguarding concerns, including neglect and abuse and that the academy and Trust Attendance Team follow its safeguarding policies in all CME cases.
 - Ensure all staff are aware of their professional duty to escalate concerns to the Attendance Champion about children who they feel may be classed as missing from education or potentially missing education.
 - Will provide support during transitions e.g. primary to secondary school, in order to prevent CME from occurring at the academy

Parents/ Carers

- Will ensure that that their children, who are of compulsory school age, are in receipt of appropriate full-time education
- Provide the academy with more than one contact number, an email address and a current home address and ensure that these are updated as appropriate
- Notify the academy, at the earliest opportunity when their child will be leaving the academy and ensure a leavers form is completed with as much information as possible, a forwarding address and new school is vital.
- Notify the academy of any absences, planned or otherwise at the earliest opportunity
- Notify the academy at the earliest opportunity, in writing, where they plan to home educate their children so that they can be removed from the admissions register.

Trust Board

- Ensure that all academies have effective safeguarding policies and procedures in place

The Executive Team

- Gather assurances from academies that they keep admission and attendance registers in line with regulations
- Gather assurances that academies hold more than one contact number an email address and a current home address for each child on the admissions register.
- Ensure that all children receive their entitlement to a full-time education and will work diligently with Academies to address instances of CME in accordance with the statutory guidance and the local authority objectives.
- Ensure that the policies and procedures in place are followed for removing children from the school admission register including where they are logged as a Child Missing Education

Local Authority

- Respond to notifications of children missing education
- Ensure that the process is followed for children missing education
- Track children logged as missing education

- Carry out necessary investigations with other agencies including the Home Office, Ministry of Defence etc
- Carry out investigations necessary to ensure the safety of children missing education

6. Reasonable Enquiries

For the purpose of this policy, reasonable enquiries are defined as limited, investigative powers that the academy may action to determine a child's whereabouts and whether they may be in danger.

In line with the Children Act 2004, the academy will follow appropriate procedures when carrying out reasonable enquiries, such as the Education Welfare Officers (EWO) conducting discussions with neighbours, relatives or landlords, to determine whether a child may be at risk of harm

Where the whereabouts and safety of a child is unknown, the academy, in conjunction with the Local Authority, may carry out the following actions:

- Make daily contact with the parent/carer, relatives and neighbours using all known contact details
- Follow local information sharing arrangements and making enquiries via other local databases and agencies where possible
- Check with agencies known to be involved with the family
- Check with the Local Authority and school or academy from which the learner moved originally
- Check with the Local Authority where the learner lives, if this is different to where the school is located
- Liaise with the schools of any known siblings
- Conduct home visits and make enquiries with neighbours or relatives, if appropriate
- This list is not exhaustive – the academy and Local Authority will use their judgement towards what reasonable enquiries are appropriate, once all the facts of the case have been taken into account.

7. Outcomes

Children that are found but not in education

Most children are found through the investigations outlined above. When a child is found, and they are not in education, the Local Authority will support the parents/carers to get the child back into education. This is usually achieved by asking parents to submit a School Admission form. If however, the parent/carer does not fulfil their legal duty to ensure their child receives an education, the Local Authority may commence a School Attendance Order.

It is possible that the child has not been to school for a significant period and therefore they may be placed in a school using the Fair Access Protocol. Children who have been out of school for a lengthy period will potentially need more support than a usual in-year admission. The academy may need to consider completing appropriate assessments to establish needs and ensure that the reintegration into education is successful.

Children who are not found

A small percentage of children who are reported to the Local authority as CME are not found following the investigations. This does not necessarily mean that the child is at risk, as the child is assumed missing with their family. The risk assessment that is completed by the academy will help to determine the level of concern.

If it is suggested that the family have moved out of the county and the CME Tracker knows which authority they have moved to, the Tracker will contact this authority to notify them. The Local Authority may send out an email to all local authorities as a response to a child missing education.

If the family leaves the country without informing the school of their location and the school have notified the Local Authority of this child as a CME as they have concerns, the Local Authority SEWO may check with the academy, Trust EWO and other agencies as to the nature of the concerns. The Local Authority may check with Immigration and Border Force depending on the level of concern.

Children who are not found at the end of all investigations are reported to HMRC, by the Local Authority, who may be able to provide them with a forwarding address or confirm that the family is still residing at the current address.

Further investigations will be carried out by the Local Authority on children who remain missing. This will be more regularly with newer cases moving to twice a year for older cases. These investigations will continue by the Local Authority until the child is no longer statutory school age.

Appendix 1 – Lincolnshire County Council Children Missing Education Flow Chart

A child/young person is on roll of a school but not attending	A child/young person moving out of county	Family indicate they are moving to another country	School Admissions
School attempts to contact parents. Good practice is to contact from day 1 of absence but no later than day 3 The school must: • make on-going attempts, beginning on the first day of any unexplained absence, to contact the pupil's parents/carers either by telephone, or text messaging • make further attempts to contact the parents, either by letter or by home visiting • contact any other schools where the pupil or their siblings are known to have been pupils • check with the pupil's peer group to ascertain if they are aware of any change in the pupil's place of residency • contact any relevant agency, for example, the family welfare officer in the relevant armed forces in the case of a service child.  School should be following their school attendance and safeguarding procedures. If no contact is made with parents/carers, complete home visit  School/Academy should continue to make an effort to engage the family using e-mails telephone and other contact methods. Records of each attempt to contact must be made, ensuring there is a complete and comprehensive record of the steps taken including dates, actions and outcomes for each step  If there is confirmation that the child is at the place of residence known to the school but not attending, the school continues to follow their non-school attendance procedures Do not remove from roll After 10 days of unauthorised absence inform the local authority through the Pupil Not Attending Regularly (PNAR) notification survey  If there is confirmation that the child is no longer at the place of residence known to the school but can still attend the school,	Check that the contact details for the parent(s) are/is correct. This includes the family's new address, name of new school (if known), leaving date, email addresses of family and new school (if known)  The new school should make contact. If not, make contact with the school given to confirm that the child is on roll. If confirmation received that child is attending, take child off roll and complete CML file.  If no new school is given or child is not attending new school and that school does not have a start date, after 5 days from leaving date, report the child as CME through the notification survey. Do not take off roll After 20 days, if no further information following joint investigation between school and local authority, remove from roll and complete CML file.	Check that the contact details for the parent(s) are/is correct. This includes the family's new address, name of new school (if known), leaving date, email addresses of family and new school (if known)  If the information is provided, remove child from roll and complete the CML file within 5 days of leaving date  If the information is not provided complete the CME notification survey  After 20 days, if no further information following joint investigation between school and local authority, remove from roll and complete CML	If a school place has been allocated. (reception, transfer from infant to junior or year 6 to 7) and there has been no acceptance/agreed start date, by parent/carers, school should make attempts to engage (telephone, texts, e-mails letters and home visit)  If a child has been allocated a place and they do not arrive on the expected day i.e. start of term, the school must follow non-attendance procedures (see column one and follow same procedure). Do not assume that child is at another school.
	Health Related Absence If a child has been out of school for 15 days or more (consecutive or cumulative) due to health reasons and there is robust medical evidence to support the absence, school can follow the process of referral to the Local Authority for alternative provision as outlined in the LA Policy on Education for Children with Medical Needs.		Mid- year application If application is to transfer schools, the leaving school should keep on roll until it has been confirmed by the new school that they have been put on roll of that school. A child should be placed on roll at the point of acceptance by parent/carers. If there is no confirmation, the leaving school must follow non-attendance procedures (see column one)

make amendments to child's file and continue with non-school attendance procedures 			
If there is confirmation that the child is no longer at the place of residence known to the school and will not be attending the school, check that the child is attending the new school if known before removing from roll. Once confirmed remove from roll and complete CML file. If a new school is not known, report the child as child missing education (CME) notification survey. Do not take off roll. After 20 days, if no further information following joint investigation between school and local authority, remove from roll and complete CML file.	Child who is not in receipt of full time education A child not in receipt of full time education (usually 25 hrs) must be entered on the Reduced Timetable notification survey	Looked after Children (LAC) If a LAC child is moving placement and no longer attending the same school, the current school needs to liaise with social worker and virtual school. Do not remove from roll until directed by Virtual School	Traveller Children If a parent notifies the school that they are travelling, the school should ask the parent for a return date and contact details. The family should notify the school if there is any change to the return date and provide a new date. If the child does not return to school on the agreed date and is not able to confirm or approve the alternative, the school follow the non-attendance procedures (see column one)

This policy ensures compliance with the latest statutory guidance while aligning with the specific objectives of Lincolnshire County Council. Regular review and collaboration with the local authority are key components to maintaining its effectiveness.