

Children Missing from Education or with Issues Regarding School Attendance/Poor School Attendance

RELATED NATIONAL GUIDANCE

[Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for local authorities \(September 2016\)](#)

[School attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities \(November 2016\)](#)

RELATED LOCAL GUIDANCE

[Leicester Schools' Extranet](#) for:

- [LA and Maintained Schools Protocol on the Management of Children Missing Education December 2016 \(City only\)](#);
- [LA and Independent Schools Protocol on the Management of Children Missing Education December 2016 \(City only\)](#).

[Leicestershire County Council Pupil Services Website](#)

[Rutland County Council Website](#)

[Pupils Missing out on Education – Operating Framework \(September 2016\)](#)

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1. Definition and Overview

The statutory guidance [Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities \(September 2016\)](#) sets out the key principles to enable local authorities 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). Local authorities should be able to demonstrate that they have considered this statutory guidance and, where it is not followed, the local authority should have reasonable grounds for not doing so.

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 historically was a term that refers to children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Recently, it has become clear that the term now also refers to children on school rolls who have poor attendance. LAs protocols for children who are on roll but who have attendance concerns differ in terminology and information is available from the relevant LA website;
3. 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;
4. 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 authorities should focus their resources effectively in intervening early in the lives of vulnerable children to help prevent poor outcomes.

The Named CME Officer is responsible for receiving details of children missing from education (or making relevant arrangements) and for ensuring that support is brokered for them through the most appropriate agencies. See [Local Contacts](#) for the details for this officer in each authority.

2. Risks

These children missing education can be vulnerable; 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.

Possible reasons for children not being on a school roll – some also apply to those children who are on roll at a school who have low attendance levels:

- 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 refugee and asylum seeking families;
- Children from families who are highly mobile;
- Children at risk of a forced marriage;
- Children experiencing abuse and neglect.

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.

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.

3. Indicators

3.1 By Schools

As a result of morning and afternoon registration, schools are particularly well placed to notice when a child may have gone missing. If a member of school/educational establishment/college 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 designated safeguarding teacher/advisor should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability by making reasonable enquiries, and refer (see also **Referrals to Children's Social Care Procedure**) any concerns about the child to Children's Services.

Schools should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance. It is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority in line with the relevant LA's protocol.

In the more general circumstances of a child failing to attend school regularly, the Head Teacher should share information about each child in accordance with the LA protocol. Circumstances where this is appropriate include where a child has not attended for 10 consecutive school days without provision of a reasonable explanation, where a child's attendance is a concern in addition to sharing details of all children who are in part-time provision.

All schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. Further information about schools' safeguarding responsibilities can be found in the statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(DfE, GOV.UK\)](#).

All schools 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 will need to provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

Schools 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.

The detailed protocols for each LA are available on the relevant websites.

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 to Children's Social Care Procedure**) should be made to children's social care (and the Police if appropriate).

3.2 By Other Agencies

In relation to irregular attendance, other agencies may have a role to play in providing support to remove barriers to attendance. In relation to CME, other agencies who come across a child who appears not to be in education should inform the named CME Officer for the LA in which the child resides.

3.3 By the Pupil Named CME Officer

Once a school has taken all reasonable actions, the Named CME Officer is responsible for over-seeing the casework that is undertaken to locate any child who is deemed to be a child missing from education. Casework includes home visits, making contact with Children's Social Care services and Housing as necessary, the aim being to ensure their wellbeing and that they return to education as quickly as possible. In some cases, the child will be located elsewhere in education and is no longer deemed to be a CME case. The child is then subject to processes for children with poor attendance.

4. Protection and Action to be Taken

Head teachers should inform the CME 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;
- There is a history of the family moving frequently;
- There are serious issues of attendance.

Where a child on a school roll is missing, the child's name may not be removed from the school 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 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.

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 relevant LA no later than the point at which the child is removed from roll; 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 them from his or her previous school, they should establish the details for the previous school and contact the school to request the records.

5. 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.

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.

6. Further Information

This guidance should be read in the context of the statutory duties upon local authorities and parents as set out in the following:

- [The Education Act 1996](#);
- [The Education Act 2002](#);
- [The Children Act 1989](#);
- [The Children Act 2004](#);
- [Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities \(September 2016\)](#);
- [Elective Home Education guidelines](#);
- [School Admissions Code](#);
- [School to school service: how to transfer information](#);
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#), as amended (Education law regarding pupil registration where a child is on a school roll);
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#); as amended: [The Education \(Pupil Registration \(Amendment\) \(England\) Regulations 2016](#).

In particular the guidance provides for professionals seeking to exercise their duty under the following Acts to ensure that their functions are discharged having **regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children**.

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002; and
- Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

Additionally, this guidance seeks to ensure that the duty to co-operate to improve the well-being of children under section 10 of the Children Act 2004 is discharged. All schools will have a designated teacher for looked after children. These teachers are ideally placed to assist when identifying those looked after children currently in school who may be at greater risk of going missing from education.