



# Children Missing Education Policy and Practice

Children's Services

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## 1. Introduction

**Children Missing Education (CME)** is children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, or receiving a suitable education elsewhere, for example, at home or in alternative provision.

The purpose of the Children Missing Education (CME) Policy is to ensure that children and young people missing education are re-engaged in appropriate education provision in the shortest possible time, with lasting success and that no child is left without the educational provision which they are entitled to.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local Authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.

Missing education is damaging to the well-being of a child and may result in the child being at more risk of harm. This guidance should be used in conjunction with appropriate safeguarding best practice. When the circumstances of the child missing education is considered to add risk of harm to the child then actions should be taken without delay. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, including child exploitation.

## 2. Legal Context

The Children Act 2004 placed a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information.

The statutory guidance Children Missing Education 2016<sup>1</sup> sets out key principles to enable local authorities in England to implement their legal duty under Section 436A of the Education

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<sup>1</sup> Children Missing Education <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify as far as it is possible to do so children missing education (CME). The duty applies to all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and are not receiving a suitable education.

A child missing education is not necessarily 'missing' i.e. a runaway. There are different procedures for reporting a child who goes missing<sup>2</sup>. Unless further information comes to light whilst investigating a child missing education, the child is deemed to be in the care of their family and is considered only as a child who is not in an educational provision. Further investigations may result in identifying the child as vulnerable if there are additional concerns for the family and the location of the family is unknown. In some situations, the process may link with the missing person protocol.

### 3. Purpose of the CME Policy

The purpose of the CME Policy is to establish a set of principles which all schools, services and partner organisations can sign up to in order to ensure children and young people living in Lincolnshire are safely on roll of a school, placed on alternative educational programmes or electively home educated at the request of parents.

The CME Policy has been designed to help the council meet its statutory duties in relation to the provision and the safeguarding and welfare of children. It does not replace any of the current child protection or safeguarding procedures that should be taken if a child is at risk of harm.

### 4. Aim of the policy

This policy is intended to inform local authority officers, schools, governing bodies and other agencies of the procedure and practice to be followed in order to track, monitor, and maintain contact with children missing from education and those who are at risk of missing out on education.

The policy will:

- Inform schools, services, and partner agencies about their role in assisting the local authority in identifying children missing education
- Raise awareness of the notification process
- Explain how children will be tracked and monitored until they are re-engaged in education

### 5. 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 on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home or in alternative provision) and who has been out of any education provision for a substantial period of time.*

A child does not meet the criteria for CME if they are still at the MIS registered address but not attending or are on an extended holiday and have provided a return date.

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<sup>2</sup> 2 LSCP joint protocol for missing children and young people  
[https://lincolnshirescb.proceduresonline.com/pr\\_joint\\_miss.html](https://lincolnshirescb.proceduresonline.com/pr_joint_miss.html)

The process of looking for children who are absent from school (and their whereabouts is unknown), starts as soon as the school has sufficient evidence to confirm this.

Children and young people with poor or reduced school attendance are often vulnerable. Not only are they missing significant periods of learning they may become children missing from education.

It is the responsibility of the school/education provision to ensure a child attends school once they are on the school roll. A child is not considered to be a child missing education whilst the school have knowledge that the child remains in the area and their school remains the nearest available. Where non-attendance is raised by the school, they are encouraged to manage this either in house or through external agencies.

Schools must let the local authority know about pupils who have been absent for significant periods of time and that the school are unauthorising this absence. Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is on roll of a school but has 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absences is known as a **Pupil Not Attending Regularly (PNAR)**. This information is reported through the PNAR notification survey.

Children who are not on a full timetable may also be at risk of not receiving a suitable or sufficient education and could potentially become a child at risk of missing education. Therefore, all children of compulsory school age who are on a reduced timetable must be reported to the local authority through the **Reduced Timetable (RT)** notification survey. This information must be reported on a four-weekly basis.

Both the PNAR and RTT surveys can be found here: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-attendance/pupil-attendance/3>

Where a child is at risk of missing education, the local authority may contact the school and seek confirmation that the case is being appropriately managed.

## 6. Why children go missing from education

Children and young people can go missing from school or agreed education provision for a variety of reasons. Their personal circumstances or those of their families may contribute to withdrawal. Children can also go missing when there is no systematic process in place to identify them and ensure they reengage with appropriate provision.

The most common reasons why children miss education include:

- Child does not register for school at age 5
- Unsuccessful transition from infant to junior and primary to secondary
- Ceasing to attend
- Exclusion (formal or illegal off rolling)
- Child not attending following in-year transfer of school
- Parent unable to find a school place after moving into the local authority
- Parents failing to provide adequate learning whilst home educating

Below are some of the most common factors that contribute to a child or family becoming disengaged, resulting in potentially being off roll of a school, or not receiving education otherwise:

- Child being a victim of bullying
- Family moving house frequently or being homeless or having periods in a refuge
- Family being transient
- Child experiencing family breakdown
- Disaffection with the school resulting in parents withdrawing their child or being 'asked to leave'
- Child involvement in youth offending
- Child being a victim of exploitation

Certain vulnerable groups are more likely to be affected by the factors listed above, these are:

- Young people who have committed offences
- Children who are being exploited
- Children living in refuges
- Children of families experiencing trauma i.e. Suffering bereavement, domestic violence, homelessness etc.
- Young runaways
- Children with special educational needs
- Refugee and asylum-seeking children
- Children who are new to the country
- Travellers
- Children who are looked after
- School aged parents
- Children with mental health issues
- Young carers
- Children who are permanently excluded from school
- Young people being forced into marriage
- Children involved in substance misuse

## 7. The role of Schools and Academies

Schools and academies have a duty under Section 10 of The Children Act 2004 to work in partnership with the local authority with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 puts a duty on all schools to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This includes identifying children who are not receiving education.

It is expected that schools and academies will have carried out all reasonable enquiries within their capacity to ascertain the whereabouts of the young person prior to informing the local authority that the child is missing education. Once a school have ascertained that the child is no longer at the MIS registered address they should report the child as missing education via the Children Missing Education notification survey. The CME survey can be found here: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-attendance/pupil-attendance>

As part of the survey the schools will identify any concerns the school have around the safety and wellbeing of the child missing education.

When a child is removed from the school roll based on regulation 8(1)e (outside reasonable distance), the school will be asked to complete a 'leavers' file (CML) so that the child can be

tracked until they have arrived at their destination school rather than the child automatically being put in to the 'unknown' school category and deemed as CME.

The completion of the CME notification should be done after 5 days of investigation by the school or sooner if the school has evidence of a child missing education. Following this, the school should continue to make reasonable enquiries unless they have sufficient evidence that the child has left the area.

#### REMOVAL FROM ROLL:

- A school may remove a child from roll after 20 days or before if they have provided sufficient evidence to their Local Authority, CME Team that the child has left the area (no longer at their (MIS) registered address and/or is being educated elsewhere). The school and local authority must have carried out all reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child prior to removal from roll, and must notify their local authority that they have removed from roll using the appropriate Leavers Form notification process (CML).
- Removal from roll must be in accordance with: the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and 2016 and Children Missing Education statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

Appendix 1 **Children Missing Education Flow Chart** shows the different pathways of the most common situations that result in a child missing education and how the school should respond.

## 8. The Role of the Inclusion and Attendance Team

The Inclusion and Attendance team are responsible for responding to notifications of children missing education and children who are at risk of missing education. The team work closely with other relevant service areas i.e. School Admissions, Pupil Reintegration Team (PRT), Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education team (EMTET), SEND and Early Help as examples. The team will ensure the process for identifying, investigating, and finding children missing education is carried out.

The Inclusion and Attendance team are responsible for tracking children that are missing education. This is carried out by the CME Tracker. The tracker is responsible for recording the CME status onto the Integrated Children's Services database (Mosaic).

When a child is referred to the local authority, the CME Team will initially check to see if a child is on roll of another school.

Where appropriate and possible, the CME Tracker will investigate the whereabouts of the family by contacting agencies such as Housing, Health, and through an investigation of their internal systems, such as Key to Success and School2School.

Once the CME Team has carried out all initial checks and the child/family is still not located, the Safeguarding and Education Welfare Officer (SEWO) within the Inclusion and Attendance team may visit the home and make enquiries within the local area to attempt to establish

where the family may have moved to. The SEWO will use the information provided by the school to prioritise their searches.

## 9. Children that are found but not in Education

Most children are found through the investigations above. When a child is found, and they are not in education, the SEWO will support the parents to get the child back into education. This is usually achieved by asking parents to submit a School Admission form. However if 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 of time 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 of time will potentially need more support than a usual in-year admission. Schools should consider completing appropriate assessments to establish needs and ensure that the reintegration into education is successful.

## 10. Children that 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 information provided by the school 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 the relevant authority to notify them.

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 SEWO will check with the school and other agencies as to the nature of the concerns. They may check with Immigration and Border Force depending on the level of concern.

### **FAMILIES FAILING TO RETURN FROM A HOLIDAY OR PERIOD OF PLANNED LEAVE:**

- Where a family take planned or unplanned leave to another country all standard procedures for non-school attendance should continue, including regular contact between parent and school, the correct coding of the register for the period of absence according to what has been agreed, and the continued monitoring and tracking of attendance, whilst the child remains school roll.
- Where a parent(s) gives a date of return (within reasonable timeframe) schools must retain the child on roll during this time and work to this return date.
- If a family do not return on the date communicated to the school and fail to remain in regular contact with the school to update them regarding their return, the school must contact the parent by phone and in writing to formally advise and remind them of their intention to return date. Parents should be informed that they may risk losing their child's school place if they fail to remain in contact and provide a return date, within a reasonable time.

Children who are not found at the end of all investigations are reported to HMRC who may be able to provide us with a forwarding address or confirm that the family is still residing at the current address. Further investigations will be carried out 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 until the child is no longer statutory school age.

## 11. Contact Details

### **CME Team**

Email: [cme@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:cme@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 01522 552771

CME referral for Lincolnshire schools

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-attendance/pupil-attendance>

### **EHE Team**

Email: [ehe@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:ehe@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 01522 553241

EHE referral for Lincolnshire schools

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/school-attendance/pupil-attendance/2>



# Appendix 1 – 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
<p>School attempts to contact parents. Good practice is to contact from day 1 of absence but no later than day 3.</p> <p><b>The school must:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Make further attempts to contact the parents, either by letter or by home visiting</li> <li>• Contact any other schools where the pupil or their siblings are known to have been pupils</li> <li>• Check with the pupil's peer group to ascertain if they are aware of any change in the pupil's place of residency</li> <li>• Contact any relevant agency, for example, the family welfare officer in the relevant armed forces in the case of a service child</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>School should be following their school attendance and safeguarding procedures. If no contact is made with parents/carers, complete home visit.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>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.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>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 school attendance procedures. <b>Do not remove from roll.</b></p> <p>After 10 days of unauthorised absence inform the local authority through the Pupil Not Attending Regularly (PNAR) notification survey</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>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, make amendments to child's file and continue with non-school attendance procedures.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Once confirmed remove from roll and complete CML file.</p> <p>If a new school is not known, report the child as child missing education (CME) notification survey.</p> <p><b>Do not remove from roll.</b></p> <p>After 20 days, if no further information following joint investigation between school and local authority, consult the CME Team to confirm you can remove from roll.</p>	<p>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). Request the family to fully complete a Leavers Form.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>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.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>Do not take off roll.</b></p> <p>After 20 days, if no further information following joint investigation between school and local authority, consult the CME Team to confirm you can remove from roll.</p>	<p>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). Request the family to fully complete a Leavers Form.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>If the information is provided, remove child from roll and complete the CML file within 5 days of leaving date.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>If the information is not provided complete the CME notification survey.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>After 20 days, if no further information following joint investigation between school and local authority, consult the CME Team to confirm you can remove from roll.</p>	<p>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/carer, school should make attempts to engage (telephone, texts, e-mails letters and home visit).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>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).</p> <p><b>Do not assume that the child is at another school.</b></p>
	<p><b>Health Related Absence</b></p> <p>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.</p>		<p><b>Mid- year application</b></p> <p>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/carer. If there is no confirmation, the leaving school must follow non-attendance procedures (see column one).</p> <p><b>Do not assume that the child has started at another school.</b></p>
	<p><b>Child who is not in receipt of full time education</b></p> <p>A child not in receipt of full time education (usually 25 hrs) must be entered on the Reduced Timetable notification survey.</p>	<p><b>Looked after Children (LAC)</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>Do not remove from roll until directed by Virtual School.</b></p>	<p><b>Traveller Children</b></p> <p>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).</p> <p><b>Do not assume that the child is at another school.</b></p>