



OAKLANDS
SCHOOL

Children Missing Education (CME) Policy

Approved by:	Julie Smith	Date: April 2024
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‘Every child deserves to be the best they can be’

Contents	Page
1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and statutory guidance	2
3. Factors that Increase Risk of Missing Education	3
4. Increased Vulnerability as a Consequence of Missing Education	4
5. Child Protection	4
6. Procedures	5
7. Monitoring Arrangements	5
8. Links with other policies	6

1. Aims

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.

This policy supports Oaklands School 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.

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

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

- The Education Act 1996 section 436A;
- The Education Act 2002;
- The Children Act 1989;
- The Children Act 2004;
- Statutory guidance for local authorities: Children missing education (September 2016);
- Elective Home Education Guidelines;
- Unregistered independent schools and out of school settings - non-statutory guidance for local authorities
- 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) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

Children Missing Education (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.

- 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;
- Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation (including travel to conflict zones), and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life;
- 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.

It also 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 and Previously Looked After Children. These teachers are ideally placed to assist when identifying those children currently in school who may be at greater risk of going missing from education.

3. Factors that increase risk of missing education

These 'missing' children 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 why a child is missing education include:

- 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 experiencing mental health problems;
- Children at risk of a forced marriage;
- Children at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
- Children experiencing abuse and neglect.

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 either by attending a school or the provision of electronic or distance learning packages where these are available.

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), 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's **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) 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.

4. Increased Vulnerability as a consequence of missing education

Children who are missing out on education are at increased risk of being criminally exploited or being groomed and exploited by gangs.

Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, criminal or sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education. See Oaklands School 'Return Home and Missing Episode Policy'.

5. Child Protection

The Headteacher will inform the Pupil Tracking Officer and the child's social worker immediately if a child who is Looked After or subject to a Child Protection Plan is missing.

In the following circumstances a referral to Children's Social Care 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;
- There is a suspicion or concern regarding FGM or Forced Marriage.

6. Procedures

As a result of daily admissions registration, we at Oaklands School are well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If a member of school 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 lead should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability by making reasonable enquiries, and where appropriate refer any concerns about the child to Children's Services where it is believed they may be at risk of harm (see the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy).

We monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance (see the Attendance Policy). If the attendance does not improve it is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to Attendance Service within the local authority.

In the more general circumstances of a child missing education, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the Pupil Tracking Officer and/or the Education Welfare Officer of any child, who has not attended for 10 consecutive school days without provision of a reasonable explanation.

However, if the school are alerted to a situation or have concerns before the 10-day period of a child missing from education they can refer to the LA sooner.

All schools, colleges and educational providers have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and this includes investigating any unexplained absences.

We 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.

We are required to 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.

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 and that the grounds for removal can be applied (see [Annex A of Children missing education Statutory guidance for local authorities](#)). 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 they have not been located, the Headteacher will arrange for the pupil's records to be retained until the child is located.

Where the Headteacher 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 as soon as the pupil is removed and the pupil's records should then be transferred to the education service to be stored in accordance with local arrangements.

When we receive a new pupil without receiving information about the pupil from their previous school, the school should contact the Pupil Tracking Officer.

If the Pupil Tracking Officer becomes aware the child has moved to another school, they should ensure that all relevant agencies are informed and arrangements made to forward records from the previous school.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher annually. At every review the policy will be approved by the governing board.

8. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Admissions policy
- Attendance policy
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Return home and missing episode policy