



Children Missing Education Policy (2026)

Reviewed:	September 2026
Next Review:	September 2027
Policy Owner:	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Approved by:	Gill Sommers (Safeguarding Governor)

1. Policy Statement

The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. Children missing education (CME) are recognised as being at significant risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, child criminal exploitation (CCE), child sexual exploitation (CSE), forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), radicalisation, trafficking and other forms of harm.

The School recognises that a child going missing from education is a potential safeguarding concern requiring prompt action.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff should recognise that children missing education are at heightened risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, contextual safeguarding risks and other forms of significant harm.

Concerns must always be treated as safeguarding concerns until established otherwise.

This policy sets out the School's procedures for preventing children from becoming missing from education, identifying concerns promptly, making appropriate enquiries and fulfilling all statutory responsibilities.

This policy should be read alongside the current 2026-27 versions of:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Missing Child Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

2. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)



- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Independent School Standards Regulations 2014
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools (September 2025)
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE)
- Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

Children Missing Education should always be considered alongside wider safeguarding indicators including exploitation, mental health concerns, domestic abuse, online harms, serious violence and contextual safeguarding.

The School will also comply with all Local Authority Children Missing Education procedures.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Nursery pupils where appropriate
- Reception
- Preparatory pupils
- All compulsory school age pupils
- Boarding pupils (if applicable)
- International pupils
- Children with SEND



- Children who are looked after
- Previously looked after children

4. Definitions

A child missing education is a child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. This includes children who are awaiting a school place, have been offered a place for a future date but have not yet started, are receiving elective home education that the Local Authority has assessed as unsuitable, or whose whereabouts remain unclear or unknown.

A pupil who remains registered at the School is not technically a child missing education, even if persistently or severely absent. However, the pupil may be at risk of becoming CME and the absence may indicate a safeguarding concern requiring immediate action.

Persistent, severe or unexplained absence may also be an indicator of safeguarding concerns and should be assessed alongside other known vulnerabilities.

5. Principles

The School will:

- place the welfare of children at the centre of decision making;
- maintain accurate admission and attendance records;
- monitor attendance daily;
- investigate unexplained absence promptly and proportionately;
- work collaboratively with parents;
- share information lawfully with safeguarding partners;
- notify the Local Authority where required;
- maintain accurate records of all actions taken;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are referred immediately where appropriate.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body/Proprietor

The Governing Body will ensure:

- statutory safeguarding duties are met;
- appropriate policies are in place;



- safeguarding arrangements are monitored;
- appropriate training is provided;
- the Designated Safeguarding Lead has sufficient authority and resources.

The Governing Body will receive regular reports regarding attendance trends, CME referrals and safeguarding themes whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Head

The Head will ensure:

- this policy is implemented consistently;
- attendance is effectively monitored;
- appropriate staffing arrangements exist;
- referrals are made where necessary;
- Local Authority notifications are completed.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL has overall responsibility for:

- overseeing safeguarding aspects of CME;
- assessing safeguarding risk;
- liaising with Children's Social Care;
- working with the Local Authority;
- maintaining safeguarding records;
- supporting staff;
- ensuring concerns are escalated promptly.

Attendance Lead/School Office

The Attendance Lead will:

- maintain accurate registers;
- investigate unexplained absence;
- maintain admission records;
- notify the DSL of concerns;



- support Local Authority enquiries.

All Staff

All staff must:

- record attendance accurately;
- report concerns immediately;
- recognise that missing education may indicate abuse or neglect;
- follow safeguarding procedures without delay.

7. Admissions Register

The School will enter all pupils' details on the electronic Admissions Register by the first day that the pupil is registered to attend the School. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date the School Office will contact parents and undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity if required.

On admission the electronic Admissions Register will include:

- the pupil's full legal name;
- the name the pupil uses at School;
- the pupil's sex;
- the pupil's date of birth;
- the pupil's address;
- the full name and address of each parent;
- which parent or parents the pupil normally lives with;
- at least one emergency telephone number for each parent with whom the pupil normally lives and, wherever reasonably practicable, an emergency contact number for more than one person;
- the pupil's agreed starting day;
- the name and address of the last school attended, if any;
- for each pupil of compulsory school age, whether the pupil is a boarder or day pupil;
- details of any future address and the date the pupil will start living there, where notified; and
- the name of any other school the pupil is or will be attending and the relevant start date, where notified.

Admission records will be kept securely.



8. Attendance Registers

Registers will be taken:

- at the beginning of every morning session;
- at the beginning of every afternoon session;
- at any additional registration points determined by the School.

Registers will be completed promptly and accurately.

Attendance will be monitored daily.

Patterns of absence will be analysed regularly.

Where code N is used temporarily because the reason for absence has not yet been established, it will be amended to the correct code as soon as the reason is known and no later than five school days after the session. If the reason remains unknown, code O will be used.

9. First Day Response

Where a pupil does not arrive as expected:

The School will:

1. attempt immediate contact with parents/carers;
2. contact emergency contacts if necessary;
3. record all attempts;
4. undertake an immediate safeguarding risk assessment;
5. notify the DSL immediately where safeguarding concerns are identified.

If concerns remain unresolved, escalation procedures will commence.

10. Persistent and Unexplained Absence

Unexplained absence will always be investigated.

Where attendance causes safeguarding concern, the School may:

- hold attendance meetings;
- undertake welfare checks;
- request medical evidence where appropriate;
- involve the DSL;
- seek Family Help;



- refer to Children's Social Care;
- notify the Local Authority.

11. Children Missing Education

Where a child's whereabouts are unknown, the School will undertake reasonable enquiries including, where appropriate:

- contacting parents;
- contacting emergency contacts;
- contacting relatives where appropriate;
- checking previous educational settings;
- liaising with the Local Authority;
- checking safeguarding records;
- considering home visits following risk assessment;
- working with health services;
- contacting Children's Social Care;
- involving the Police where necessary.
- A contemporaneous chronology of all actions, decisions and communications will be maintained.
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Pupils Who Are Suspended or Excluded

Any suspension or permanent exclusion will be managed in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy and applicable legal requirements. The School will consider the pupil's continued education, welfare and safeguarding throughout any period when the pupil is not attending and will liaise with the Local Authority where required.

Unknown Whereabouts of a Child

Where a child's whereabouts or circumstances are unclear or unknown, the School and Local Authority will work together to undertake and record reasonable enquiries. The School will conduct the enquiries available to it and will cooperate with the Local Authority, which may use its statutory powers and national information-sharing arrangements. Actions may include:

- make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details;
- check local databases within the local authority;
- follow local information sharing arrangements and where possible make enquiries via other local databases and agencies e.g. those of housing providers, school admissions, health services, police, refuge, Youth Justice Services, children's social care, and HMRC;



- ask the Local Authority to consider enquiries through national agencies and databases, including UK Visas and Immigration, Border Force, the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs, the Ministry of Defence and relevant health services;
- check with agencies known to be involved with family;
- check with local authority and school from which child moved originally, if known;
- check with any local authority and school to which a child may have moved;
- check with the local authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is;
- in the case of children of Service Personnel, check with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS); and
- home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.

This list is not exhaustive or prescriptive. Each case will be considered on its individual facts and enquiries will be proportionate to the risks and circumstances. The School will continue to work with the Local Authority until it is mutually agreed that enquiries have concluded or that there are no further reasonable actions for the School to take. Where appropriate, next steps may include contacting the Police, Children's Social Care or, where there are concerns about a child who has travelled abroad, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

12. Local Authority Notifications

The School will notify the Local Authority where required by legislation and within statutory timescales, and local procedures, including when:

- a compulsory school age pupil leaves at a non-standard transition point;
- a pupil is removed from roll in accordance with statutory requirements;
- there are concerns regarding a child's whereabouts;
- information is requested under statutory powers.

The School will make attendance returns to the Local Authority at the intervals agreed with it and at least once in each calendar month. These returns will include the names and addresses of compulsory school age pupils who:

- fail to attend School regularly; or
- have been continuously absent for ten school days where the absence has been recorded using one or more of codes G, N, O or U.

The School will make a sickness return where a compulsory school age pupil is recorded as absent using code I and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will miss 15 or more school days because of illness, whether consecutively or cumulatively during the school year.

Attendance concerns will be considered alongside the individual child's circumstances. Any pattern of persistent, severe or unexplained absence will be considered by the DSL and may result in safeguarding action irrespective of overall attendance percentage or the statutory return thresholds.



The School will cooperate fully with Local Authority Children Missing Education Officers and, where relevant, will inform the pupil's social worker and/or youth justice worker about unexplained absence or proposed deletion from the register.

13. Removal from the Admissions Register

A pupil's name may be deleted from the Admissions Register only where a ground in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 is met in full. The name will be deleted as soon as the relevant ground is met and will not be deleted retrospectively. Attendance will continue to be recorded until the date of deletion.

Before deletion, the School will:

- confirm and record the applicable regulation 9 ground;
- retain the evidence demonstrating that every condition for that ground has been satisfied;
- where grounds H or I apply, undertake joint reasonable enquiries with the Local Authority and obtain agreement that there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the School again;
- make the required deletion return to the Local Authority and provide the prescribed information; and
- retain all relevant records securely.

The School will not remove a pupil solely because contact cannot be established with a parent or because the pupil is persistently or severely absent.

Where a parent gives the School written notification that, after a specified day, the child will no longer attend and will receive education otherwise than at school, the School will delete the child's name in accordance with regulation 9 once that day has passed, unless a School Attendance Order naming the School remains in force. The School will notify the Local Authority and share any safeguarding concerns. Responsibility for assessing the suitability of elective home education rests with the Local Authority.

14. Safeguarding

Children missing education are at increased risk of:

- abuse;
- neglect;
- child sexual exploitation;
- child criminal exploitation;
- county lines involvement;
- trafficking;
- forced marriage;



- female genital mutilation;
- honour-based abuse;
- radicalisation;
- modern slavery.

Any safeguarding concern will result in immediate referral to the DSL.

Where a child is believed to be at risk of significant harm, Children's Social Care and/or the Police will be contacted immediately.

15. Vulnerable Groups

Additional monitoring may be appropriate for:

- children with SEND;
- looked after children;
- previously looked after children;
- children subject to Child Protection Plans;
- children in need;
- young carers;
- pupils with poor attendance history;
- pupils experiencing mental health difficulties;
- pupils affected by domestic abuse.

Mental health concerns may both contribute to, and arise from, poor attendance. Attendance concerns should therefore be considered alongside the child's wider wellbeing.

16. Information Sharing

Information will be shared lawfully, proportionately and in accordance with safeguarding legislation.

Concerns will not be withheld because of data protection considerations where safeguarding requires information sharing.

Sharing Information with the Local Authority

The School will notify the Local Authority when a pupil of compulsory school age leaves the School at a non-standard transition point e.g. other than at the end of the Summer Term at the end of Year 8.

The School will provide the Local Authority with the following information:

- the full name of the pupil



- the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives
- at least one telephone number (two wherever possible) of the parent(s) with whom the pupil lives
- where applicable the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil will be going to live with and the date the pupil is expected to start living there
- the name of the pupil's destination school and anticipated start date if known
- the reason/grounds why the pupil has left the school

The School will make a new pupil return to the Local Authority within five days whenever a pupil's name is added to the Admissions Register outside the start of the School's most junior year. The return will contain all information held in the Admissions Register. The School will also provide returns at standard transition points where requested by the Local Authority. Information relating to funded early education will be supplied separately where required.

17. Record Keeping

The School will maintain:

- attendance records;
- admissions records;
- safeguarding records;
- chronology of actions taken;
- communications with parents;
- Local Authority correspondence;
- referral records.

When a pupil joins the school after the age of 5 the name of the pupil's previous school will be recorded. When a pupil leaves the School the destination school, where known, will be recorded.

Records will be retained in accordance with statutory retention schedules.

18. Training

All staff will receive:

- safeguarding induction;
- annual safeguarding updates;
- regular attendance guidance;
- awareness of Children Missing Education procedures.

DSL training will be completed in accordance with statutory guidance.



19. Monitoring

The DSL and Head will monitor:

- attendance trends;
- persistent absence;
- repeat absences;
- safeguarding referrals;
- Local Authority notifications;
- policy effectiveness.

Governors will receive appropriate safeguarding reports.

20. Equality

This policy will be implemented fairly and consistently.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required for pupils with disabilities or additional needs.

21. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where:

- legislation changes;
- statutory guidance changes;
- inspection recommendations require amendment;
- safeguarding practice develops.

Appendix A – Indicators of Potential CME

Staff should be alert to:

- repeated unexplained absence;
- poor punctuality;
- inability to contact parents;
- sudden withdrawal from school;
- repeated holidays during term time;



- concerns regarding neglect;
- domestic abuse;
- exploitation;
- significant behavioural changes;
- children saying they are moving without clear arrangements.

Appendix B – Immediate Staff Actions

If a child cannot be located:

1. Inform the School Office immediately.
2. Notify the DSL without delay.
3. Record all known information.
4. Do not remove the pupil from roll.
5. Continue reasonable enquiries.
6. Escalate safeguarding concerns immediately.
7. Notify external agencies where required.
8. Maintain a clear written chronology of all actions.

Appendix C – Related Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Attendance
- Behaviour
- Admissions
- Missing Child
- Whistleblowing
- Online Safety
- SEND
- Staff Code of Conduct