## Child Missing Education Guidance

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## Identifying and maintaining contact with children missing or at risk of going missing from education and removing pupils from school roll

## Reviewed March 2023

1. **Introduction**
   1. Children who are not receiving suitable education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk and this can include engagement in anti-social or criminal behaviour, social disengagement, forced marriage & FGM, radicalisation and/or sexual exploitation.

1.2 The **national definition** of a child missing from education is:

“All children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as 15 school days or more)”

1.3 A child becomes ‘Compulsory School Age’ on either 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of ‘Compulsory School Age’ on the last Friday of June during the academic year they become 16.

**2. The Law relating to children missing from education**

2.1 Part 1, Section 4 of The Education and Inspection Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to have in place arrangements that will identify children in their area who are not receiving a suitable education. The duty applies to children of compulsory school age (5-16) who are not on a school roll and are not receiving suitable education.

2.2 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 effective 1st September 2016, details requirements of schools to inform the Local Authority (LA) when pupils are admitted or removed from the school roll.

2.3 Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on governing bodies and proprietors of academies to make arrangements for supporting pupils at schools with medical conditions. Statutory guidance advises that LAs must work with schools to support pupils affected by this.

**2.4** Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for local authorities September 2016

[**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/550416/Children\_Missing\_Education\_-\_statutory\_guidance.pdf**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf)

**3. Identifying children at risk of going missing**

3.1 The LA must put in place arrangements for joint working and appropriate information sharing with other agencies and LAs which come into contact with families and children. The following are the relevant agencies:

* All schools – including Maintained schools, Academies, Independent schools and Pupil Referral Units
* Health
* Police
* Youth Offending Teams
* Housing
* Children’s Safeguarding Teams

3.2 Below is a list of children who are vulnerable to go missing from education.

* Children at risk of forced marriage or FGM
* Young people at risk of radicalisation
* Young people who have committed criminal offences
* Children living in women's refuges
* Children in homeless families, perhaps living in temporary accommodation, houses of multiple occupancy or Bed and Breakfast accommodation
* Young runaways
* Children with long-term medical or emotional health problems
* Unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees, or the children of asylum seeking families
* Looked after children
* Children from Gypsy/Roma/Traveller background
* Young carers
* Children from transient families, i.e. students who have experienced high levels of mobility between different education providers
* Teenage mothers
* Children excluded from school
* Children in private fostering arrangements
* Children informally excluded from school and those placed on long term part time timetables
* Children taken off roll following a lengthy absence due to an extended family holiday taken in term-time
* Children entering or leaving the independent schools sector
* EC nationals who have the right of abode in the UK – this now includes a significant number of asylum seekers granted status by other EC countries and who have subsequently moved to the UK
* Others who have come from abroad to live and or work in the Borough
* Children who have particular social and behavioural difficulties and are placed in alternative placements. This means that by arrangement they do not attend their usual school full time
* Children who have low levels of attendance (persistent or severely absent).

3.3 Children fall out of the education system and are at risk of ‘going missing’ due to a wide range of reasons, some examples of which are listed below:

* They fail to start appropriate provision and so never enter the school system

(e.g. pre school to Reception or they are new to Tameside and no school application is submitted).

* They fail to complete a transition to High school.
* They cease to attend, due to exclusion (e.g. illegal or unofficial exclusions) or withdrawal / removal from roll with no named destination.

**3.4** The law allows parents to arrange for their children to be educated at home rather than at school. The LA has a robust system in place for monitoring the education of children that are educated at home. Pupils who are educated at home are NOT considered to be missing education. Further information on this can be found on the Tameside website or via [ehe@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:ehe@tameside.gov.uk).

# 4. Duty of the Local Authority

# 4.1 The Local Authority (Tameside Council) are committed to ensuring that there are secure pathways, procedures and monitoring systems in place to ensure that all children of compulsory school age are known and tracked. There are robust arrangements in place to share information when children of compulsory school age move into or out of the borough where their whereabouts are known or unknown.

4.2 The LA has a CME Tracking Officer, which schools, other agencies and organisations can contact regarding CME via [cme@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:cme@tameside.gov.uk).

Responsibilities include:

* Developing and monitoring a referral system for children out of school, at risk of missing education and those reported missing.
* Maintaining and updating the children missing education database and acting as a link with schools and other agencies.
* Working with schools and other agencies to ensure that procedures and practices are in place to minimise the possibility of children and young people going missing from education.
* Maintain procedures to track pupils who have been reported as missing education.

**5. Duty of schools (Including Academies, Independent Schools and Pupil Referral**

**Units)**

5.1 *“All (School) staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in the future. Staff should be aware of their school’s or college’s unauthorised absence and children missing from education procedures.”*

*Extract from Keeping Children Safe in Education (part 1) – September 2020*

5.2 Schools are required to inform the LA about the details of:

* All pupils admitted or removed from the roll of their school in accordance with The Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This is usually done via data transfer (B2B) or migration reports.
* However, if the pupil’s whereabouts are not known, the school and LA must make joint reasonable enquiries. This will require a CME referral.
* Any pupil who has been absent without school’s authorisation for a continuous period of 20 days or more.

5.3 Where schools have any safeguarding concerns about any pupil, it is vital that they follow their school’s safeguarding procedures, **a referral to CME does not replace a referral to Children’s Safeguarding Team.**

**6. Duty of other agencies**

6.1 Staff from other departments of the Local Authority and external agencies who come across any children, who they believe may not be accessing educational provision, are requested to contact the allocated school in the first instance. If this is unknown, they can contact the CME Tracking Officer via [cme@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:cme@tameside.gov.uk).

These agencies may involve Housing Officers, Community Safety Officers, Police, Health Professionals, Children’s Safeguarding professionals, etc.

**7. Referral**

7.1 Where schools are required to notify the LA of a pupil who is CME (see off rolling document - Appendix 1), a CME referral form should be completed and submitted, the referral is an online referral and can be found here: <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/ChildrenMissingEducation>

It is imperative that details of any actions taken to locate the pupil by school staff are detailed on the form eg: home visits, enquiries with emergency contacts etc. If this information is not provided it may cause a delay in action being taken by the LA.

**8. Children Missing from Education procedures**

8.1 Below are the procedures to be followed by school staff, prior to a referral to CME Officer, when the whereabouts of a pupil are not known.

* Carry out routine checks with the pupil’s named emergency contacts - telephone numbers/text message/email to try to establish the pupil’s whereabouts.
* Write letters to the pupil’s last known address.
* Check the pupil’s records to see if there are any siblings at another school – if so, contact that school to make further enquiries
* Ask the friends of missing pupils for any information
* Carry out a home visit to the pupil’s last known address
* If a voluntary aided school, check with the appropriate local faith leader

A record of the above actions should be kept and noted on the CME referral form.

8.2 Where school staff have been unsuccessful at locating a family and after a period of no less than 10 school days, a CME referral form should be submitted.

8.3 Where school staff have located the family but they are out of borough and a school place has not been allocated in that borough, a CME referral form should be submitted.

8.4 Pupils should remain on a school roll after a referral has been submitted until they receive notification from the CME Tracking Officer that they may remove them.

8.5 On receipt of CME referral form the Tracking Officer will carry out the following tasks:

* Liaise with the School Admissions Team to check if a transfer or appeal application has been received.
* Carry out initial checks with various partner agencies including Children’s Social Care, health, housing, Youth Offending Teams.
* If no information is found from the initial checks, arrangements may be made for a home visit to be carried out by an Education Welfare Officer. If the pupil is found to still be at the known address, the case will be referred back to school to be managed under their non-attendance process (see *Appendix 2*).
* If there is a suggestion that the family have moved to a different authority, even if no actual address is known, the Tracking Officer will notify the CME Officer in the LA where information suggests the child may have moved to.
* At this point, or if the pupil’s whereabouts remain unknown, the pupil will be recorded as ‘CME’ and the case will be held open by the LA until the whereabouts of the pupil become known.
* The Tracking Officer will:
* Inform school staff to remove the pupil from their school roll
* carry out regular follow-up checks in an ongoing effort to try and ascertain the pupil’s whereabouts,
* notify the Police ‘Missing Persons Co-ordinator’ if pupils have not been traced within a period of 6 months,
* liaise with other agencies as and when necessary, e.g. other LA’s, other area schools, UK Border Agency, Children’s Safeguarding professionals.

8.5 Once schools have been advised by the Tracking Officer to remove pupils from their school roll they should upload pupil information onto the DfE s2s (school to school) ‘lost pupil’ database.

8.6 In the event of a pupil’s whereabouts becoming known following ongoing investigations, the Tracking Officer will update the previous school and School Admissions.

**9. Pupils who fail to attend their allocated school**

9.1 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 state the following:

*“…a pupil is a pupil at the school from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or has been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.”*

When allocating a school place parents and school staff are made aware of the date by which the pupil is expected to be on their school roll, this will normally be 15 days from the date of the allocation. To comply with this regulation, pupils should be added to the school roll by the “expected to be on roll by” date cited in the allocation letter.

9.2 School staff must be proactive in their attempts to contact parents by phone calls, letters and home visits within a 15 day period of being informed that a pupil has been allocated a place at their school. All attempts of contact should be evidenced on any future CME referral in the event that the pupil’s whereabouts turns out to be unknown.

9.3 Where school staff have evidence that the pupil no longer lives at the last known address, a CME referral form should be submitted. Pupils should not be removed from school roll until advised to do so by the Tracking Officer.

9.4 Where a pupil’s whereabouts are unchanged from that provided on the school application form but parents are refusing to ensure attendance at that school, the pupil must be added to the school roll no later than the expected date quoted in the allocation letter.

9.5 School staff should then follow their attendance procedures to address the non attendance. The Education Welfare Service will assist school staff to prepare any legal paperwork should this become necessary. It should be noted that in order for a parent to be guilty of the offence in The Education Act 1996, which requires parents to ensure regular attendance, the pupil must be on a school roll otherwise no offence is being committed by a parent and therefore no enforcement action can be taken.

9.6 Where the non attendance is a result of the pupil not being allocated their preferred schools, parents should be advised to use the school appeals procedure in the first instance.

9.7 The Admissions Team is provided with results of all school appeals. Where an appeal was unsuccessful, checks are made to ensure that pupils attend the original placement.

9.8 In the case of Reception pupils that are not statutory school age, school staff should make every attempt to contact the parent / carer as detailed above. If there is no response after 10 days, a CME referral form should be submitted.

1. If the pupil has not been located after 20 school days, school staff are asked to send a letter, to the last known address, advising parents /carers that the pupil will be removed from the school roll.

1. If a parent of a non-statutory Reception pupil choses not to allow their child to attend the allocated school as they are prepared to wait for a place at their preferred school, the allocated school is required to send parents a letter stating that the child will be removed from the school roll.

The Tracking Officer will hold the details of all pupils in (a) and (b) until such time that the pupil reaches statutory school age. At this point, enquiries will commence by the Tracking Officer to establish if the pupil has re-applied for a school place. If parents refuse to submit an application form once the pupil reaches statutory school age, legal proceedings may take place.

Parents of summer born pupils are permitted to defer admission of their child until they are compulsory school age. This must be done with prior arrangements and schools will be notified to make special arrangements. No CME referral is required in these circumstances.

**10. Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions**

10.1 Children can miss large amounts of education, or be unable to attend school at all, as a result of having a having a medical condition. It is for this reason, Governing bodies are required to make arrangements for supporting pupils to ensure they can access all aspects of the curriculum including PE and school trips.

10.2 Statutory guidance states that schools should have a medical policy which covers provision for pupils. In developing this policy, schools should liaise with health care professionals.

Where appropriate, schools should develop an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) for pupils. This will detail what specific arrangements will be put in place and which member of staff will be responsible for supporting pupils. IHCPs should be written after gaining advice from health care professionals, parents / carers & pupils.

Link to statutory guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/484418/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions.pdf>

10.3 Where a pupil with a medical condition is absent for 15 school days in an academic year and the absence relates directly to the medical condition, school staff should notify the LA via [medicalenquiries@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:medicalenquiries@tameside.gov.uk).

10.4 Where a pupil is unable to attend school but their medical condition allows them to access education, the LA may provide alternative provision. This may include online learning, home tuition or other appropriate measures. LA guidance relating to pupils with medical conditions and the role of the LA. This can be found at <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/ChildrenMissingEducation>