



**THOMAS ALLEYNES HIGH SCHOOL
UTTOXETER**

Thomas Alleyne's High School

Children who go missing in education policy

Approved/reviewed by	
Managing & Resources Committee October 2023	
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Introduction

Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 (www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2) requires that all staff should be aware of systems within their school or college which support safeguarding and these should be explained to them as part of staff induction. This should include the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education. This will be included in the safeguarding professional development (CPD) plan for staff for the academic year and is part of the Safeguarding level 1 training.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a key duty on local authorities and requires effective joint working between agencies and professionals. When a child goes missing or runs away they are at risk. Safeguarding children therefore includes protecting them from this risk. Local authorities are responsible for protecting children whether they go missing from their family home or from local authority care.

All professionals working with children, as well as the wider community can help by remaining vigilant to children's safety and wellbeing. The law states that 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 from education, particularly persistently, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation. It is important the school's response to children missing from education supports identifying such abuse and also helps prevent the risk of them going missing in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as on a child in need or child protection plan, or as a looked after child), where going missing from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community. www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education

The DFE defines CME as:

'All children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in an alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period (usually four weeks or more)

Children with missing episodes from home/care

- **Any Child** may benefit from Early Help, but all school and college staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure all staff are aware of the early help process and understand their role in it. For our district earliest help is accessed via the referral pathway to Malachi Family Support. Parental consent is needed. For the next tier, the Early Help Team referral can be made by school. Again, parental consent is needed for this tier of help.

- *Definition from statutory guidance: Missing child:* a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers.
- Since April 2013 police forces have been rolling out new definitions of 'missing' and 'absent' in relation to children and adults reported as missing to the police. These are:
 - *missing:* anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another; and
 - *absent:* a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be. The police classification of a person as 'missing' or 'absent' will be based on on-going risk assessment.
- In all cases of a known missing episode, we will call Staffordshire Advice and Support service (SCAS) (0300 111 8007) if no social worker is working with the family or the social worker. Each episode and correspondence will be added to MyConcern by the DSL or delegated person by the DSL.
- Where relevant (i.e. there is an associated risk of CSE or CCE), MACE VMAP matrices will be completed by the DSL and submitted to the VMAP team to support intelligence gathering. These will also be uploaded to MyConcern.
- Safe and well checks are carried out by the police as soon as possible after a child reported as missing has been found. (as per statutory guidance). However, to support a pupil's well-being, the DSL or delegated person by the DSL will support the pupil in school and do a well-being meeting in school. Following this any necessary multi-agency information sharing may be required and in all cases, the DSL will share this at the safeguarding board to support contextualised safeguarding.

Children missing in Education

- We will enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.
- We will monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register and address poor or irregular attendance. It is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority. Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.
- When a child is expected to join a school and does not arrive, for the first 10 school days the school will make our own enquiries. This should include trying to contact the parents/carers by telephone or letter, and we will also contact the School Admissions Team to establish if the child has been registered elsewhere.
- We have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this we will investigate any unexplained absences.

- For absence of between 10 and 20 school days, we will investigate as per the list below to establish the reason for the unknown absence and lack of information:

As per the statutory guidance for Children Missing in Education

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

- When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown, it is reasonable to expect that the local authority and the school will complete and record one or more of the following actions:
 - a. make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details;
 - b. check local databases within the local authority
 - c. check Key to Success or school2school (s2s) systems;
 - d. 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;
 - e. check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and/or the Border Force;
 - f. check with agencies known to be involved with family;
 - g. check with local authority and school from which child moved originally, if known;
 - h. check with any local authority and school to which a child may have moved;
 - i. check with the local authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is;
 - j. in the case of children of Service Personnel, check with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS); and
 - k. home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.
- The guidance states that this list is not exhaustive or prescriptive, and so local authorities and schools should treat each case on its individual merits and use their judgement, ensuring they have taken into account all of the facts of the case. It should be recognised that the type of reasonable enquiries required to try to locate a child will differ from case to case and additional enquiries to those suggested in this section may be necessary.
- We would use our educational welfare officers at VIP Education to support our enquiries.
- The DFE documents Keeping "Children Safe in Education 2012" and "Working Together to Safeguard Children - A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children", originally published in March 2010, and revised in 2013, 2015 and 2018 says:
 - "There is a Children Missing Education (CME) named point of contact in every Local Authority. Every practitioner working with a child has a responsibility to inform their CME contact if they know or suspect that a child is not receiving education. To help local agencies and professionals find children who are missing from education and identify those that are at risk of going missing from education, guidance was issued in July 2004, identifying and maintaining contact with children missing, or at risk of going missing, from education."
- If after 20 school days (four school weeks) the child has not been located, the school will complete and submit a CME Referral Form to cme.referrals@staffordshire.gov.uk and it is at this point that the Headteacher should take the child off the school roll. School will contact:
 - Children Missing Education, Staffordshire County Council, Families First, Faraday Road, Stafford ST16 3NQ Telephone: 01785 278999 or 895966
Email: cme.referrals@staffordshire.gov.uk

- Dependent on the level of concern, the Education Safeguarding Advice Service can also be consulted by emailing esas@staffordshire.gov.uk or telephoning 0300 111 8007 (option 3).
- When a child is deleted from the school's admissions register, we will update their school management information system and clearly indicate the date and the reason for removal from roll. On the "i" tab next to "Reason for Leaving" the new school's name should be given together with its seven-digit school identifier number (schools in England and Wales) or the school name and locality (schools in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man, Channel Islands, Gibraltar or Armed Forces Schools abroad). We will refer to this guidance (see [CME webpage](#)) and notify the LA accordingly depending on the reason.
- Where a pupil leaves a school without a known destination, (which will have been referred to CME as above) the school should also upload the child's records to the secure area of s2s known as the Lost Pupils Database. Any school then admitting the child without previous school history can request their LA to search the Lost Pupils Database for the child's record.

DFE Guidance and part –time timetables.

In May 2022 the DfE released its latest version of 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance to help schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance, including roles and responsibilities.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf In this document it specifically addresses the issue of part-time timetables and advocates that all pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

Further to this it suggests that a part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised. (Page 18 of Working together to improve school attendance')

Current guidance from Ofsted states that schools, including academies and free schools, should inform the Local Authority of any part-time education arrangements regardless of provision provided. These children would be seen as children at risk of missing out on education, and therefore require monitoring. For the purposes of this document the definition of a child at risk of missing out on education is a child registered at a school but not receiving full time education as part of a planned approach by the school.

Parents role and responsibilities

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education (section 7 Education Act 1996). This can be by regular attendance at school, at alternative provision, or otherwise (e.g. the parent can choose to educate their child at home).

A parent means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

The local authority and school will need to decide who comes within the definition of parent in respect of a particular pupil when considering reducing / altering a child's school timetable, but generally parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.

When working with families to address issues which have led to the consideration of a part-time timetable schools should initiate an Early Help Assessment¹ (EHA). The outcome of the EHA may identify that support and advice is required from external agencies. This in turn will then inform an accurate and agreed personalised team around the family plan. Please be mindful that parental consent and knowledge is vital and that the views of the young person must also be taken into account.

It is vital that any reduction in educational hours or change to the child's timetable should be agreed with the child and their parents, as they will remain responsible for ensuring their child attends the agreed timetable / activity and for safeguarding their child when not in educational provision. Parents will be key to ensuring the child attends and engages with any proposed plans.

Parents who fail to support their child's attendance even on a reduced timetable may still be liable to statutory action from the Local Authority provided that there is clear documentation to demonstrate the parent's agreement to the change, and that they understood the expectations on them to ensure their child attendance.

Education Provider's roles and responsibilities.

Education provider includes; maintained schools (special and mainstream), academies, pupil referral units, independent schools and alternative education providers. A reduced timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision on a full time basis (equivalent to weekly hours the child would normally attend school) In agreeing to a reduced timetable a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence.

Schools should inform the local authority of any instances of a child been placed on a reduced timetable, so that the local authority is aware of the arrangements and can collate and monitor the data as required by Ofsted. Information should also be provided to the governors/trustees about any children placed on a reduced timetable, so that the governors/trustees can fulfil their responsibilities to monitor the schools provision.

Points to consider when planning a reduced / alternative timetable:

- Is an Early Help Assessment in place – Before entering into a reduced timetable the school must understand the young person needs and those of the wider family. The EHA is a good tool for gathering and understanding these.
- Safeguarding – is the young person / family known to safeguarding services, what impact will a reduced timetable have on any existing safeguarding issues, any reduced timetable should only be implemented following a review of the child protection or children in need plan, which may involve requesting a core group meeting?
- Impact on child – How could the reduced time/table effect the young person in terms of mental health, educational progress, peer relationships, relationship within family etc?
- Impact on wider family – Would the child spending more time at home put greater pressure on a family already experiencing difficulties. How could this be managed, could another agency provide family support?
- Clear plan to co-ordinate work with child and family – In every instance of a reduced / alternative timetable a clear plan, agreed by all parties, should be in place, which sets out each person's / agencies task, and records each person's / agencies agreement to cooperate.

- Set review dates and re-integration – Make sure you establish the review date prior to implementing the plan. This will ensure the young person does not become hidden, forgotten or allowed to drift. A recommended review period would be every 6 weeks, but should be sooner if there are any concern's around attendance / achievement or safeguarding.
- Appoint a lead person to be accountable for the plan – Every plan should have a lead person to ensure it is implemented and reviewed. This person will also be the single point of contact for the young person, family and other agencies.
- Parental involvement, responsibility and role – As above the parents must be clear about their role and responsibilities. In order for any change to be achieved and maintained the parents must be fully involved and in agreement with the plan.
- Other agencies involved with child and family, their role and responsibilities – Ensure you know which other agencies are involved with the young person, involve them in the planning.
- Regular contact - It is crucial that a child on a reduced timetable is contacted or seen daily by the school to ensure that the child is safe. This information must be recorded in the school. If the school has any concerns about the safety of a child on a reduced timetable they must follow their safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Safeguarding, radicalisation, child exploitation - Ensure that if you are making these changes that you have considered any consequential risks you may be exposing the young person to, or allowing them greater opportunity to become involved in unsafe activities.
- Know what registration codes you will use – Be clear how you will record the period of reduced / alternative provision, and how you will monitor attendance and safeguarding. What will happen if the young person does not attend or a safeguarding concern arises?

It is best practice for every education provider to keep a list of all its students on reduced / alternative timetables, alongside their individual plans.

References:

- Related Legislation PROMOTING THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN: DfE July 2014;

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335964/Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children Final 23-....pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335964/Promoting_the_educational_achievement_of_looked_after_children_Final_23-....pdf)

- SUPPORTING PUPILS AT SCHOOL WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS; DfE April 2014; Ref DfE-00 93-2014

[Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335964/Supporting_pupils_with_medical_conditions_at_school_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk))

- ENSURING A GOOD EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WHO CANNOT ATTEND SCHOOL BECAUSE OF HEALTH NEEDS;

[Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335964/Education_for_children_with_health_needs_who_cannot_attend_school_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk))

- KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION: SEPTEMBER 2023; DfE-00140-2016

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550511/Keeping_children_safe_in_education.pdf

- ALTERNATIVE PROVISION; DfE January 2013; Ref DfE-300-2013

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision>

- CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION Statutory guidance for Local Authorities; DfE November 2013: Ref: DfE-00261-2013

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

- Admission Pathway to a Staffordshire Short Stay School / Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) In year Admissions Fair Access Protocol

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/Schoolbag/2016/May/16-May/District-Inclusion-Partnership-Fair-Access-Protocol-and-PRU-Admission-Pathway.aspx>

- Children who are missing Education due to health/medical needs Protocol and Good Practice Guidance

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/Pupil-Support/SEN-and-Vulnerable-Children/Policies-and-Guidance.aspx>

- Children Missing Education

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/missing/CME.aspx>