

Cam Hopton Church of England Primary School (Voluntary Aided)

Life in all its fullness
John 10:10

Children Missing Education

Document History

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This policy is to be reviewed in line with other related policies and any other documentation from the DfE, Ofsted and Gloucestershire Diocese.

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1. Aims

We understand 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 education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

This policy sets out the criteria for when a child may be considered missing in education, highlights where there may be an increased risk, the roles and responsibilities within school, and the procedures that should be followed where there is a CME concern.

2. Definition

Children missing education (**CME**) are defined by the Department for Education as, '*children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school*'.

Many of the children who fall under this criteria are not on the roll of a school. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority as per the [Education Act 1996 s436A](#) to make arrangements to identify these children and work with parents to enrol or return them to a suitable full time education.

CME also includes those children who are **missing** (family whereabouts unknown) and are usually children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision. This might be a child who is not at their last known address **and either**

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
- has 10 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation, or
- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown

It is important to note that a pupil with poor attendance does not necessarily equate to them being a child missing education. Where a pupil is persistently absent (attendance less than 90%) or even severely absent (attendance less than 50%), we generally know the whereabouts of the child and are in communication with the family. In these cases, the normal Attendance Policy applies.

The [DfE's Children Missing Education Guidance](#) highlights several circumstances in which children may be more likely to be missing from education. These are:

- Children at risk of harm or neglect
- Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families
- Children of military service personnel
- Children who go missing or runaway
- Children who are in the Youth Justice System
- Children who cease to attend a school
- Children of new migrant families

In all cases where we are concerned about the welfare of a child, we will implement our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, making referrals to Children's Social Care and the Police as necessary.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for approving this policy and holding the Headteacher to account for its effective implementation. The Governing Body are provided with regular information relating to pupil attendance, pupil mobility and safeguarding data which includes the number of children for whom there are CME concerns.

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy in school, which may involve delegating some of the responsibilities to their wider leadership and staff teams. These responsibilities include:

- Entering pupils onto the admission register on the first day that the school and parents have agreed they will begin attending. School must also notify the local authority within five days of doing this if this is an admission at a non-standard transition point.
- Applying the daily attendance procedures outlined within the Attendance Policy. This includes accurate recording of registers, rigorous absence follow-up, monitoring and tracking of pupil attendance and working proactively to support when there are attendance concerns.
- Undertaking joint enquiries with the local authority in circumstances where there is a concern a pupil may be CME.
- Deleting pupils from the admission register where one of the grounds in [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) applies, including notifying the local authority within five days of doing this (unless it is a standard end of phase transition).

Staff

All staff will be vigilant in fulfilling their responsibilities under both the Attendance and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies, which underpin the effective implementation of this CME policy. Staff receive face to face safeguarding training on an annual basis, with further inputs throughout the academic year.

Staff responsibilities include ensuring that registers are completed accurately in a timely fashion, exploring the reasons for unexplained absences with pupils, and using CPOMS to share any concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and record information about the conversations they have with pupils and parents.

Parents

At Cam Hopton C of E Primary School, we believe that excellent attendance at school is the part of their child's education that parents have the most impact upon. This is why [Parental Responsibility Measures](#) are clear that it is a parent's responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly. Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that:

"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, their parent is guilty of an offence".

The following are some ways in which parents can support their child's attendance:

- Be aware of their legal responsibilities in ensuring their child attends school regularly
- Ensure that their child arrives to school punctually every day
- Reinforce to their children the importance of education and how attending regularly leads to higher achievement
- Contact school in a timely manner (before 9.00am) in the event that their child is going to be absent that day
- Ensure that any medical appointments are booked outside of school hours wherever possible

- Ensure that any leave of absence request is only made in the most exceptional of circumstances
- Support their child's attendance (and therefore achievement) by not taking holidays during term time
- Notify school immediately if there are any changes to details of named contacts for their child
- Work in partnership with school staff to support any improvement plans for their child's attendance

Local Authority

Gloucestershire County Council have a range of responsibilities relating to children missing education, many of which do not affect our school as they relate to children who are not on a school roll. In regard to CME concerns about our pupils, the local authority will:

- Provide a responsive Inclusion Team who will receive referrals from schools where joint enquiries are required.
- Support us in undertaking joint enquiries where there are concerns a pupil may be CME, utilising their access to wider systems to ascertain the whereabouts of the child.
- Provide staff training, support and guidance relating to all elements of the process.
- Ensure that Schoolsnet is kept up to date with clear processes for schools to follow.

4. Preventing Children Missing Education

It is a key priority at Cam Hopton C of E Primary School to create a culture that promotes excellent school attendance for all of our pupils and the ways in which we go about that are outlined in our Attendance Policy.

When pupils become children missing education it can often be outside of our control as a school, however, there are some measures that we can take to prevent this or at least make managing the process simpler when it happens. These measures include, but are not limited to:

- Creating a culture of transparency and honesty with families so they are open with school about any changes to their family circumstances or potential leaves of absence
- Being equally transparent with families about the guidance relating to children missing education and the potential ramifications of extended unauthorised and unexplained absence
- Actively forging positive relationships with families to build this culture
- Regularly reminding families to update us with their emergency contact details and holding multiple contacts on file wherever possible
- Maintaining accurate attendance registers according to DfE guidance on attendance coding
- Having clear accessible procedures for families to notify us about any day-to-day absences for their children
- Having clear accessible procedures for families to request any leaves of absence for their children
- Implementing absence procedures consistently, swiftly and robustly, each and every day
- Using professional curiosity to ascertain the reasons behind any unexplained absences
- Monitoring and tracking patterns of absence to identify any early warning signs

5. Responding to Concerns About Children Missing Education

Anyone can make a report to the Children Missing Education Team at Gloucestershire County Council if they believe a child of compulsory school age to be missing education. Reports can be made to: Tel 01452 426015 missingpupils@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Where it is believed that a child is missing education, the response differs depending on whether they are on a school roll.

Children who are not on a School Roll

It is the responsibility of Gloucestershire County Council to identify children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and support them to access a suitable full-time education. For example, when a family is new to the district.

Many families are able to apply for a school place without additional support, but for anyone that does require help, they can contact the Inclusion Team Email attendance@gloucestershire.gov.uk 01452 427274

Children who are on our School Roll

There are a range of circumstances in which pupils can be lawfully deleted from the school roll, but which do not require children missing education procedures to be followed. For example, where a child moves out of area and registers at a new school, where they have moved beyond a reasonable distance away from the school but their whereabouts are known, or where they are electively home educated. The full range of grounds for removal are outlined in Appendix Three.

In all cases where a pupil is deleted from the school roll, Gloucestershire County Council will be informed within five days and the school will update their Management Information System and Pupil Mobility Record accordingly.

There are two main circumstances in which we may be concerned that a pupil on our roll becomes a child missing education. These are:

1. A pupil has not attended for 10 school days following their known return date after a leave of absence
2. A pupil has had a continuous period of 20 school days of unauthorised absence

In both these circumstances, the child will only be considered for removal from the school roll if the following stipulations are all met:

- The absences are unauthorised and not reasonably believed to be due to illness or an unavoidable cause
- Both school and the local authority have undertaken joint reasonable enquiries to locate the pupil
- School and the local authority are in agreement that their enquiries have been unsuccessful in locating the child

Schools must not wait until the 10 or 20 days of unauthorised absence have passed before asking the local authority to begin joint enquiries. Referrals must be made within five school days of the child last attending or their whereabouts being known but can be made as soon as schools have done their enquiries.

Joint Reasonable Enquiries

In undertaking reasonable enquiries to find the whereabouts of a child, we will follow our Attendance Policy and the Gloucestershire County Council's expectations of schools which include, but are not limited to, the following measures:

- Contacting families, relatives, neighbours, landlords (where appropriate) and other significant adults or contacts
- Making enquiries within school with class teachers and friends (where appropriate)
- Liaising with schools attended by any siblings
- Conducting home visits within the period that the child is believed to be missing education, including within the last five school days before submitting a joint enquiries referral
- Attempting to contact parents by phone call, letter, text message and any other means (e.g. Class Dojo)
- Checking with previous schools
- Checking with any other agencies known to be working with the family
- Contacting the local authority of any forwarding address that has been provided

When we have made a joint enquiries referral to Gloucestershire County Council, they will support efforts to locate the child through means such as checking data transfer systems, checking other databases and sharing information with other agencies (e.g. UK Border Force).

If at any point there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral will be made to Children's Social Care (and the Police if appropriate).

6. Recording and Reporting

Recording

It is vital that comprehensive records are maintained regarding pupil mobility and cases of children missing education. At Cam Hopton C of E Primary School, we use the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) to maintain a chronology of actions taken in respect of each pupil where there are concerns.

Records will include details of enquiries undertaken by us as a school, copies of any referrals made to the local authority for joint enquiries, and any further correspondence throughout these enquiries.

Where a decision is taken to remove a pupil from the school roll following joint enquiries, we will record the rationale for that decision and the grounds on which they are being removed.

Reporting

Data on safeguarding is provided to the Governing Body on a half-termly basis. This includes pupil mobility and any concerns regarding pupils who may be children missing education.

This provides governors with strategic oversight in this area and, whilst not their remit to consider at an operational level, enables them to assure themselves that we are following all required processes as a school.

7. Links with Guidance and Other Policies

- [DFE Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance](#)
- [DFE Summary Table of Responsibilities to Improve School Attendance](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [Education \(Information about Individual Pupils\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [DFE Guidance on Children Missing Education](#)
- [DFE Guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [DFE Guidance on Children who Run Away from Home or Care](#)
- [DFE Guidance on Transferring Information from School to School](#)
- [The School Admissions Code](#)
- [The Children Act 2004](#)
- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- [The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

This policy should also be read in line with the following Cam Hopton C of E Primary School policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Attendance

8. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Full Governing Body who receive Safeguarding Reports (including pupil mobility and CME cases) at each FGB meeting.

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if there are updates to Department for Education Guidance.

Cam Hopton CE Primary School is committed to equality, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

This school aims to serve the community by providing high quality education and promoting Christian Values.