

Children Missing Education – Guidance for school

Key Message

Every year children move between Blackburn and Darwen schools or leave the area for a school in another authority. Additionally, children arrive in the area needing to access education and may require support and intervention to do so. There is a legal requirement placed on the Local Authority to monitor this movement and in Blackburn and Darwen this responsibility is undertaken jointly by Schools, the Inclusion Team and a range of partners. The purpose of this guidance is to outline both the legislative requirements and operational details for managing this responsibility, so that all parties understand their responsibilities and undertake them consistently and promptly. This will help to minimise disruption to pupil learning and achievement that mobility can cause, and ensure that children's welfare is safeguarded.

Children Missing Education (CME) Definition

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 a school i.e. privately or electively home education (EHE).

For the purposes of this document we define Children Missing Education as:

All children of compulsory school age who are:

- **Not on a school roll or receiving a suitable education otherwise than at a school**
- **On the roll of a school but where they have been absent for 10 consecutive days following an agreed leave of absence and no contact has been received from parents.**

CME also includes those children who are missing (**family whereabouts unknown**) but are usually registered on a school roll or alternative provision.

This may include:

A child who is not at their last known address and either:

- **Has not taken up an allocated school place as expected**
- **Has had 20 or more days of consecutive absence from school without permission/explanation**
- **Has left school suddenly and destination is unknown**

Children missing education can therefore be categorised into 2 groups, those who are not receiving a suitable education and those whose family whereabouts has become unknown.

What to do when a pupil moves abroad:

Please ensure, wherever possible, when you are informed that a child is moving abroad, key information from parents, is obtained prior to the child leaving your school.

If this information is not obtained prior to the child's last day at school, attempts should be made to contact parents to confirm their future arrangements in regard to education.

If parents cannot provide details of the new school, a letter template for school abroad may be a way of forwarding this information to you, once the child has left. It can be given to the parent prior to leaving so that information can be established at a later date.

When a family moves abroad, school should obtain:

- Destination details including new school and new home address in full and flight details
- Confirmation from receiving school that the child is attending or a place has been agreed

What is the Local Authority required to do?

Local authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. In order for Local Authorities to fulfil this duty, it is crucial that school, health services and other partner agencies act when they are aware of or believe that a child is missing from education.

This should include reasonable enquiries to obtain as much information as possible such as names, addresses, contact details, emails, details of other family members, friends etc. Agencies should act quickly to make reasonable enquiries to try and ascertain the child's whereabouts to avoid the child becoming CME. Only once these reasonable enquiries have been completed and the whereabouts of the child are still unknown or unconfirmed should a Children Missing Education (CME) referral be made the Local Authority.

Reasonable enquiries by the referrer/school

Schools must follow their own policies and procedures for responding to pupils not attending school. As soon as a child is believed to be missing education, enquiries in preparation for a CME referral should include:

- Contacting family, relatives, neighbours and other significant adults
- Making enquiries within school with class teachers, friends (if appropriate)
- Liaising with schools attended by siblings
- Conducting home visits (home visits must be recent and be completed within the period in which the child is believed to missing education)
- Sending letters and/or emails
- Checking with previous schools (if appropriate)
- Checking with any other agencies known to be working with the family – School Nurse/Health/Family Support/Social Worker, etc
- If you have been provided with a forwarding address or school in the UK, it is expected that you make enquiries with that Local Authority/School.

These checks must be undertaken within 10 school days of the child being missing.

This list is not exhaustive; cases should be taken on an individual basis meaning that enquiries may differ case to case.

This guidance does not replace any part of the Child Protection or Safeguarding procedures that already exist within the Local Authority (LA) and they should be followed as appropriate.

Changes from 1 September 2016

In September 2016, the Department of Education updated the statutory guidance to reflect the 2016 amendments to the Education (Public Registration (England) 2006 Regulations.

[Children missing education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Pupil destination verified

Schools must ensure that they have made reasonable enquiries to ascertain the verified destination and return to the local authority. They must:

- Complete a deletion from roll form following advice from your Inclusion Officer (all details to be completed as set out by the Pupil Regulations 2016 (including the reason why pupil was removed), at the point of removing child from roll.
- Action the CTF transfer.
- Inform Children's Social Care immediately by phone where a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan that the child has moved or is believed to have moved.

Pupil's destination not verified

Schools must ensure that they have made reasonable enquiries in conjunction with the local authority to ascertain pupil's whereabouts'.

Schools must ensure they follow all reasonable enquiries before submitting a CME referral.

- Where there are siblings at other schools, ensure contact has been made with them before making a referral. In some cases, the other schools may have located the family through enquiries and therefore a referral will not be required. Where a family have provided an address in another Local Authority, enquiries must be made with that authority to try to confirm the whereabouts of the family before making a referral.
- If there is no response after 10 consecutive days, and there are no identified safeguarding concerns, then the matter should be referred directly to the Inclusion Team using the online referral form.
- Please ensure when completing the online referral you must provide as much information as possible including emergency contact details and email addresses.
- If a school has safeguarding concerns, or a pupil is subject to a Child Protection Plan and they are 'missing', school should contact the child's allocated Social Worker or CADS immediately.

The school must maintain ownership of the 'missing' pupil's records until requested by the new receiving school

Response to a CME referral

It is essential that once a CME referral has been made schools should keep in regular contact with the named inclusion officer. The CME investigation can be very time consuming and any information obtained by schools post referrals should be disclosed to the Inclusion Officer immediately. This may conclude any investigation quicker and provide school with a swifter outcome.

Once CME investigations have been completed, the Inclusion Officer will advise the school of the outcome and advise on an appropriate off-roll date where such advice is needed. Schools must not delete a child from the school roll until advised by the Inclusion Officer.

The advice provided by Blackburn and Darwen Council is strictly in line with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.