

# Children Missing Education



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# Objectives

- To explore the definition of Children Missing Education
- To understand the difference between Children Missing Education (CME) and children who are persistently absent
- To understand the legal framework and guidance relating to safeguarding and CME
- To understand the local authority's responsibility in relation to CME
- To understand the school's responsibility in relation to CME
- To understand the local authority's referral process



# Children Missing Education (CME)

The DfE defines Children Missing 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 [e.g. privately, electively home educated (EHE), or in alternative provision]*

*Children missing education 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'.*



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# Persistent Absence

- There is a slight difference between CME and persistent absence of statutory school aged children from school.
- Pupils are identified as persistent absentees if they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions.
- These instances require a school to follow their attendance procedures, a CME referral would not be necessary.



# Who are 'Children Missing Education'?

Children may come to miss education for a variety of reasons. For example:

- They may never have started in a school;
- They may cease to attend school, due to exclusion or parents withdrawing them;
- They may have left primary school but not completed transition to secondary school
- They may have moved into a new area, including from abroad.

Hillingdon faces particular challenges as a borough with a highly mobile population, with significant movement in and out of the borough throughout the school year.



# Why Do Children Missing Education Matter?

- Children missing education (CME) are at risk of educational under-achievement, with a potential long-term impact on their life chances.
- Research also shows that children missing education are at higher risk of getting involved in crime, substance misuse, and other harmful behaviour.
- **Ofsted** (2014) has identified that 'Children who are missing from home, school or care are at greater risk of sexual exploitation'.



# Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

## Section 175 of the Education Act 2002

- Requires local authorities and the governing bodies of maintained schools and further educational institutions to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- The same requirements are placed on independent schools, academies and non-maintained special schools through section 157 of the same act.



# CME- Local Authorities Responsibility

- Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 states that Local Authorities must 'make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age but:
  - Are not registered pupils at a school; and
  - Are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.
- These arrangements also play an important role in fulfilling the local authority's wider safeguarding duties.





# Schools Responsibility

- 'Keeping children safe in education: statutory guidance for schools and colleges' (DfE, 2018) states that:
- 'A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School and college staff members should follow the school's or college's procedures for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect including sexual abuse or exploitation and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future... Governing bodies and proprietors should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses to children who go missing from education'.



# CME Safeguarding in Schools

- There is a natural overlap with safeguarding as children missing education are at risk of under-achieving, abuse, and exploitation.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Attendance Lead must be aware of the school's duties and responsibilities in the key areas of attendance, admissions, leavers and CME. They should ensure that all staff are similarly aware so that they can raise any concerns they have and ensure that the necessary safeguarding procedures are instigated, when appropriate.
- In line with the duty under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, the expectation is that the school and the local authority will have in place procedures designed to carry out reasonable enquiries.



# Transitional Arrangements: new starters

- **All schools** are required to notify the local authority **within five days** when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point.
- Schools must 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 should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity



# Transitional Arrangements: leavers

## Sharing information with the local authority:

Schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the **fifteen grounds** set out in the regulations, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply at standard transition points – where the pupil has completed the school's final year – unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided.

This includes non starters being removed from the pre admissions register



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# Identifying and Tracking Children Missing Education in Hillingdon



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# Hillingdon's CME Team

- CME Lead
- 3 x CME officers- investigating the CME referrals, completing checks and conducting weekly home visits



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# Children Missing Education Referrals

- Statutory school age in England starts from 5 years and is calculated from their first term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, children are only statutory from this point
- If a child is missing education for more than 10 consecutive days, they should be referred to the Children Missing Education Team using the **Stronger Families' Referral** form.
- If a child has moved abroad ask for evidence of flights/details of forwarding address/new school details etc and include this information in your CME Referral.
- If a child has returned to school after a CME referral has been completed, The School Attendance Support Team and the CME Team will need to be informed as the case will remain open until we are notified otherwise.
- To remove a child from the school roll, this can only commence once confirmation has been received that the child is in education in another school/borough, moved abroad or being home educated.
- If a child has been referred to CME, please do not re-refer the child if an update is required. Simply email the CME inbox asking for an update.



# CME Checklist

- Has contact been made with parents/carers/family members or any other emergency contacts either in writing or by phone?
- Has school checked possible whereabouts with staff and pupils, including anyone who may be in touch via social media/mobile phone? Is there any other soft information (other students say family is on holiday)
- Is the family known to Social Care? Is the child/ren subject to CP/CIN plan? If so please contact Social Care immediately.
- Does the child have an EHC Plan? If yes please notify SEN Officer
- Are there any other safeguarding issues?
- Has a home visit been undertaken?
- Has the family made any request for holiday/emergency leave?
- Has the child/family been missing for 10 days or more?
- What was the attendance prior to child going missing?
- Have parents identified a new school/move to a new area? Please contact the new school/LA before making a referral





# Changes to the Stronger Families Form

- A number of changes will be initiated on the SF form. One of the changes is that it would be essential that you add a valid home address and a contact details, for you to proceed in making a referral to CME.
- The reason we would like to implement this is that we have received a number of referrals without a valid home address and contact details. Without these details, our CME officers are unable to investigate the CME and locate the child.



# SAO- School Attendance Order

If it appears to the local authority that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, then they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order. The order will require the child's parents to register their child at a named school.



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# Useful Contacts

- Children Missing Education Team:  
[childrenmissingeducation@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:childrenmissingeducation@hillingdon.gov.uk)
- Stronger Families Hub:  
[strongerfamilieshub@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:strongerfamilieshub@hillingdon.gov.uk)



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# Questions



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