

## Children missing education - Guidance and local arrangements

Local Authorities have a duty (Education and Inspections Act 2006) to make arrangements to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education.

Children missing education 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. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalization, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Children and young people who are missing education may also be at risk of becoming missing more generally from home or from care. For more information on children missing visit: [www.mkscb.org](http://www.mkscb.org).

### Who is at greatest risk and why?

Children fall out of the education system because they:

- Fail to start appropriate provision and therefore never enter the system
- Fail to make the transition between schools within or across the Local Authority area
- Cease to attend due to exclusion or withdrawal

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education. Schools and local authorities are encouraged to make judgements on a case to case basis:

- **Pupils at risk of harm/neglect** – children may be missing from education because they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Schools should follow local child protection procedures. The Department's guidance [keeping children safe in education](#) provides further advice on safeguarding children
- **Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families** – research has shown that many children from these families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. The local authority GRT Officer can advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring continuous access to education.
- **Children of Service Personnel** – families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently. Schools should contact the MoD Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) on 01908 618244 for advice
- **Missing children and runaways** – children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education
- **Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System** – children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education. The local authority Youth Offending Team (YOT) are responsible for supervising these children (aged 8 to 18)

- **Children who cease to attend a school** – where the reason for the child’s non-attendance is unknown, an investigation should be done to ensure the child has access to full time suitable education
- **Children of new migrant families** – children of new migrant families may not have yet settled into a fixed address therefore increasing the risk of the child missing education.

### **Adding or removing children from the school roll**

Recent changes to statutory guidance regarding children missing education means that **all schools** (including academies and independent schools) **must** notify the local authority of all lawful deletions from roll in accordance with [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2006](#).

When removing a pupil from roll, schools are now required to inform the local authority of the full name and contact details of any parent and the pupil’s future address and destination school if applicable by completing the **weekly vacancy returns**. Schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child **jointly** with the local authority before removing the pupil from roll.

**All schools** must also notify the LA **within 5 days** of adding a pupil’s name to the register at a non-standard transition point. If a child who is currently on the school’s roll fails to attend without reasonable explanation, or a child who is expected to join a school fails to start, the relevant school staff should undertake an initial investigation. If this investigation fails to resolve these issues the school should inform the local authority. The Local Authority recommends that this initial investigation should be completed in 10 days or less. Following initial investigation by the school the Local Authority will aim to complete subsequent enquiries within 10 days.

Children should remain on the school roll until all reasonable enquiries have been completed.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006) states that a school may only remove a child from their roll when a pupil:

- Registers at another school
- Is withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Has been permanently excluded
- Fails to return after an extended family holiday\*
- Has a medical condition prevents their return to the school
- Will be in custody for more than four months
- Has left the school but it is not known where they have gone\*
- Has another school named on a school attendance order
- Is above compulsory school age
- Dies.

\* Following joint reasonable enquiry by both the school and the Local Authority to locate the pupil.

## **Making joint reasonable enquiries**

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:

- Maintain contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details
- Check with agencies known to be involved with family
- Check with local authority and school from which the child moved originally, if known
- Check with local authority and school to which a child may have moved
- Check with the local authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is
- Home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives

If the school does not identify the whereabouts of the child then a member of the Children Missing Education team will complete a wider database check. If the location of the child is identified then the school will be informed and if necessary the parents or carers will be supported by the Local Authority to apply for a school place closer to the new home address. If there are any safeguarding concerns, or if no trace can be found, then a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub will be made. If the child is traced at this stage then the school will be advised that the child can be removed from roll.

However, if no trace can be made, the school will be advised in writing to remove the pupil from roll and upload the Common Transfer Form (CTF) on S2S.

Working with schools, the Local Authority aims to complete the second stage search process in no more than 20 school days.

## **Technical Note: Common Transfer Files**

If a school knows which school a child is moving to they should ensure that the Common Transfer File (CTF) is sent to the receiving school using S2S as quickly as possible. S2S is the Department for Education school to school website, which is a secure method of transferring pupil or other sensitive data between schools, Local Authorities and the Department for Education. It has been a statutory duty since 2002 for schools to upload a CTF file via the S2S website every time a pupil leaves a school. Receiving schools are then notified that a file is waiting for them to download. The website must also be used to post CTF files for children missing in education and for those leaving mainstream education.

## **Reporting children missing education**

The senior officer responsible for ensuring that duties towards children missing from education are met is:

Simon Sims, Head of Service – Education Sufficiency, Access and Attendance

[Simon.sims@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Simon.sims@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01908 253919

For further advice and to forward referrals please contact:

The Children Missing Education Team

[cme@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:cme@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01908 253338