



Children Missing Education & Children Absent from Education Duties & Guidance September 2025

Children missing and absent from education

Persistently absent children and children missing from education could be an indicator that a child is at risk of harm or that there are safeguarding issues within the family or local community around a child. Government data shows that local authorities reported an estimated 39,200 children missing from education on the October census day in 2024. This figure is based on 30,400 reported by 94% of local authorities, plus an estimated figure for the missing 6%.

During the 2023/24 academic year, there were an estimated 149,000 CME at any point. This includes adjustments made for non-response and is based on a figure of 145,200 reported by 99% of local authorities. This is an increase from an estimated 117,100 in 2022/23. Where a child was missing education more than once during the year, they are only recorded once.

CME National and LA Data from Summer 2023/24 & Autumn 24 October Census.

Nat/LA	Summer 2023/24	Autumn 2024 Census
England	34,800	39,200
BCP	90	180
Devon	120	170
Gloucestershire	160	220
Plymouth	65	75
Wiltshire	70	120

Children Missing Education

A Child Missing in Education (CME) is defined by the Department for Education ([DfE](#)) as “a child of compulsory school age who is not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who has been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually four weeks or more)”.

Local Authority Responsibilities

Local authorities have a duty of care under section 436A of the Education Act 1996, to make arrangements to establish the identities of Children Missing Education (CME) The legal framework for this policy is the CME statutory guidance issued by the DfE August 2024, [Children Missing Education - Guidance for Local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

The local authority should consult the parents of the child when establishing whether the child is receiving suitable education. Those children identified as not receiving suitable education should be returned to full time education either at a school or in alternative provision. Prompt action and early intervention are crucial to discharging this duty effectively and in ensuring that children are safe and receiving suitable education. Local authorities should have robust policies and procedures in place to enable them to meet their duty in

relation to these children, including ensuring that there are effective tracking and enquiry systems in place, and appointing a named person to whom schools and other agencies can make referrals about children who are missing education. Some children who are missing from education can be identified and supported back into education quickly; other children who have experienced more complex problems face tougher obstacles to getting back into suitable education. When developing policies and procedures for children not receiving a suitable education, local authorities should consider the reasons why children go missing from education and the circumstances that can lead to this happening. Arrangements made under section 436A also play an important role in fulfilling the local authority's wider safeguarding duties. This duty should therefore be viewed alongside these wider duties and local initiatives that aim to promote the safeguarding of children.

Local authorities should have in place arrangements for joint working and information sharing with other local authorities and agencies. Individual local authorities can determine the specific detailed arrangements that work best in their area that not only meet this statutory duty but also enable them to contribute to a range of work aimed at improving outcomes for children. The Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory Guidance provides advice on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Local authorities should undertake regular reviews and evaluate their policies and procedures to ensure that these continue to be fit for purpose in identifying children missing education in their area. We have set out a checklist at Annex B that local authorities may wish to use to satisfy themselves that they have effective systems in place.

Where there is concern for a child's welfare, this should be referred to local authority children's social care. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, the police should also be involved. Where there is a concern that a child's safety or wellbeing is at risk, it is essential to take action without delay. Local authorities have other duties, powers and expectations to support their work on CME. These include:

- Arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion
- Safeguarding children's welfare, and their duty to cooperate with other agencies in improving children's well-being, including protection from harm and neglect
- Serving notice on parents requiring them to satisfy the local authority that the child is receiving suitable education, when it comes to the local authority's attention that a child might not be receiving such education
- Issuing School Attendance Orders (SAOs) to parents who fail to satisfy the local authority that their child is receiving suitable education, if the local authority deems it is appropriate that the child should attend school
- Prosecuting parents who do not comply with an SAO⁶
- Prosecuting or issuing penalty notices to parents who fail to ensure their school-registered child attends school regularly
- Applying to court for an Education Supervision Order⁸ for a child⁹ to support them to go to school
- Carrying out the expectations of local authority School Attendance Support Teams set out in the statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' – 2024.

Children at particular risk of missing education

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, so it is

vital that local authorities make judgements on a case-by-case basis. Although not exhaustive, the list below presents some of the circumstances that local authorities should consider when establishing their CME policies and procedures:

A. Pupils at risk of harm/neglect – Children may be missing from education because they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Where this is suspected schools should follow local child protection procedures. However, if a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made immediately to children's social care (and the police if appropriate). Local authority officers responsible for CME should check that a referral has been made and, if not, they should alert children's social care. The Department's statutory guidance *Keeping children safe in education* provides further advice for schools and colleges on safeguarding children.

B. 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. It is therefore important that schools inform the local authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education. Although many are settled, some GRT families move regularly and their children can be at increased risk of missing education. Local authority Traveller Education Support Services (TESS), where these exist, or the named CME officer within the local authority, can advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring the minimum disruption to GRT pupils' education, for example dual registration with other schools or the provision of electronic or distance learning packages where these are available.

C. Children of Service Personnel – Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently – both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice. Schools and local authorities should contact the MoD Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) on 01980 618244 for advice on making arrangements to ensure continuity of education for those children when the family moves.

D. Missing children and runaways – Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education. Further sources of information about missing children are listed at the back of this document.

E. 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. Local authority Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are responsible for supervising those young people (aged 8 to 18). YOTs should work with the local authority CME officer to ensure that children are receiving, or return to, appropriate full-time education. Where a young person was registered at a school prior to custody, the school may be able to keep the place open for their return.

F. Children who cease to attend a school – there are many reasons why a child stops attending a school. It could be because the parent chooses to home educate their child. However, where the reason for a child who has stopped attending a school is not known, the local authority should investigate the case and satisfy itself that the child is receiving suitable education.

G. Children of new migrant families – children of new migrant families may not have yet settled into a fixed address or may have arrived into a local authority area without the

authority becoming aware, therefore increasing the risk of the child missing education.

Parents' responsibilities

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw them from school at any time to do so, unless they are subject to a School Attendance Order.

Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are going to be home educating their child after a certain date, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register once that date has passed (unless a SAO is in place) and inform the local authority. However, where parents orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school should consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans or statements of special educational needs (SEN) can be home educated. Where the EHC plan or statement sets out SEN provision that the child should receive at home, the local authority is under a duty to arrange that provision. Where the EHC plan or statement names a school or type of school as the place where the child should receive his or her education, but the parent chooses to home educate their child, the local authority must assure itself that the provision being made by the parent is suitable. In such cases, the local authority must review the plan or statement annually to assure itself that the provision set out in it continues to be appropriate and that the child's SEN continue to be met.

Schools' Statutory Responsibilities

To support overall attendance procedures, schools will share daily attendance registers with the DfE.

To enable effective CME processes, all schools must make a 'new pupil return' or a 'deletion return' to the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register (except during standard transition points unless the local authority requests it, as set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The law also allows local authority officers to access the attendance and admission registers of all types of school to carry out their functions under the Education Acts. Officers are permitted to take digital or physical extracts.

Schools must enter pupils' names on the admission register on the first day that the school and a person with control of the pupil's attendance have agreed that the pupil will attend the school. If no date has been agreed or notified, the pupil's name must be entered on the first day they attend the school. Names must be entered from the beginning of the first session.

If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. Schools must monitor pupils' attendance through their daily attendance register. Schools should agree with their local authority the intervals at which they will make a return to the local authority (an 'attendance return') with the details of any pupil of compulsory school age who has failed to attend regularly (excluding where they were out of school and attending an approved educational activity covered by codes D, K, V or B), or has been absent for a continuous period of ten school days where their absence had been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised (G, N, O and/or U). Schools should monitor attendance closely 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 consecutive school days after a leave of absence or is absent from school for reasons statistically recorded as unauthorised absence for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil's name can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to find out the location and circumstances of the child or have succeeded but agree there are no reasonable grounds to believe that they will attend the school again. In deciding there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again both school and local authority must agree, including that there are no reasonable steps that could be taken (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance. Neither ground for deletion applies if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause. Schools must also arrange full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed period exclusion. This information can be found in the Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England statutory guidance.

Maintained schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. Academies and independent schools have a similar safeguarding duty for their pupils. Further information about schools' safeguarding responsibilities can be found in the Keeping children safe in education statutory guidance.

Reach South Academy Trust Schools are also required to ensure any Children Missing in Education (CME) are recorded in CPOMS under the CME category.

Recording information in the school's admission register

It is important that the school's admission register is accurate and kept up to date. Schools should regularly encourage parents to inform them of any changes whenever they occur, through using existing communication channels such as regular emails and newsletters. This will assist both the school and local authority when making enquiries to locate children missing education.

Where a parent notifies a school that a pupil will live at another address, all schools are required to record in the admission register:

- A. the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live;
- B. the new address; and
- C. the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.

Where the school becomes aware, in circumstances set out in regulation 8(5), that the pupil is will be attending a different school (in addition to or instead of the current school), schools must record this in the admission register in accordance with regulation 8(4)22:

- A. the name of the other school; and
- B. the date when the pupil began or will begin attending the school.

Sharing Information with the Local Authority

All schools must make a return to the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register (a 'deletion return'). This duty does not apply at standard

transition points – where the pupil has completed the school’s final year – unless the local authority has asked for such information to be provided.

The school must provide the local authority with the following information from the admission register:

- the full name of the pupil;
- address;
- the full name and address of any parent the pupil normally lives with;
- at least one telephone number by which any parent the pupil normally lives with can be contacted;
- if applicable, the pupil’s future address, the full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil will start living there;
- if applicable, the name of pupil’s other school and when the pupil began or will begin to attend the school; and
- the ground for deletion under which the pupil’s name has been deleted from the admission register. (see chapter 7 of ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ for guidance on grounds for deletion).

All schools must make a return to the local authority within five days when a pupil’s name is added to the admission register (a ‘new pupil return’). Schools will need to provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

This duty does not apply when a pupil’s name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point – at the start of the first year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests for such information to be provided. All schools must make a return to the local authority (an ‘attendance return’) with the full name and address of any pupil of compulsory school age who is not a boarder and has failed to attend regularly (excluding codes D, K, V or B) or has missed ten consecutive school days or more with their absence being recorded in the attendance register in ways statistically recorded as unauthorised absence.

All schools must also make a return to the local authority (a ‘sickness return’) where a pupil of compulsory school age has been recorded in the attendance register as absent using code I (illness) and the school have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will be, or will have been unable to attend school because of illness for at least 15 school days during the school year, whether consecutive or not.

Providing information on standard transitions

As set out in paragraph 24, schools are under an automatic duty to provide information to the local authority for non-standard transitions. This relates to pupils removed from the admission register before completing the final year of education normally provided by the school, or pupils added to the admission register after the start of the first year of education normally provided by that school.

Schools are also **only** under a duty to provide information to the local authority for standard transitions if a local authority requests that schools make such returns. This relates to pupils removed from the school’s admission register after the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by the school, or pupils added to the admission register at the

start of the first year of education normally provided by the school. For the majority of pupils, a standard transition occurs when a pupil moves between a primary and secondary school, but this can also include other types of schools including where pupils move between infant and junior schools and in local areas with three-tier education systems with first, middle and high schools.

In a small number of cases, pupils removed from the admission register in one school would be a standard transition but their transfer to another school would be a non-standard transition and vice-versa. For example, a pupil leaving a primary school at the end of Year 2 is a non-standard transition, but their transfer to a junior school at the beginning of Year 3 is a standard transition. In such cases, only the school where the non-standard transition occurs is under an automatic duty to notify the local authority. The local authority would need to make a request for the information from the other school, if they required information on the standard transition.

There is no expectation for local authorities to request information from schools on pupils for standard transitions. Local authorities should consider carefully the benefits of having this information in meeting their duties in relation to children missing education and safeguarding and assess the likely burden on schools and the local authority before deciding to do so.

If local authorities decide to request information on pupils for standard transitions, it should be made clear to schools that they are therefore under a duty to make such notifications. Local authorities should also establish a clear and efficient procedure for this and communicate the procedure to schools in their area.

Making Reasonable Enquiries

The term 'reasonable enquiries' grants schools and local authorities a degree of flexibility in decision-making, particularly as the steps that need to be taken in a given case will vary. The term 'reasonable' also makes clear that there is a limit to what the school and local authority is expected to do.

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. The type of procedures may include the appropriate person checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords – private or social housing providers – and other local stakeholders who are involved. They should also record that they have completed these procedures. If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care (and the police if appropriate).

A pupil's name can only be removed from the admission register under regulation 9(1)(h) or (i) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 if the conditions of paragraph (iii) have been met - the school and the local authority must have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances and have either failed to do so, or located the pupil and found out their circumstances but agree there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again, taking into consideration any reasonable steps that the school and local authority could take jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance.. Local authorities and schools should agree roles and responsibilities locally in relation to making joint enquiries. Further information on the deletion of the names of pupils who have been located but have not returned to school is included in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance (Chapter 7 - Ground H and Ground I).

As set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance, the Local Safeguarding Children Board should agree with the local authority and its partners a threshold document, which includes the criteria for when a case should be referred to local authority children's social care for assessment and for statutory services. In addition, local authorities, with their partners, should develop and publish local protocols for assessment, which set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children's social care.

If there is evidence to suggest the child has moved to a different local authority area, contact should be made with the named person in the new authority using secure communication methods. The local authority should maintain a record of the child's details until they are located or attain school leaving age. When the whereabouts and circumstances 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:

- make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details;
- check local databases within the local authority; • check Key to Success or school2school (s2s) systems;
- 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;
- check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and/or the Border Force;
- check with agencies known to be involved with family;
- check with local authority and school from which child moved originally, if known;
- check with any 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;
- in the case of children of Service Personnel, check with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS); and
- home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.

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 and establish their circumstances will differ from case to case and additional enquiries to those suggested in this section may be necessary.

Making these enquiries may not always lead to establishing the location or circumstances of the child, but will provide a steer on what action should be taken next, for example, to contact the police, children's social care and, in cases where there may be concerns for the safety of a child who has travelled abroad, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Using Common Transfer Files to transfer pupil information

The Department provides a secure internet system – school2school – to allow schools to transfer pupil information to another school when the child moves. If the school the child is leaving agrees, the local authority may do this on the school's behalf.

The Common Transfer File (CTF) guidance makes clear that all schools maintained by a local authority in England are required when a pupil ceases to be registered at their school, and becomes a registered pupil at another school in England or Wales, to send a CTF to the new school.

Academies (including free schools) are also strongly encouraged to send CTFs when a pupil leaves to attend another school. Independent schools can be given access to school2school by the Department. Many independent schools also have Management Information Systems that are compatible with those used in the maintained sector and so would be able to download CTFs. Where a pupil transfers to a new school in Scotland or Northern Ireland the previous school in England is still required to send a CTF.

The school2school system also contains a searchable area, where schools can upload CTFs of pupils who have left but their destination, next school is unknown, or the child has moved abroad or transferred to a non-maintained school. If a pupil arrives in a school and the previous school is unknown, schools should contact their local authority who will be able to search the database.

There may be exceptional circumstances when standard rules for sending and receiving a CTF for a pupil might not apply. Each case would need to be judged on its merits in consultation with relevant parties. Circumstances when it is not considered appropriate to pass on details via a CTF might include a family escaping a violent partner; if the family is in a witness protection programme; or where there are concerns that the child is at risk of forced marriage. Guidance on how to share information in these circumstances is included in the CTF guidance.

Sharing information with others

Families moving between local authority areas can sometimes lead to a child who is unknown to any local authority and consequently missing education. Where a child has moved or where the destination of a child is unknown, local authorities should identify relevant local authorities – either regionally or nationally – and check with them in order to ascertain where the child has moved.

Once the location of the child is established, the named person in the local authority where the child lives should satisfy themselves that that the child is receiving suitable education.

Secure systems should be used to share and transfer personal information. Local authorities should not make blanket enquiries, as contacting all local authorities with a list of children is poor practice. This is also not a secure method of sharing personal information. Best practice is for local authorities to carry out thorough local checks in their own authority area before contacting specific local authorities that they believe to be linked to the child.

Local authorities may wish to have a dedicated CME email address to where enquiries can be sent from other local authorities and agencies. Any sharing of information by email or other means must comply with the law relating to data protection and should be done in line with local arrangements for recording and sharing information. Further advice is available in the Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioner's guidance.

Local authorities should regularly raise awareness of their policies and procedures and notification routes with all schools in their area, and with local partners and agencies working with children and families, such as GPs, other health professionals, clinical commission groups, police and other emergency services, housing agencies, children's homes, statutory and voluntary youth services, voluntary and community organisations, and Youth Offending

Teams.

These partners and agencies may become aware of the arrival or existence of a child living in the area, who is not receiving suitable education, before the local authority does (for example children of migrant worker families). They may also hold crucial safeguarding information about a child, and local authorities should identify all likely routes of information and consider involving them when making enquiries about children missing education.

It may also be helpful for local authorities to have local contacts with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Border Force, and HMRC to assist them in tracing children missing education. There may be others depending on local circumstances.

Children who are absent from education

A child is not missing in education if:

- Their whereabouts are known, and school understands that they have refused to attend school
- Their whereabouts are known, and school understands that they have a diagnosed medical condition which is preventing them from attending school
- They are receiving education via elective home education

These children maybe 'Children Absent from Education'. Even if the child is not a CME, you may well have safeguarding concerns for the potential risks to the child, while they are not attending school and must follow the safeguarding procedures and mechanisms for reporting and recording any safeguarding and child protection concerns.

'All staff should be aware that children being absent from school or college, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. It is important that staff are aware of their school or college's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures.' **Keeping Children Safe in Education – September 2024**

Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024) The DfE's publication places a huge emphasis on a multi-agency approach to supporting children who are on roll at a school but are not in regular attendance. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and

is the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study). Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools, the LA and partners to work collaboratively with, not against families.

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to be, in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and Understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate Support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise Support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a attendance contract or education supervision order

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to education.

Attendance Monitoring, Systems and Processes

The school should follow up any absences to:

- ascertain the reason for the absence and record these on the registration certificate notes;
- ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken, when the parent/carer cannot be contacted

and/or the reason for the absence is unauthorised

- identify whether the absence is approved or not
- identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

The school's attendance team should be regularly tracking attendance data and escalate safeguarding concerns with the DSL, where a pupil has a high level of absence or patterns of non-attendance that maybe both authorised and unauthorised.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) In line with the above, school governing bodies, academy trusts, and other school proprietors must have regard to the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Schools should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions. Where reasonably practicable, for every pupil, schools should hold an emergency contact number for more than one person. Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. This goes beyond the legal requirement but is good practice. Doing so provides schools with additional options for contacting a responsible adult when a child is missing from school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.

If at any point there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a MASH (multi agency referral form) should be completed and returned via your local authority front door service. Also, where appropriate, schools can contact the police directly.

Existing safeguarding procedures and mechanisms for reporting and recording any safeguarding and child protection concerns are to be followed at all times, whilst understanding the increased risks to children who are missing or absent from education.

Guidance History

Date	Summary of change	Contact
October 2023	Guidance developed by the Inclusion Team	Polly Lovell (Director of Inclusion)
September 2024	Guidance updated by the Inclusion Team	Polly Lovell (Director of Inclusion)
August 2025	Reviewed – minimal changes, census data updated.	Sharna Denver

Appendix 1

Grounds for deleting a pupil from the school admission register

Grounds for deleting a pupil of compulsory school age from the school admission register set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, as amended:

Ground A - The pupil has been registered at another school Relevant regulation 9(1)(a) 222. Where a pupil has been registered at another school, unless:

- a school attendance order naming the school is in force in relation to the pupil (see further information below),
- the pupil is a mobile child and the school is their main school (see further information below),
- the school has agreed with a person with control of the pupil's attendance at the other school that the pupil should be registered at more than one school (see further information on dual registration below), or
- the school itself has control of the pupil's attendance at the other school and has decided that the pupil should be registered at more than one school (see further information on dual registration below).

Transfer between schools

Where a pupil is transferring to another school, the original school must delete the pupil's name from the admission register as soon as they are entered on the admission register of the new school. The new school must enter the pupil's name on the admission register on the first day that it has agreed or been told the pupil will attend the school as explained under Expected First Day of Attendance. For example, if a pupil leaves School A on 28 March and their expected first day of attendance at School B is 29 March, they would be added to the admission register of School B and deleted from that of School A on 29 March.

School A will:

- record the pupil's attendance and absence up to and including 28 March,
- delete the pupil's name from the admission register on 29 March, and
- transfer the appropriate pupil information via the S2S system.

School B will:

- enter the pupil's name on the admission register on 29 March,
- record the pupil's attendance and absence from 29 March,
- follow up any unexpected absence on or after the 29 March, and
- request the transfer of the pupil information.

There are a small number of exceptions, these are:

School attendance order

If a school attendance order is in place for the pupil, and the name of the school has been replaced by the relevant local authority with that of another school, their name must be

deleted from the admission register under the reason for deletion at ground D (regulation 9(1)(d)). 23 If the school attendance order has not been amended and still names the school, the pupil's name must not be deleted under ground A even if they have been registered at another school as well.

Mobile child

Where a child of compulsory school age has no fixed abode and their parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place, the child can temporarily attend another school without the need for their main school to remove their name. Main school in this context means the school that, during the last 18 months, the child has attended during periods when their parent was not travelling in the course of their trade or business, or, if there is more than one school that fits that description, the school that most recently fulfils those criteria.

Dual registration

In circumstances where it has been agreed between the school and a person with control of the pupil's attendance that the pupil will be registered at more than one school, the pupil's name will remain on the admission register. This is also the case where it has been decided by the school if it has control of the pupil's attendance at the other school. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending another school on a temporary basis, such as a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school.

Ground B

The pupil has not continued at the school following completion of nursery education
Relevant regulation 9(1)(b) Where a pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education and on completing nursery does not continue into reception (or more senior class).

Ground C

The pupil is also registered at one or more other schools and the other schools have agreed the deletion
Relevant regulation 9(1)(c) Where a pupil is registered at one or more other schools, and:

- the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again,
- each school where the pupil is registered has given consent to the deletion,
- there is no school attendance order naming the school in force in relation to the pupil (see further information below), and
- the pupil is not a mobile child, or if they are, the school is not their main school (see further information below).

School attendance order

If a school attendance order is in place for the pupil, and the name of the school has been replaced by the relevant local authority with that of another school, their name 24 must be deleted from the admission register under the reason for deletion at ground D (regulation 9(1)(d)). If the school attendance order has not been amended and still names the school, the pupil's name must not be deleted under ground C even if the other criteria are satisfied.

Mobile child

Where a child of compulsory school age has no fixed abode and their parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place, the child can temporarily attend another school without the need for their main school to remove their name. Main school in this context means the school that, during the last 18 months, the child has attended during periods when their parent was not travelling in the course of their trade or business, or, if there is more than one school that fits that description, the school that most recently fulfils those criteria.

Ground D

The pupil has a school attendance order which has been changed to name another school Relevant regulation 9(1)(d) Where the pupil is the subject of a school attendance order that previously named the school, but another school has now been named on that order instead.

Ground E

The pupil had a school attendance order which has been revoked Relevant regulation 9(1)(e) Where the pupil was the subject of a school attendance order naming the school, but the order is revoked because the local authority that made the order is satisfied that arrangements have been made for the child to receive suitable full-time education for their age, ability and aptitude and special educational needs somewhere other than at a school.

Ground F

The parent of a pupil has notified the school in writing that the pupil will be leaving the school to be educated otherwise than at a school Relevant regulation 9(1)(f) Where the pupil's parent has informed the school in writing that the pupil will no longer attend the school after a certain day and will receive education otherwise than at a school and that day has passed, and there is no school attendance order naming the school in force in relation to the pupil.

School Attendance Order

If a school attendance order has been revoked because the local authority that made the order is satisfied that arrangements have been made for the child to receive suitable full-time education for their age, ability and aptitude somewhere other than at a school, the pupil's name must be deleted from the admission register under the reason 25 for deletion at regulation 9(1)(e).

Ground G

The pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school Relevant regulation 9(1)(g) Where a pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school, the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again, and the pupil is not a boarder at the school. In circumstances where parents are moving away and withdrawing their child but are unable to say how their child will continue with their education, for example, the family are relocating but have not been able to secure a place at a new school in advance, once the pupil has completed their final day at school and moved out of the area, the school must delete the pupil's name from the admission register and the pupil's information should then be transferred to the Lost Pupil Database via the S2S system.

Reasonable distance

DfE does not define reasonable distance because each case depends on the family situation and the geography of the area for example, the parent's ability to get the child to the school, a safe walking route or the accessibility of local transportation.

Temporary or occasional absence

Relevant regulation 9(5)(a) Whether a pupil normally lives a reasonable distance from the school is not affected by a temporary or occasional absence. A judgement should be made in an individual case as to whether an absence is temporary or occasional, but a prolonged absence is not generally considered as temporary.

Ground H

The pupil has not returned following a leave of absence Relevant regulation 9(1)(h) Where a pupil has been granted a leave of absence and:

- the pupil has not attended school within the ten school days immediately after the end of the period that the leave was granted for,
- the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause, and
- the school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out
- the pupil's location and circumstances, but: a) they have not succeeded, or b) they have succeeded but they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, taking into account any reasonable steps that could be taken (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance.

DfE's guidance on Children Missing Education sets out the expectations for schools and local authorities in respect of making reasonable efforts to find out a pupil's location and circumstances.

Pupils who have been located but have not returned to school

Where a pupil has been located and their circumstances discovered but they have not returned to school, a joint decision is required between the school and the local authority before this ground is used. Both must agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe the child will return to the school, even with reasonable support and/or enforcement to try to cause their return to school. This means the final criterion will be met very rarely, usually when a pupil has been out of the country for a prolonged period and there are no signs of the pupil returning. This ground cannot be used in any case where the pupil could reasonably be supported to return to school regardless of whether that support has been provided. It cannot be used where a pupil is absent because of a health reason. It also cannot be used in cases where attendance legal action to cause the pupil to return to school could reasonably be taken instead. In such cases, the appropriate support or enforcement should be taken rather than the pupil's name being deleted from roll. Examples of appropriate use include:

- The pupil is still away from home and the parent has refused to give a date for their return but there is no reason to think there is anything preventing them from returning.

- No date or evidence of the pupil returning has been provided by the deadline set out in the school's contact with the parent and there is no reason to think there is anything preventing them from returning.
- The parent has given a date, or several dates, for returning and the pupil has failed to return by or on the last given date. Examples of where regulation 9(1)(g) may be appropriate instead:
- The date for return the parent has provided is too vague or too far in the future to reasonably believe the pupil still normally lives a reasonable distance from the school. The school does not believe, taking account of any information from the parent, that the pupil still resides within the area and the pupil's absence does not appear to be temporary.

Ground I

The pupil has been continually absent from school for 20 school days

Relevant regulation 9(1)(i) Where a pupil has been continuously absent from the school for a period of 20 school days or more and:

- at no point during that period did any of the circumstances in regulation 10(3) Table 2 or 10(4) Table 3 other than the ones for codes G, N, or O apply.
- the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause, and
- the school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out 27 • the pupil's location and circumstances, but: o they have not succeeded, or o they have succeeded but they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, taking into account any reasonable steps they could take (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance.

DfE's guidance on Children Missing Education sets out the expectations for schools and local authorities in respect of making reasonable efforts to find out a pupil's location and circumstances.

Pupils who have been located but have not returned to school

Where a pupil has been located and their circumstances discovered but they have not returned to school, a joint decision is required between the school and the local authority before this ground is used. Both must agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe the child will return to the school, even with reasonable support and/or enforcement to try to cause their return to school. This means the final criterion will be met very rarely, usually when a pupil has been out of the country for a prolonged period and there are no signs of the pupil returning. This ground cannot be used in any case where the pupil could reasonably be supported to return to school regardless of whether that support has been provided. It cannot be used where a pupil is absent because of a health reason. It also cannot be used in cases where attendance legal action to cause the pupil to return to school could reasonably be taken instead. In these cases, the appropriate support or enforcement should be taken rather than the pupil's name being deleted from roll.

Examples of appropriate use include:

- The pupil is away from home and the parent has refused to give a date for their return but there is no reason to think there is anything preventing them from returning.

- No date or evidence of the pupil returning has been provided by the deadline set out in the school's contact with the parent and there is no reason to think there is anything preventing them from returning.
- The parent has given a date, or several dates, for returning and the pupil has failed to return by or on the last given date. Examples of where regulation 9(1)(g) may be appropriate instead:
- The date for return the parent has provided is too vague or too far in the future to reasonably believe the pupil normally lives a reasonable distance from the school. The school does not believe, taking account of any information from the parent, that the pupil still resides within the area and the pupil's absence does not appear to be temporary.

Ground J

The pupil is detained under a sentence of detention

Relevant regulation 9(1)(j) Where a pupil is found guilty of a crime and detained under a sentence of detention (as defined in regulation 3) before the pupil's name can be deleted from the admission register the school must have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will not return to the school once they are released. This must be decided on a case by case basis after considering whether the pupil will return at the end, or part way through their sentence (e.g. where part is served on licence in the community).

In determining whether there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will return to the school following their detention, it is expected that schools will discuss this with the pupil's youth offending team worker.

Pupils who are remanded to custody awaiting trial or sentencing cannot be removed under this ground.

Ground K

The pupil has died

Relevant regulation 9(1)(k) Where a pupil has died. A pupil's name should only be deleted from the admission register when the school is informed of the death. This would normally come from the pupil's parent but it is possible that notification comes from another source, such as relatives or the police. Once the school receives the information, it is particularly important to delete the pupil's name as quickly as possible to prevent inadvertent and unnecessary contact with the family about the child.

Ground L

The pupil will be over compulsory school age and will not continue into the sixth form

Relevant regulation 9(1)(l) Where a pupil will be over compulsory school age by the school next meets, and:

- the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again, or
- the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements to be transferred to the school's sixth form.

Compulsory school age

A pupil ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Ground M

The pupil is a boarder at a school maintained by a local authority or academy and their boarding fees have not been paid

Relevant regulation 9(1)(m) Where a pupil is a boarder at the school and:

- the school is maintained by a local authority or is an academy,
- charges for the pupil's board and lodgings are payable by the pupil's parent, and those charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to 29 which they relate.

Ground N

The pupil has ceased to be a pupil at an independent school or non-maintained special school

Relevant regulation 9(1)(n) Where a pupil has ceased to be a pupil at the school and the school is not maintained by a local authority or an academy (including a city technology college or a city college for the technology of the arts).

Ground O

The pupil has been permanently excluded from the school

Relevant regulation 9(1)(o) Where a pupil has been permanently excluded from the school. A pupil's name cannot be deleted from the admission register until the outcome of any consideration of reinstatement and independent review (in the case of a disciplinary exclusion from a maintained school, pupil referral unit, or academy) or appeal (in the case of a city technology college or city college for the technology of the arts).

Deleting the name of a pupil of compulsory school age from the register of a special school

Relevant regulation 9(2) Where a pupil of compulsory school age is registered at a special school under arrangements made by a local authority, the pupil's name cannot be deleted without the consent of the local authority, or if the local authority refuses to give consent, without a direction from the Secretary of State, unless:

- The pupil is registered at the school as result of a school attendance order, but the school is not now named on that order or the order has been revoked because arrangements have been made for the child to receive suitable full-time education for their age, ability and aptitude somewhere other than at a school, and the pupil's name is deleted under regulation 9(1)(d) or (e); or
- The pupil has died, and the pupil's name is deleted under regulation 9(1)(k); or
- The pupil has been permanently excluded from the school, and the pupil's name is deleted under regulation 9(1)(o). It is expected that the local authority will not withhold consent unnecessarily, nor delay for an unreasonable period.

Appendix 2

Further LA Guidance:	
Plymouth	Children missing education procedures (plymouth.gov.uk) Children Missing Education Procedures PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK
Bournemouth	BCP CME Policy September 2022 (bcpcouncil.gov.uk)
Devon	Children missing education - Support for schools and settings (devon.gov.uk) Children missing education - roles and responsibilities - Support for schools and settings (devon.gov.uk)
Gloucestershire	Children missing education (gloucestershire.gov.uk)
Wiltshire	Children Missing from Education (proceduresonline.com)

This guidance should be read in the context of the statutory duties upon local authorities and parents as set out in the following:

- [**The Education Act 1996 section 436A;**](#)
- [**The Education Act 2002;**](#)
- [**The Children Act 1989;**](#)
- [**The Children Act 2004;**](#)
- Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities [Children Missing Education - Guidance for Local authorities 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91111/Children_Missing_Education_-_Guidance_for_Local_authorities_2024.pdf)
- [**Elective Home Education Guidelines;**](#)
- [**Unregistered independent schools and out of school settings**](#) - non-statutory guidance for local authorities;
- [**School Admissions Code;**](#)
- [**School to school service: how to transfer information;**](#)
- [**The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006**](#), as amended (Education law regarding pupil registration where a child is on a school roll); [**The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013**](#); as amended [**The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016**](#). [**The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)**](#)

In particular the guidance provides for professionals seeking to exercise their duty under the following Acts to ensure that their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- [**Section 175 of the Education Act 2002;**](#) and
- [**Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.**](#)

Additionally, this guidance seeks to ensure that the duty to co-operate to improve the well-being of children under section 10 of the Children Act 2004 is discharged. All schools will have a Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children. These teachers are ideally placed to assist when identifying those children currently in school who may be at greater risk of going missing from education.