



Liverpool
City Council



St Michael's Catholic Primary School

Children Missing from Education (CME) Policy

Adopted Policy and Procedures for when children go missing from school

Revised October 2025

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2 Introduction

Liverpool City Council (LCC) is committed to ensuring that every child of compulsory school age is receiving an excellent full-time education. Parents/carers have a duty to ensure children are receiving suitable full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

If a child is not in school, they are at significant risk of underachieving, becoming victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Children may not be attending or may leave school for a number of reasons, but if they are still of compulsory school age, then parents, schools and local authorities have a responsibility to ensure the continuity of their education.

The purpose of this policy is to set out clear and robust procedures for schools, academies, free schools, Liverpool City Council and partner agencies to follow, in order to try and locate children who are absent from school and their family whereabouts is unknown.

3 The legal framework

The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Article 2 of protocol No 1 states:

“No person shall be denied the right to education”

The government has placed a duty on local authorities (Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 436A) to have in place 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 who are not receiving a suitable education. In relation to children, suitable education is efficient full-time education suitable to her/his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have.

Regulations 8(f) and 8(h) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, place a duty on schools and local authorities to jointly carry out reasonable enquiries to try and locate pupils absent from school whose whereabouts are unknown.

4 Purpose of Liverpool's CME policy and procedures

The purpose of this document is to establish a set of principles which all agencies can subscribe to and to set out the responsibilities of staff in schools, the local authority and partners in ensuring that all children and young people have the opportunity to access appropriate and suitable educational provision and is underpinned by Liverpool's safeguarding procedures to ensure that the local authority (LA);

- Is able to fulfil its statutory duty to provide an education for all children of compulsory school age.
- Identify, reengage and maintain contact with those children and young people missing from education who reside in Liverpool.
- Ensure Liverpool City Council, schools and families work together, along with other partners, to track children believed to be not to be on roll with an education provider and offer support until they are registered in a new school or other educational provision. The oversight and scrutiny of this process is managed by the LA Children Out of Provision Panel (COPP).

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people and to share information. This principle underpins the policy and there is an expectation that all agencies will work together to ensure that children and young people do not 'slip through the net' and become missing.

Missing children and young people are amongst the most vulnerable in Liverpool and therefore it is vital that practitioners in all services work together to identify and reengage these children and young people back into education as quickly as possible.

5 Definition – Children Missing from Education (CME)

The 2016 DfE Statutory Guidance for Children Missing Education provides a definition for missing in education;

“All children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more)”

Children who are on a school roll but;

- The child or young person fails to attend school without offering a reasonable explanation and;
- The school has been unable to locate the pupil at the last known address and have completed the CME checklist.

The policy does not apply to children who are registered at a school and are not attending regularly. Schools already have a duty to monitor attendance through the attendance register and to follow their attendance procedures when the attendance of an individual pupil gives cause for concern.

It should be noted that this document does not apply to young people who run away from home or care placement. This group is subject to separate arrangements detailed in the Pan Merseyside Missing Children Protocol.

6 Roles and responsibilities

Children who go missing from the roll of a school or alternative provision provider.

Schools and the local authority have a statutory duty to make reasonable enquiries to locate a pupil following unauthorised absence from school and, after no less than 20 school days of unauthorised absence, to transfer the pupil records using the statutory electronic Common Transfer File (CTF)

The 2006 Pupil Registration Regulations came into force on September 1st 2006.

- Regulation 5 requires a pupil to join a school roll from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or has been notified, that the pupil will attend. The required pupil level data must be listed in both the admissions and attendance registers from that day.
- If a pupil has accepted a place at the school and fails to attend on the agreed date, the school must follow up the absence to ensure that the pupil does not lose their place and that any safeguarding and missing from education concerns are addressed.
- If the child or young person does not join the school within 5 days of the expected first day of attendance a referral must be made to the Education Welfare Service.

Liverpool City Council has in place arrangements for joint working and appropriate information sharing with other local authorities and relevant partner agencies that come into contact with children and families including Liverpool City Council departments, Social Care, Health, Youth Offending Teams, Merseyside Police, social landlords, Revenues and Benefits as well as links with national government agencies.

Liverpool City Council is committed to ensuring;

- Tracking procedures are monitored through the Children Out of Provision Panel to ensure best practice with regard to safeguarding children and young people

- Work with other agencies is carried out so that the local authority knows all children of statutory school age who reside within Liverpool and that their education provider is identified.
- All pupils of statutory school age who go missing from schools in Liverpool are located
- Support is provided to other local authorities to locate their own missing/lost pupils

The Government passed legislation amending the Pupil Registration Regulations which came into force on the 1st September 2016.

These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

All schools (including independent schools) are now required to:

- Inform the LA in every circumstance when they are about to delete a pupil's name from the admission register
- Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school (where they can reasonably obtain this information)
- Provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school (again where they can reasonably obtain this information).

The local authority requires all schools to fulfil this statutory requirement by notifying the LA using the LA Exit or CME referral forms.

Professionals must work together to identify children and young people of compulsory school age who have no educational provision to ensure they can swiftly return to a suitable form of education provision.

6.1 Systems for identifying and maintaining contact with children missing education

Liverpool City Council's systems for identifying and maintaining contact with children missing education

- All new to city/country In Year admissions are dealt directly through the local authority. All school admission applications for children moving into the Liverpool area are logged and monitored by the Liverpool Admissions Team.
- If the applicant (child), is not on a roll and waiting for an appeal of a particular school, they are placed on the agenda of Liverpool's Children Out of Provision Panel (COPP)
- The Children Out of Provision Panel monitors cases of children currently out of provision and tracks the progress until a child is placed back into education. The panel's remit ensures that the safeguarding of children missing and at risk of missing education remains a priority.
- A 'Children Out of Provision' register is held which identifies those pupils who are known to the local authority and are without any educational provision. This is circulated and discussed at the COPP panel on a fortnightly cycle.
- The local authority Education Management System, Capita One, provides the database by which a child's name can be checked to establish whether or not s/he is registered with an education provider or educated at home by the parent.
- The most complex of cases may require the completion of an assessment to identify which services may be required to provide support to the child or young person.

6.2 Identifying children at risk of becoming missing from education

Some children are at greater risk of becoming a child missing education.

The following groups have been identified as at risk. These include:

- Young offenders
- Children at risk from Child Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation

- Children at risk of becoming involved with gun and gang crime
- Children living in refuges
- Children at risk of radicalisation or extremism
- Runaways
- Children of homeless families
- Children of Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Children of new immigrant families
- Children looked after
- Children from the Gypsy, Roma, Irish and Show People Communities
- Children who are privately fostered
- Young carers
- Pregnant teenagers and school age mothers
- Children with mental health problems
- Children who have been permanently excluded.
- Children whose parent/s are in prison
- Children subject to witness protection arrangements

6.3 Why do children go missing from education?

- They fail to start appropriate provision and thus never become a part of the education system;
- They cease to attend their education provision due to an unofficial exclusion or removal from the school roll;
- The parent/carer withdrawal of a child from the school roll with no details provided of alternative provision; or
- They fail to find alternative provision when moving to a new address within Liverpool or moving into Liverpool from Out of City.
- They fail to transfer from primary to secondary school
- They fail to complete a transition between providers (for example being unable to find a suitable school place after moving to a new Local Authority or transfer between school education phases).
- Children who are categorised as 'hard to place'
- Forced Marriage.

7 Sharing information

Legislation is in place that enables appropriate information to be shared safely and securely.

Information can be shared in accordance with the following legislation:

- Current Child Protection legislation, which states that any child missing from education, is deemed to be a 'Child in Need'.
- Section 27 of The Children Act 1989, which states that a Local Authority may request help from any Local Education Authority and other agencies in exercising their duty to provide support and services to children in need and that Education staff have a duty to gather information regarding concerns.
- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that it is the duty of the parent of every child aged five to sixteen to cause the child to receive efficient, full-time education, suitable to his or her age, ability or aptitude and to any special need he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- The Children Act 2004, which states that all public agencies should work together, exchange and share information for the welfare and protection of children in the area.
- Data Protection Act 1998,
 1. Schedule 1, Principle 1 and Schedule 2(5)(b), to process data which is necessary to enable an Authority to pursue every avenue to trace a child, as well as Schedule 2, specifically:
 2. Para 3 "disclosure is necessary to protect the vital interests of the child", and;
 3. Para 5d "disclosure is necessary for the exercise of any functions of a public nature, exercised in the public interest"

8 Procedures for children missing education

Schools have their own procedures regarding contacting children at risk of going missing from education. These include the use of the schools to schools (S2S) website and the Lost Pupils Database for the transfer of pupil data. Schools should act responsibly in this matter in terms of the safeguarding agenda and the duty to ensure that the whereabouts of all children are known. This proactive approach will help to enable us in limiting the opportunity for children and young people to become missing or “lost”.

8.1 Procedures for children who are deemed to be at risk from harm

If the child or young person is subject to a child protection plan or is a child looked after, notify the social worker as soon as no contact can be made.

Day 1 - Where there is concern for a child who is deemed to be at risk from harm, or where there is reason to suspect the child is a victim of crime, notify social care and/or the police immediately.

This document does not replace any of the Child Protection Procedures.

Existing safeguarding procedures and mechanisms for reporting and recording child protection concerns are to be observed at all times.

8.2 Children who are not deemed to be at risk or harm

Follow attendance procedures for example; first day contact.

Days 1-5 – Schools should make all investigations to determine the whereabouts or reasons for absence from school.

Days 6-19 - Where a pupil has been missing for 5 school days, the school should contact the Education Welfare Service. A missing pupils’ checklist should be completed by the school.

Day 20 - Where a pupil remains missing from school/education provision, review the situation with the Education Welfare Service. If all enquires have been completed by

the school/education provider and the Education Welfare Service, and the child is still untraced, a CME referral should be completed by the school.

In agreement with the Children Missing Education Pupil Tracking Officer and the Education Welfare Service, pupils may be removed from the roll once all the following have been completed:

- Remove the pupil as a leaver from your database.
- Set up a Lost Pupils' destination school on your database, using XXX as the local authority code and XXXX as the school establishment number.
- Create a common transfer file (CTF) for the pupil, using the above Lost Pupils' destination school.
- Upload the CTF to the school to School (S2S) website <https://securedatatransfer.teachernet.gov.uk/sdtlive/asp/login.asp> or go to [teachernet.gov.uk](https://www.teachernet.gov.uk) and navigate to the login screen using the S2S links.
- Once uploaded, the pupil data will be stored in the national lost pupil database. The use of XXX as the local authority code and the school establishment number XXXX is correct and not an illustration. School will pass a copy of the Pupil Checklist with the CME Referral Form to the CME Pupil Tracking Officer. The procedures ensure that "reasonable enquiries" are carried out before a pupil is removed from a school roll.
- It is vital that schools try to obtain as much information as possible from parents and pupils in advance, if it is suspected that they may be moving out of area to reduce the risk of them disappearing without trace.
- It is also equally important to notify the Education Welfare Service as soon as possible if it is suspected that a pupil is missing to ensure that all enquiries can be completed within the four-week timescale, therefore, keeping unauthorised absence to a minimum.
- The CME Pupil Tracking Officer will continue to regularly monitor any "Missing children" to track them into provision. The CME Officer will also contact, where appropriate relevant agencies. If at any time during the tracking process, the child is located,
The CME Pupil Tracking Officer will: -
 - Contact the school, informing them where the child has been located.

- Where a forwarding address is identified, contact will be made with the person responsible for Children Missing Education in the new local authority.

The DfE has stated schools must not back date the off-roll date to the beginning of enquiries once it is agreed a pupil can be removed from roll.

8.3 Local Authority Procedures

The CME Pupil Tracking Officer is based within the local authority Education Welfare Service and has access to a range of partner agencies to support the identification of pupils who are missing from education.

8.3.1 Notification Routes

- From schools – through the LA's Exit and CME referral form for removal from roll and all non- standard admissions.
- Schools are also required to complete a referral to the CME Pupil Tracking Officer if the pupil's destination has not been established.
- The admission list within a school where a pupil does not arrive and contact cannot be made; or where a school becomes aware through their own pupils/families or other contacts, of any child who is not registered at a school.
- From other professionals within Children's Services education support teams
- From other local authorities – S2S secure messaging, secure email.
- From members of the public
- Registered Social Landlords
- Hospital Trusts
- Children's Social Care
- Police
- Youth Offending Teams
- Health Visitors/School Nurses

8.3.2 Recording Children Missing Education

The Children's Services education pupil database has a module which is used to record all children who are classified as children missing education. It is the CME Pupil Tracking Officer's responsibility to record necessary information on this database to enable accurate information to be reported to the Director of Education.

8.3.3 Local Authority Procedures

The CME Pupil Tracking Officer will be responsible for coordinating referrals from schools, internal and external agencies and recording the information on the pupil database. The CME Pupil Tracking Officer will perform all required checks using the prescribed checklist with partner agencies in line with agreed protocols to ascertain the whereabouts of a child. It is the CME Pupil Tracking Officer's responsibility to record the missing child on the S2S Missing Pupil database if necessary which is accessed by CME staff within Local Authorities across the country.

8.4 School procedures

The following advice and guidance is for schools to ensure consistent practice.

8.4.1 Missing pupils

Under normal circumstances when a child moves school the receiving school must contact the previous school to inform them they have placed the pupil on roll. In response to this, the previous school must complete a Common Transfer Form (CTF) and transfer this file to the new school via the secure data transfer site, referred to as School-to-School (S2S). The purpose of this national system is to try and avoid pupils going missing. Where a pupil leaves a school and no notification of a new school has been received, a school must within 1-10 days of their last date of attendance notify the LA CME Pupil Tracking Officer having once completed the referral form and checklist. The pupil must remain on roll for at least 20 continuous school days whilst further enquiries are completed by the CME Pupil Tracking Officer.

8.4.2 Pupils located who are located

- If the child returns to school or is found during the 20 days still residing in Liverpool, the child should not be taken off roll.
- The school should work with the child/family and if appropriate other agencies to ensure the child remains engaged in education.
- A child may be removed from roll only if they then go on roll at another school.
- For pupils located outside Liverpool. The school should complete the relevant CME referral form and checklist with information of the forwarding address and

send to CME Pupil Tracking Officer who will make enquiries with the receiving authority to confirm the child's whereabouts.

8.4.3 Pupils not located

- If after completion of the referral form and checklist and submission to the CME Pupil Tracking Officer the child remains untraceable, in agreement with the local authority the school may remove the pupil from roll.
- The pupil must remain on roll for at least 20 continuous school days whilst enquiries are completed. The school will post the child on the S2S site. In accordance with DfES S2S instructions the destination should be given as XXXXXXXX (i.e. 7X's). This website enables LA staff on a national basis to see who is missing and provide fresh information where possible.
- The removal date will depend on whether the pupil has been traced to another school or is untraceable.
- The School must adhere to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Regulation 8 'Deletions from Admission Register'.

8.5 Procedures for other agencies

This may include the Police, health professionals, voluntary organisations, etc. Where an agency has information regarding a child who is not currently accessing education or is aware of a child who is at risk of missing education they should inform the CME Pupil Tracking Officer as soon as possible using the CME referral form. The Agency's own referral form will be accepted but as much detail as possible needs to be included to ensure the maximum chance of tracing the pupil. The CME Pupil Tracking Officer will be responsible for coordinating the referrals from schools, internal and external agencies and ensuring accurate recording on the pupil database

9 Children Missing Education local authority lead and contact details

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