

Children **M**issing **E**ducation

POLICY

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Section 1 – Legal Background

This guidance is intended to demonstrate how the local authority aims to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to children missing education.

1.1 Under section 436A of the Education Act 1996, as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the local authority has a statutory duty to make arrangements to enable it to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in its area who are not receiving a suitable education.

1.2 “Suitable education” is considered to be efficient, full-time education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child and to any special educational needs which he/she may have.

1.3 The statutory duty applies in relation to children of compulsory school age who are:

- i) Not on a school roll; and
- ii) Who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at school - either elective home education (EHE) or alternative provision.

1.4 The purpose of this statutory duty is to ensure that children missing from education are identified quickly and effective tracking systems are put in place to ensure that action is taken to provide them with suitable education.

Section 2 – Introduction

2.1 To meet the statutory duty the local authority is required to show:

- **Strategic Management and Leadership** – including clear written policies, arrangements and processes that are embedded within the authorities governance, strategic planning arrangements and cross-service, multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding and regular monitoring by senior managers, elected Members and relevant partners.
- **Networks and Points of Contact** – including clearly identified stakeholders, defined notification routes, a named central contact and clear roles and responsibilities for officers to whom duties are delegated.
- **Information systems** – including a database of children currently not in education (together with details of actions being taken), robust and appropriate monitoring procedures to ensure that data is kept fairly and securely.
- **Provision-brokering services** – including agreed processes for securing the support and involvement of other services and agencies, agreed processes for securing provision for children who are identified as missing education, monitoring arrangements and information systems concerning the availability of school places.

- **Effective Pupil Tracking systems** – including a record of all children who leave education without a known destination, rigorous follow-up procedures, agreed procedures with schools, a named administrator with responsibility for the Lost Pupil Database, arrangements to regularly upload and download from the Lost Pupil Database.

Essential Responsibilities

- receive information about a child who is or is believed to be missing education;
- log details;
- check whether a place of education is already known;
- make enquiries of the last known school attended or other last known provider;
- make other reasonable enquiries – for example, with health, social care, housing and benefits agencies, etc;
- locate and contact the family;
- identify the child's needs;
- identify and access available provision – for example, local schools with places, etc;
- facilitate access to such provision;

Local authority procedures and processes should be aware of vulnerable groups such as:

- young offenders;
- children with a history of poor attendance/behaviour;
- children of homeless families living in temporary accommodation;
- young carers;
- families which are highly mobile – for example, Travellers;
- teenage parents;
- children living in women's refuges;
- children with long-term emotional or medical problems;
- children who have a history of running away from home;
- children of asylum seekers;
- children of new immigrant families who have not yet settled into a fixed address.

2.2 Local authority procedures and processes should also be aware to movements across:

- local authority boundaries and should ensure that any potential gaps are identified and closed. (The local authority named administrator will maintain a record of named Children Missing Education (CME) contacts in other authorities and will liaise and communicate with these as the need arises).
- CME referrals may be made to the local authority by a range of sources including schools, other local authorities, the health service, domestic violence referrals (made by the police to the local authority), the Nationality and Immigration Directorate, the general public, etc.

Section 3 – Manchester overview

All schools (including academies and Independent Schools) must notify the LA school admissions team of a child's name and home details before removing a child from roll. The schools and the LA have an agreed process and timescale to share such information and this is contained within the school process, CME and 'off rolling' guidance to schools.

After 20 school days and after following the 'off rolling' guidance a school should remove a child's name from its roll and create a "missing" (CTF) with XXXXXXX as the destination. **Schools should be aware that this process is mandatory and is based on the relevant regulations.** This missing CTF should be immediately uploaded onto the DFE S2S secure access site where it will be held in the Lost Pupils database.

Should a Manchester school which has previously sent a missing CTF to the Lost Pupils database be contacted by a school at which the missing child has since registered, it should advise the receiving school to request its own local authority to download the original CTF from the Lost Pupils website, rename and send to them. School should also advise the CME Team of the child's new school.

Along with the normal transitions rounds, all schools (including academies and Independent Schools) must also notify the LA school admissions team within 5 days of adding a child's name to their admissions register at a non standard transition point (In Year) by adding the details to the weekly waiting list report or by completing the form provided.

The remainder of this document contains the action taken by Manchester LA when a child is reported as missing.

CME Team

Within 20 working days of the referral being assigned to the CME officer, within the school admissions team, the officer will begin/continue their enquiries following the CME process document. (As the CME team will have already contacted the last known school attended it may not be necessary to contact the school again. Further contact with the school may, however, be necessary if further, more detailed background information is required.)

It is expected that a minimum of a home visit (if safe to do so)/ letter to last known address/phone calls to last known numbers are made within the 20 days by the school, if this has not already been undertaken.

The CME team will liaise with other LA departments, external agencies and other Local Authorities when investigating a case. The team will record all discussions and action taken on the Manchester LA database.

The CME team is integrated into the wider school admissions and school place planning team. This ensures that children missing from education are

secured the appropriate education. Children who are residing in the city and are not in receipt of education will be offered a place through:

The co-ordinated in year admissions process
The IYFAP
The Year 11 Strategy
The Special School heads partnership

Children that are offered education and do not attend the provision will be monitored and tracked through the school admission team using the statutory School Attendance order process.

For children whom the school admissions service are unable to establish the child's whereabouts or are unable to engage the family the CME officers will liaise with the council's Early Help Hub to assist with family engagement, residence and any safeguarding concerns. The CME officers will routinely liaise with the following key partners and agencies and use the following systems in establishing the whereabouts of a child

Revenue and Benefits departments
Border Agency
Other LA CME officers
Key to success
Face book
The council social care and housing systems
The DFE Lost pupils database.

Reporting

The CME Team manager will audit the CME Open referrals every 6-8 weeks. This will be reported to the Admissions Senior Management Team.

Periodically the CME Team Lead and Manager will review the different reports in order to:

- monitor the numbers of Manchester children known to be of CME status;
- identify any actual or potential gaps in local authority procedures and practice
- produce an annual statistical report for Head of Service/Management Team.

The Admissions senior Management team will also review the number of active cases open to the CME team on a monthly basis and monitor the success of children found and re-integrated into suitable education.

The Education and Skills Senior Leadership team will receive a quarterly report presented to the Quality Assurance Board detailing the number of cases registered as CME and CME whereabouts known, success rate of cases and local issues where appropriate.

The MSCB will receive a quarterly update on the number of children registered as CME and CME whereabouts unknown.

Outcomes

A CME case will only be closed when one of the following outcomes has been reached:

- **Child on a school roll or home educated**

If a child is on roll at an identified school or is being home educated, either within Manchester or in another local authority, after confirming the information the Investigating Officer should close the CME referral and enter a note on the 'ONE' Communication Log stating the name of the school the child is currently attending or the authority where he/she is being home educated. Where the school is not in Manchester the current base should also be updated.

- **Child moved to an identified town/city or an identified authority outside of Manchester**

If the Investigating Officer learns that the child moved to an address in an identified town/city or an identified authority outside of Manchester but is unable to ascertain further information (in particular, the name of an identified school) he/she will contact that authority and refer the case to them. If written confirmation is received that the forwarding Local Authority accepts responsibility/acknowledges the child being in their area then the Manchester CME Involvement can be closed as 'Confirmed in other LA'

- **Unable to trace whereabouts of child following extensive investigations**

If the Investigating Officer fails to obtain the whereabouts of the child following extensive investigations, the case will be set to "closed" and no further investigations will be made – this will carry a maximum timescale of 6 months to investigate before the case is closed. If all enquiry information is received earlier than 6 months the case can be closed earlier. If further information is received following the closure of a case, the case will be reactivated.

In all cases where a Childs whereabouts cannot be found the details will be uploaded to the DFE lost pupils database.

CONTACT DETAILS

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ADENDUM

Following a meeting between Education and Social Care, it was agreed that once the CME team had exhausted all reasonable enquiries looking for pupils who are whereabouts unknown, the child's details will be sent to the MASH Team to carry out a full MASH enquiry.