



Children Missing Education (CME) Policy

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Table of contents

1. Introduction
2. Purpose of this policy
3. Meaning of 'Children Missing Education'
4. Legislative Framework
5. Tracking and monitoring
6. Children for whom there are child protection or other serious welfare concerns
7. Reducing the risk of children going missing from education
8. Maintaining a database of Children Missing Education
9. Key stakeholders
10. How to report a Child Missing Education
11. Children who go missing from School or Alternative Provision
12. Contact details

1. Introduction

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Children missing or at risk of missing education are vulnerable to academic underachievement and are at risk of being out of employment, education or training (NEET). Young people who are out of education may also be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Out-Space its staff and volunteers are committed to ensuring children and young people are at the heart of everything we do, and a key aim for us is to be able to offer alternative education to students at risk of becoming NEET.

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation:

[Children missing education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



2.0 Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure Out-Space meets its statutory duties in relation to the provision, the safeguarding and the welfare of children it works with. It does not replace any of the existing child protection or safeguarding procedures and therefore this policy should be read in conjunction with those.

2.2 There are certain vulnerable groups who are more likely than others to become children missing education. They are as follows:

- young people who have committed offences
- children living in domestic abuse refuges
- children of homeless families perhaps living in temporary accommodation
- young runaways
- children with long-term medical or emotional problems
- looked after children
- children with a Gypsy/Roma/Traveller background
- young carers
- children from transient families
- teenage mothers
- children who are permanently excluded from school
- migrant children whether in families seeking asylum or economic migrants
- children moving out of independent schools/academies/free schools
- children whose parent(s) are in the Armed Forces

2.3 We are committed to ensuring that:

- All pupils who may be missing from schools, including independent schools, academies and free schools, are located without delay.
- Support is given to other agencies and partners including Local Authorities to locate missing children.
- Joint reasonable enquiries are made with schools and designated Local Authority (LA) staff to locate children who are missing from school as soon as possible.



3.0 The Meaning of 'Children Missing Education'

All children of compulsory school age, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

3.1 'Children Missing Education' (CME) are

- Children of statutory school age who become missing from education and their whereabouts are unknown.
- Those not on a school roll and no alternative arrangements have been made for them.
- Those who do not attend school and are not receiving a suitable education (i.e. Poor Elective Home Education or alternative provision).

These children can be at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation and in later life becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

3.2 A child is NOT missing from education if they are:

- On a school roll but are not attending regularly.
- They are being home educated to an adequate standard, as required for their age and aptitude.
- They are in temporary alternative provision.
- They attend a Specialist Provision.

In the case of non-attendance, a referral should be made to the Educational Welfare Officer or the school's Attendance Officer for further investigation.

4.0 Legislative Framework

4.1 The Education Act 1996 436A highlights the duty to make arrangements to identify children not receiving education.

4.2 The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information. To fulfil the requirements of the CME Policy, the authority has agreed to work in collaboration to ensure the early identification and intervention of children who are not receiving a suitable education. All stakeholders have a responsibility for CME.

4.3 The Department for Children, Schools and Families (now Department for Education) document "Working Together to Safeguard Children" published in March 2010 (updated in 2018) states: "There is a Children Missing Education (CME) named point of contact. Every practitioner working with a child has a responsibility to inform their CME contact if they know or suspect that a child is not receiving education. To help local agencies and professionals find children who are missing from education and identify those at risk of going missing from education, guidance was issued in July 2004".

4.4 Amendments to the above legislation were made in July 2016 and came into force as of



September 2016. DofE Guidance regarding Children Missing Education (CME) was updated in September 2016.

5.0 Tracking and Monitoring

5.1 Guidance was introduced by the DofE, as of September 2016, to ensure Local Authorities and schools make procedures even more robust to prevent children becoming 'missing'.

5.2 Out-Space is not a full-time provision and does not have responsibility for the full-time education of students, we therefore report absences daily and report attendance weekly.

6.0 Children for whom there are Child Protection or other Serious Welfare Concerns

6.1 Out-Space DSL (Lyndon Samuel) will immediately contact the Children's Services or relevant local authority, School and/or the Police if any of the below apply to a child who may become missing:

- has a Child Protection Plan
- is subject to serious concerns about their health, safety or welfare
- is living in a family where there are concerns about domestic abuse, substance abuse, mental health problems or learning difficulties
- may be in contact with a person who poses a risk of harm to children and young people
- may be at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation
- is subject to a Care Order
- is looked after by the local authority
- may be the victim of or involved in a crime
- may be taken out of the country illegally (e.g. abducted)
- may be taken out of the country for an illegal act (e.g. forced marriage, female genital mutilation, child trafficking)
- is privately fostered.

7.0 Reducing the risk of children going missing from education

7.1 Making sure that children do not go missing from education is a priority for the Local Authority, schools and all other professional parties involved with the education of a child.

7.2 All schools and provisions in Suffolk must have robust processes in place for minimising the risk



to children and young people of becoming missing in education. This includes school registration and removal from roll process.

7.3 Out-Space will contact parents and support workers if a child is more than 15 minutes late

7.4 Out-Space will maintain a database for updating, reporting and review. This Database will assist in identifying potential “Missing Children” at the earliest opportunity. Where a child is identified as potentially “missing” this will be reported to the LA, School or relevant third party organisation at the earliest opportunity. Out-Space has a system of reporting absences if a child is more than 15 minutes late.

7.5 Out-Space is not a fulltime provision and does not have responsibility for the fulltime education of students, we therefore report absences daily and report attendance weekly.

7.6 Out-Space will cooperate fully with the Local Authority, Schools, Educational Welfare, CME officers and any other professionals to reduce the risk of children becoming missing in education.

8.0 Maintaining a database of Children Missing Education

8.1 The Suffolk Family Focus Attendance Services (SFFAS) maintains the Children Missing Education (CME) database. The CME officer manages the database through day-to-day processes.

8.2 The database is being continually developed to provide better information to ensure that children are tracked effectively and for annual reporting.

9.0 Key stakeholders

9.1 It is crucial for agencies to work together and acknowledge their safeguarding responsibilities to prevent children from going missing in education or to re-engage them after they have gone missing.

9.2 All agencies have a responsibility to identify their role in reducing the risk of children become CME.

9.3 Effective multi-agency work in this area will involve information sharing, operational involvement and a commitment to alert key people and the Local Authority in every case where there is a suspicion of a Child Missing Education. Effective multi-agency working will reduce the risk of Children Missing Education.

9.4 Key stakeholders include:

- Education – including maintained schools, independent schools, free schools, voluntary-aided schools, foundation schools, academies, Pupil Referral Units, special schools, colleges, Elective Home Education and other professionals within education.
- Children’s Social Care
- Health – Health authorities, Primary Care Trusts, School nurse teams
- Police and Police authorities
- Youth Justice Teams
- Youth Offending Institutions



- Childrens' homes
- Early Help Integrated Teams
- Housing providers
- Childrens' Centres

10.0 How to report a Child Missing Education

10.1 Identifying Children Missing Education and intervening quickly relies on all agencies working together. It is essential that all agencies working with children and families are aware of the need to alert the Local Authority when they suspect that a child may be missing from education.

10.2 As of September 2019, all Suffolk School CME referrals should be made via the CME schools' portal. The portal can be accessed at the following link:

<https://schoolsreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/reports/refer-child-missing-education>

10.3 The Children Missing Education Team will follow up all referrals, working closely with the Suffolk Family Focus Attendance Service (SFFAS), and other Local Authority services.

10.4 The CME Officer is available to provide information sessions and support partner agency teams, Suffolk schools and key stakeholders.

10.5 The public has a role to play in identifying CME. The public CME reporting template is available from www.suffolk.gov.uk/cme. The CME Team should be notified as soon as possible if there is a suspicion that a child is missing from education.

10.6 The CME Team contact details are:

Email: CME@suffolk.gov.uk

Telephone: 01473 265224

Address:

Suffolk County Council
Children Missing Education Team
CYP Services
Endeavour House
8 Russell Road
Ipswich
Suffolk, IP1 2BX

11.0 Children who go missing from School or Alternative Provision

11.1 EWOs will take an immediate referral on any child. However, if they are on the child protection register or are subject to a S.47 enquiry, an immediate referral should be made by the school to Social Care Services.

11.2 The EWO taking the referral should visit the home within 72 working hours/three school days, (a Colleague may be required to accompany the EWO) and any other address at which the child may



be residing. Enquiries may be made of neighbours. It is important that these should be discreet and limited to asking if the family's whereabouts are known.

11.3 EWOs must exercise their professional judgement in deciding whether to refer to Social Care and/or the Police if they find the child. They must, however, do so if they are unable to locate the child within 72 working hours of referral by the school, and immediately if they have reasonable cause to suspect the child may be at risk of harm. EWOs must report the outcomes of any enquiries undertaken to the Children Missing Education Officer and follow all procedures laid out in this Child Missing Education protocol, updated March 2020.

12. Contact Details

If, at any time, in the procedures described above, a child is at risk of harm, the person with the concern must make an immediate referral to Social Care Services in line with Suffolk Safeguarding Board Procedures. These can be found, together with the referral guidance at:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/pupil-attendance-and-welfare/children-missing-from-education/>

Any concerns about children missing education should be referred to:

Out-Space DSL, Lyndon Samuel – 07443 013341 or email lyndon@out-space.co.uk

Signed: 
Lyndon Samuel

Date: 10/04/2025

Review date: 01/08/2025.

Director (DSL)

Out-Space