

Policy and Procedures For Children Missing or at Risk of Becoming Missing From Education

**Jonathan Ord
Fair Access Officer
Reviewed and Updated July 2015**

Please note that this policy does not replace your organisation's existing Safeguarding policies and procedures.

If you feel that any child or young person is at risk of harm then you must inform the Police/ Children's Social Care as appropriate

Background

All children of statutory school age, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later on in life.

Local authorities should have robust procedures and policies in place to enable them to meet their duty in relation to these children, including appointing a named person that schools and other agencies can make referrals. Local authorities should undertake regular reviews and evaluate their processes to ensure that these continue to be fit for purpose in identifying and dealing with CMEs in their area.

The purpose of the section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 1996 is to ensure that local authorities' arrangements enables them to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school, and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. The LA should consult the parents of the child when establishing whether the child is receiving suitable education. Local authorities should have procedures in place to prevent children at risk of becoming CME. Those children identified as not receiving suitable education should be returned to full time education either at a school or in alternative provision.

This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age

Since June 2013, Ofsted has been implementing a new joint inspection for multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children which will include CMEs.

We note recent Department for Education comments in response to schools where pupils are thought to be at risk of extremist influence: "The safety of young people in our schools is paramount and we will be taking immediate steps to strengthen our guidance to schools on safeguarding and to amend the current regulations about the information schools collect when a pupil is taken off the register." (July 2015)

Effective implementation of this guidance will support the local authority in making further progress in improving outcomes for children and young people.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document should be read in conjunction with [‘Children missing education: Statutory guidance for local authorities’](#) (Department for Education, January 2015) and with all relevant safeguarding policy and procedures
- 1.2 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced the statutory duty for local authorities to identify children who are not receiving a suitable education.
- 1.3 There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education so it is vital that local authorities make judgement on a case by case basis. The DfE identifies some of the circumstances that local authorities should consider when establishing their CME practices and policies (2015 Guidance):
 - Pupils at risk of harm/neglect
 - Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Families
 - Families of Armed Forces
 - Missing children/runaways
 - Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System
 - Children who cease to attend a school
- 1.4 This document does not relate to the following groups of children/ young people:
 - Those on a school roll but who are not attending. These will be dealt with through existing attendance procedures. Arrangements are in place for the LA to respond to the 2013 OFSTED document ‘Pupils Missing Out on Education: Low Aspirations, Little Access, Limited Achievement’ which requires the LA to monitor those pupils not educated in the usual way. This document does not specifically relate to those children and young people but we recognise these are potentially vulnerable and at risk of becoming CME.
 - Those below statutory school age. If any childcare provider or other agency has any concerns about the whereabouts, safety or welfare of a child below statutory school age they should contact Children’s Social Care or the police as appropriate. *If any child is approaching statutory school age and it is felt they are at risk of becoming CME please refer to the named CME contact as described below*
 - Those above statutory school age. These young people would still be subject to colleagues following appropriate safeguarding and school registration procedures. *Information regarding pupils identified as CME prior to reaching the end of statutory school age will be referred to the Connexions service if appropriate as being at risk of becoming NEET*
- 1.5 There are number of key posts within Newcastle that will support the implementation of this policy:

The named CME contact for Newcastle upon Tyne Local Authority is:

Jonathan Ord
Fair Access Coordinator
Attendance Service
Newcastle City Council
Heaton Centre
Trewitt Road
Heaton
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE6 5DY

Phone: +44 (0)191 277 4542

email: jonathan.ord@newcastle.gov.uk

secure email: jonathan.ord@newcastle.qcsx.gov.uk

- Directorate Responsibility - Assistant Director, Education
- Directorate Responsibility – Access, Admissions and Attendance Service Manager
- Pupil Tracking – Business Intelligence Team
- Admissions Issues - School Admissions Officers
- Attendance Service – Area Attendance Officers
- Safeguarding – Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care

1.6 In Newcastle we recognise that the issue of Children Missing Education must not be seen in isolation. The named CME lead is a member of the [Newcastle Missing/Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Group](#), known as the M-SET Group. This is an established sub working group of Newcastle Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards (NSCB and NSAB). Its purpose is to:

- Implement and monitor the joint multi-agency sexual exploitation strategy and action plan
- Give consideration to improving outcomes for children and young people who go missing from home and education
- Give consideration to human trafficking issues and actions
- Ensure effective links with other strategic and service plans to prevent duplication
- Consider implications of policy, legislation, research and guidance
- Consider issues relating to the compliance of procedures, guidance and protocol
- Influence and contribute to the commissioning of services for children, young people and adults
- Develop and monitor performance management data
- Develop and maintain links with other relevant partnerships tackling associated issues e.g. forced marriage, domestic abuse, trafficking

- Contribute to regional collaboration and working

2 Local Standards

- 2.1 In Newcastle we believe that all pupils should receive the best possible education. We will take steps to confirm that every Newcastle pupil has a place at a named school or in appropriate alternative provision and that the pupil is receiving the education to which they are entitled.
- 2.2 Where it is suspected, believed or known that a pupil may be missing from education, we will take proportionate steps to establish the whereabouts of the pupil and the arrangements for their education.
- 2.3 We will work with all Head Teachers and schools to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities and of the support available.
- 2.4 Where the LA is informed that a pupil is missing education, we will include their details on our CME list and may undertake further checks to those undertaken by the school at the point of the pupil being reported as missing education. These additional checks will be proportionate and relevant to the known welfare risks and concerns about the pupil.
- 2.5 We will work to reduce the risk of pupils missing the education to which they are entitled and hence ensure they achieve their optimal potential.

3 Partnership Working – Everyone’s Responsibility

- 3.1 The identification of children not receiving a suitable education is an important contribution to a number of local priorities and should strengthen and complement existing duties and partnerships. The nominated CME officer in Newcastle will need to work closely with colleagues across the different service areas, e.g. Local Safeguarding Children’s Board, and external partners whose work contributes to safeguarding and improving outcomes for children. Key partner agencies include:
 - Children, Education & Social Care, including all education establishments and those that work with them
 - Health, (e.g. GPs, Emergency Departments, Walk-In Centres, Health Visitors, Minor Injuries Units, School Health Advisors)
 - Police, Police Authorities and immigration services
 - Housing
 - Inland Revenue
 - Youth Offending Team and Probation Service
 - All other voluntary and community organisations
 - Other Local Authorities

This list is not exhaustive; there may be others depending on individual circumstances.

- 3.2 There is a duty on all local authorities to work with other agencies to safeguard vulnerable children and young people from going missing from education. Systems are in place to ensure joint, and where necessary cross border, working is effective and swift so that all relevant and appropriate information is shared.
- 3.3 There are a number of ways a CME referral can be made:

- Through S2S (School to School) secure messaging available to local authorities in England and Wales.
- By email: cme@newcastle.gov.uk
jonathan.ord@newcastle.gov.uk
jonathan.ord@newcastle.gcsx.gov.uk (Secure)
- By telephoning the Attendance Service (0191) 2774500
- In writing to the named CME contact

4. Strategies in Operation

- 4.1 All children and young people identified as missing from education are logged on the Capita ONE database.
- 4.2 Schools are required to refer any children thought to be missing or with no known destination school to the Attendance Team as soon as is practicable after carrying out their own checks (see Appendix 1)
- 4.3 The Attendance Team works closely with all schools to promote regular school attendance and carry out the statutory duties placed on local authorities in respect of this.
- 4.4 Cross boundary procedures are in place to ensure a consistent approach for all pupils who are missing or at risk of missing education. This is strengthened further by the regular Children Missing Education North East Forum.
- 4.5 All children whose parents/carers have elected to Home Educate are visited by a local authority officer to ensure that a suitable education is being provided. There are separate LA policies and procedures regarding Elective Home Education
- 4.6 The Admissions Team, where the LA is the Admissions Authority, operates a robust system to coordinate the admissions of children at different points of transition. They also process requests for in-year admissions. The transfer procedure in place has been agreed by schools and support services and is also available to parents.

5. Local Authority Action when a Pupil Is Reported As ‘Missing’ Education’ by School

- 5.1 When checks undertaken by the school (see Appendix 1) fail to establish the whereabouts and destination school of a missing pupil, the school will report the pupil as CME as above.
- 5.2 When notified that a pupil is missing education, the Local Authority will undertake reasonable and proportionate checks.
- 5.3 In all cases LA staff will:
 - Log the referral on Capita ONE and record as a possible CME. (This system will be used to track and record steps taken to locate the pupil).
 - Check information held on the pupil database.

- Check if Children's Social Care are currently involved with the child. If the child is known to Children's Social Care then the named worker will be informed and the worker details will be recorded on the pupil database.
- 5.4 If the child is not known to Children's Social Care and there are no concerns held by the school, and following the above checks, the LA will note on Capita ONE that the child has left the school and will record in the notes the actions taken to trace the whereabouts of the child. They will then close the case as an active CME on the pupil database.
- 5.5 Where checks have revealed possible safeguarding or welfare concerns about a child missing from education, Children's Social Care is available to discuss these concerns and if appropriate a referral should be made. In situations where a referral is made to Children's Social Care they will then determine the appropriate steps to be taken to try and locate the child. Children's Social Care shall record the actions they take. The child's name will remain on the CME register until Social Care makes a decision to close the case.
- 5.6 Where no referral is made to Children's Social Care the LA may conduct further checks as appropriate such as:
- If the pupil has an Education, Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs check with SEN
 - Make further telephone checks to all numbers provided by school.
 - Make contact to any parental e mails supplied by school.
 - Check if the pupil has any siblings on the Pupil database. If so, contact the sibling's last known school for information.
 - Contact any other agencies with known involvement
 - Check with council tax benefit/housing benefit
 - If any service is involved request they make a home visit.
 - If the pupil is from an Army family contact the Army Welfare Service.
 - Contact any previous LA the pupil has lived in.
 - Contact the designated CME lead for another LA if there is any information to suggest that the pupil has moved to, or has contact with, another LA. (The Fair Access Coordinator can provide contacts)
- 5.7 If any of the checks, or other information supplied from other sources, indicate that there are or have been concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety, this information must be shared with the Children's Social Care as soon as possible so that they can then determine the appropriate steps to be taken to try and locate the pupil.
- 5.8 The existence of concerns will be noted on the Capita ONE and the case closed as CME if the pupil is not located 12 weeks after being notified as CME.
- 5.9 In all cases checks will be made to try and establish the whereabouts of the pupil. If after twelve weeks the LA have been unable to locate the pupil the details will be passed to Children's Social Care and the Police for a decision on how to progress.
- 5.10 A list of all cases will be retained (see section 7) for monitoring and will be subject to regular checks of national databases however will be closed as an active case

6 Enquiries

- 6.1 Occasionally the Local Authority will receive queries from other Local Authorities or agencies seeking to locate a child in Newcastle or to check they are in education. If an address is provided the LA will:
- Check information held on Capita ONE.
 - Check if Children's Social Care are currently involved with the child
 - If an address in Newcastle is confirmed log the referral on Capita ONE and record as a possible CME
 - Feedback the result of these checks to the referrer
- 6.2 If it is confirmed the pupil is in Newcastle and there is no evidence to indicate they are in receipt of a suitable education then any services that are working with the family should be informed. If appropriate LA staff will make every effort, including home visits, to contact the family to clarify how they are educating the child and to support in accessing appropriate provision.
- 6.3 In the event of a parent refusing to provide their child with appropriate education the Attendance Team can pursue a School Attendance Order (1996 Education Act, Section 437).

7 Monitoring Pupils on the Local Authority CME List

- 7.1 All individual cases will be dealt with using the above procedures. The complete CME register will be reviewed twice a year. This review will be conducted by the Fair Access Coordinator, Lead Specialist Data Quality & Standards (Business Intelligence Team) and identified staff from Children's Social Care
- 7.2 This review will look at those cases and check all appropriate and proportionate steps have been taken to locate the pupil.
- 7.3 The Assistant Director, Education will select sample random cases of CME to quality assure CME procedures and work.
- 7.4 A report will be presented annually to relevant groups on the CME work that has taken place in the previous year. These include:
- MSET (NSCB Sub-group)
 - Schools Safeguarding Partnership
 - Directorate Management Team

8. Contact Details

For any further queries regarding this guidance, please contact either:

- Jonathan Ord (Fair Access Coordinator) jonathan.ord@newcastle.gov.uk (0191) 277 4542 for advice about CME
- cme@newcastle.gov.uk if you wish to report a pupil as CME
- School Admissions, admissions.information@newcastle.gov.uk advice regarding admissions and school transfers

- Business Intelligence Team, CapitaOneDataQual@newcastle.gov.uk on 0191 2787878 for advice about S2S and CTF
- Initial Response Service; Children's Social Care on 0191 2772500/ if you have a concern that a child is vulnerable or at risk of significant harm. Not every crisis occurs during office hours, for emergencies contact the Emergency Duty Team on 0191 2787878.

Appendix 1

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 state that schools are expected to make reasonable enquires to establish the whereabouts of a missing pupil.

When a pupil leaves with notice the school will:

- Agree with parent the last day the pupil will be attending the school.
- Request updated telephone numbers, e mail and address.
- Ask if the pupil has been allocated a place at a new school and if so seek details.
- If a new school has been allocated contact the school to agree the date the pupil will be starting.
- If a new school has not been allocated ask parents to inform you when a new school has been allocated as you will need to transfer electronically the Common Transfer File (CTF). You should also contact the LA with details of the pupil, new address etc.
- If it cannot be established that the pupil will be attending the named / any school, you should follow CME process.
- If necessary for further details re CTF refer to the Business Intelligence Team

Where a pupil leaves without advance notice or their destination is unknown, the school will:

- If the pupil or family is known to Children's Social Care inform the named Social Worker
- Check possible whereabouts with staff
- Contact parents using any known telephone numbers number or by email
- Contact any emergency contacts held for the pupil
- Make home visits to the last known address
- Check with neighbours and friends
- Contact any agencies known to be involved
- Contact the last known school of any siblings
- Ask the pupil's friends and their parents if they are aware of the pupil's whereabouts
- Check any social media sites e.g. Facebook.

If the pupil is still not located contact the CME team (cme@newcastle.gov.uk). This will enable the LA to make further enquires, as appropriate, to try and locate the pupil.

The pupil should remain on roll for a minimum of 20 school days and their absence should be recorded appropriately. Please note, the school must contact the Fair Access Coordinator and agree the date that the pupil may be removed from roll, allowing the LA time to carry out appropriate checks

On the date agreed with the Fair Access Coordinator the school should ensure the pupil's attendance data is up to date and remove them from their roll with the correct leaving date.

Create a CTF to the destination of Unknown/other (XXX/XXXX) and load it onto the S2S website. By doing this, the pupil's details will be uploaded onto a central database. If a pupil then arrives at a new school without any records from their previous school, the new school can ask their LA to retrieve the details from the database.

It is a statutory requirement that all schools enter start dates and end dates on the national School 2 School (S2S) database. A forwarding destination, where known is also expected to be added.

Please note a child must never be removed from roll simply because they are not attending

Appendix 2 Further sources of information:

Associated resources (external links)

[Child abduction](#)

[Counter terrorism](#)

[International child abduction](#)

[Forced marriages \(FCO\)](#)

[HM Customs and Revenue](#)

[Home Office](#)

[Working together to safeguard children](#)

[Missing Children/People](#)

[UK Border Agency](#)

Other Department for Education advice and guidance:

[Behaviour and attendance \(including exclusions, bullying and alternative provision\)](#)

[Child sexual exploitation](#)

[Child trafficking](#)

[School Admissions Code](#)

[Elective Home Education guidelines](#)

[Children who go missing or run away from home or care](#)

Related legislation

School Attendance: [Education Act 1996 \(section 7, 8, 14 & 19\)](#)

[Education Act 2002 \(section 21\)](#)

[Education and Inspections Act 2006 \(section 4 & 38\)](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Child protection: [Children Act 1989 \(section 17 & 47\)](#)

[Children Act 2004 \(section 10, 11, 12 & 17\)](#)

[Education Act 2002 \(section 175\)](#)

Approval and Implementation

TITLE	Policy and Procedures for Children Missing or at risk of going Missing from Education		
VERSION NUMBER	2	<i>Previously issued</i>	2011
DATE	July 2015	<i>Approved Version</i>	

Approval has been given for this Procedure to be implemented with immediate effect.

Implementation plan

NSCB member organisations, through their Policy and Procedure Committee representative are responsible for ensuring that all relevant staff are made aware of the revised procedure and how and where to access it.

Approval given by who and when	
Planned Implementation Date	September 2015
Review Date	
Circulation e-mail and website	jonathan.ord@newcastle.gov.uk
Process Signed Off By	
Date	