Child Missing Education Policy

Children Missing Education Policy

Revised August 2024

Children & Adults' Directorate Education and SEND Gun Wharf Dock Road Chatham ME4 4TR



1. Introduction

- 1.1. Section 436 A of the Education Act 1996 as amended by the Education Inspections Act 2006, requires all local authorities to make arrangements, as much as is possible, to establish the identities of children residing in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving suitable education. It is related to current Legislation and Related Guidance (S436A – Education and Inspections Bill 2006) and based on the Department of Education's (DfE) Children missing education, Statutory guidance for local authorities September 2016.
- 1.2. Suitable education is defined as full time education suitable to age, ability, and aptitude and to any special education needs, the child may have. The duty applies to children of compulsory school age who are not on school roll and are not receiving a suitable education at home, privately or in alternative provision.
- 1.3. The purpose of the Child Missing Education (CME) Policy 2024 is to establish a set of principles which all agencies can subscribe to and to ensure that Medway Council:
 - 1.3.1. Can fulfil its statutory duty to provide an education for all children of compulsory school age.
 - 1.3.2. Can locate, assess monitor and track children and young people missing education to ensure that they reach their full potential.
 - 1.3.3. Identifies those missing from education and those at risk of becoming so.
 - 1.3.4. Can produce, monitor and evaluate data on CME for Elected Members and Senior Officers in Children and Adult Service.
 - 1.3.5. Ensure their responsibility is carried out through a strategic and multi-agency framework where all agencies share information on the identification of children and young people missing education.
- 1.4. It is important to have the attainment of young people and the provision of high-quality support to be available according to assessed needs of the child and family. As far as possible, we will ensure the right educational setting is chosen for young people, according to their individual needs, maintaining as far as possible the child's current school placement.

2. Who is a child missing from education (CME)?

2.1. There is an obligation on parents to ensure that children in their care receive an education. <u>Section 7 of the Education Act 1996</u> details this obligation:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- 2.1.1. to his age, ability, and aptitude, and
- 2.1.2. to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise"

- 2.2. Most children receive education through schools in the public and private sector, some children are electively home educated, and others are in alternative provision, such as pupil referral units (PRU). There are processes in place to monitor the quality of education and attendance of pupils in these education establishments and children within these education frameworks are not considered CME.
- 2.3. For these procedures, CME are children who are not on the roll of an education provider or where elective home education has been assessed to be inadequately fulfilling the requirements of Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act. As such, children defined as CME are particularly vulnerable as they can become "invisible" to the usual monitoring processes and may stay undetected for some time.
- 2.4. There are procedures in place to monitor and tackle poor school attendance and these are set out in the Code of Practice for the Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies.
- 2.5. Statutory guidance clearly states that where any professional identifies a child who is not in education then the children missing education protocol should be followed. <u>DfE Working Together to safeguard children</u> is clear that: "Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action."

3. Children at risk of becoming CME

- 3.1. At different points in a child's life, they may become more vulnerable to becoming CME, there are some recognised factors that increase this risk and attention must be paid to these. The list of vulnerable groups is neither exclusive nor exhaustive, but it offers a checklist for partners:
 - 3.1.1. Children not registered by parents/carers at a school when they reach statutory school age (no later than the term after their fifth birthday).
 - 3.1.2. Children not registered by parents/carers at transition points e.g. Year 2 Year 3 and Year 6 Year 7
 - 3.1.3. Children transferring between local authorities
 - 3.1.4. Children moving out of the country
 - 3.1.5. Frequent house moves, periods of homelessness or time spent in refuges.
 - 3.1.6. Family breakdown.
 - 3.1.7. Parents/carers "withdrawing" children from school.
 - 3.1.8. Schools off-rolling pupils without the correct checks and procedures being followed.
 - 3.1.9. Exclusion (official and unofficial).
 - 3.1.10. Children being "home educated" but not official registered as Electively Home Educated.
- 3.2. Certain groups of children are more likely to be affected by the factors listed above and include:
 - 3.2.1. Children in Public Care (CiC).
 - 3.2.2. Children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP).
 - 3.2.3. MISPERS (Missing Person).
 - 3.2.4. Refuge and asylum seekers.
 - 3.2.5. Gypsy, Roma and Travelling families.
 - 3.2.6. Unaccompanied minors.

- 3.2.7. Children who have experienced domestic violence or other adverse family circumstances such as parental mental health, substance, and alcohol misuses (Toxic Trio).
- 3.2.8. Children with special educational needs (SEN).
- 3.2.9. Migrant families.
- 3.2.10. Young Carers.
- 3.2.11. Children who have had attendance difficulties at school.
- 3.3. Missing education is also linked to other problems including increased risk of:
 - 3.3.1. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
 - 3.3.2. Becoming a child Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
 - 3.3.3. Criminal and anti-social behaviour.
 - 3.3.4. Illegal employment.
 - 3.3.5. Becoming teenage parents.
 - 3.3.6. Mental Health.
 - 3.3.7. Forced Marriage.
- 3.4. To successfully safeguard the children who may fall into one of these groups a multiagency approach is essential. Information sharing protocols are used to enable swift notification of children at risk of becoming CME and clear robust procedures in place to affect immediate remedial action.

4. The duty of the Local Authority (LA)

- 4.1. We have robust policies and procedures in place to log, track and locate children and to ensure they are returned to education in a timely manner.
- 4.2. The contribution of partner agencies is key to the successful identification and engagement of children and families.
- 4.3. Schools play a vital role in protecting children from continued CME status by offering places on roll and securing good attendance. They also act as first alert to the disappearance of pupils from their attendance registers to enable timely investigation and swift action.
- 4.4. In paragraph 17.97 of the Victoria Climbie Inquiry Report, Lord Laming recommended that, "Front line staff in each of the agencies which regularly come into contact with families with children must ensure that in each new contact, basic information about the child is recorded. This must include the child's name, address, age, the name of the child's primary carer, the child's GP, and the name of the child's school if the child is of school age. Gaps in this information should be passed on to the relevant authority in accordance with local arrangements." The LA continues to raise awareness among agencies of how to inform the LA of children missing from education. It's often the case that another agency is aware of the arrival or the existence of a child living in an LA but not in education, before the LA is aware.
- 4.5. Health professionals, including Hospital Accident and Emergency staff, Health Visitors, GPs, School Nurses, Child Protection Designated Nurse, Paediatricians, Midwives, Medway Young Person Wellbeing Services (CAMHS/NELFT) and others who may have information about children within families who are not receiving education are an essential source of information for the purpose of notification.
- 4.6. Police, Medway Youth Service, and other school support services notify the CME officer, if there is concern that a child is out of school and there is no information to indicate that they are on roll at school.

- 4.7. Letting/estate agents may identify children who are CME and provide information to the CME officer to support families with obtaining a school placement.
- 4.8. Social workers, Family Solutions/Early Help and youth workers may identify children at risk of becoming CME and provide information to the CME officer to support enquiries and investigations. Once cases are identified, and where further support is required, the CME officer liaises with Social Care and Family Solutions/Early Help.
- 4.9. The School Admissions and Transport Team work closely with the CME officer, to ensure children do not become possible CME during the transition stages of education: -
 - Parents/carers who have applied for a Year R place and failed to on roll their child (once statutory school age).
 - Transfer from infant to junior school.
 - Transfer to secondary school.

Clear processes ensure effective and joint working between the teams. Referrals are also made to the CME officer, where a school have refused a place, and a parent/carer has not confirmed the education provision.

- 4.10. CME/EHE Lead is responsible for the local authority statutory DfE Elective Home Education (EHE) and Children Missing Education (CME) data collection.
- 4.11. Established working arrangements are in place between the EHE and CME, to ensure children at risk of CME from these areas are monitored and referred. For clarification refer to the <u>EHE policy</u>.
- 4.12. Up to date referral information on CME procedures are shared with all appropriate agencies annually including Health, Police, Virtual School, Social Care, Family Solutions/Early Help, Independent Schools, and Estate agents.

5. Role of the Children Missing Education Lead/Officer

- 5.1. There is a named Children Missing Education Officer, and the Attendance Manager is the CME lead.
- 5.2. The role of the CME officer is to monitor and track, the CME data and ensure that all children identified within Medway receive suitable education. The CME Officer will advise and support the parents/carers to apply for suitable education and ensure that information regarding these children is shared with appropriate partners and other local authorities.
- 5.3. The database includes information on children who have moved into the area and do not have suitable education provision. It tracks the progress and status of securing provision, and each case remains live and active until the child is placed in suitable provision.
- 5.4. The database holds information on children who have been removed from the admissions register of a school after all 'reasonable enquiries' have been made to locate them, including visits to the home, enquiries of housing providers and enquiries to address register databases. The school is advised to upload the pupil's records via Common Transfer File (CTF) onto the statutory electronic "Lost Pupils/No Trace" database.

- 5.5. The Attendance manager reports the numbers of CME coming into Medway and moving out of Medway in a quarterly report that is included in the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) dataset.
- 5.6. The Attendance manager is responsible for CME and duties include:
 - 5.6.1. Supervision of the process to ensure that procedures are in place and followed to safeguard CME.
 - 5.6.2. Supervise the CME Officer and Attendance Officers (AO) to ensure that casework is of a high-quality standard and conforms to the statutory duty.
 - 5.6.3. Ensure schools are guided in their responsibilities for CME.
 - 5.6.4. Identify and strengthen links with partner agencies to ensure timely reporting of CME.
 - 5.6.5. Oversee legal procedures to compel registration of a pupil where necessary (School Attendance Order).
 - 5.6.6. Update procedures to reflect changes to government guidance and legislation.
 - 5.6.7. Submit a quarterly and annual report to the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP).

6. Medway School Admissions and Transport Team

- 6.1. All families have the right to apply for a mainstream school place at any time during their child's education (up to and including Year 11); through either the main coordinated admissions processes (for Year R in primary/infant school, Year 3 in junior schools and Year 7 in secondary schools) or the in–year (casual) admission processes for all other year groups and after the end of the co-ordinated admissions processes.
- 6.2. For the main co-ordinated admissions processes, parents/carers must apply for their preferred school(s) through the Local Authority where they live (e.g. if they are a Medway resident). For Medway Residents, applications must be sent to the School Admissions and Transport Team at Medway Council or made online.
- 6.3. The application will be processed in accordance with the co-ordinated admissions schemes and a decision made on whether a place can be offered. A parent/carer will have the right of appeal to any school they applied for that did not offer their child a place.
- 6.4. Full details on the main admissions processes are available on the <u>Schools and</u> <u>learning homepage</u>.
- 6.5. For the in-year (casual) admissions processes, parents/carers must complete an application for each individual school they wish to apply for and return the application direct to the school.
- 6.6. The application will be processed and if available, and the child meets the entry criteria (for selective schools), a school place will be offered. If a place cannot be offered, the family will be advised of their right to appeal.
- 6.7. School has a duty to provide Medway Council with the details of every application and its outcome. In cases where a place has not been offered, the School Admissions and Transport Team will contact the parents/carers to ascertain what education provision they are making for their child. Parents/carers can request Medway Council to allocate a place at the nearest school with a vacancy.

- 6.8. Once a school place is offered parents/carers have 20 school days to accept or refuse the place directly with the school. If following this time, the place has not been accepted, it can be withdrawn, and the family will be referred to the CME Officer.
- 6.9. In some cases, where the information provided determines that the child falls under the Medway agreed Fair Access Protocols (FAP), the child will be discussed at the Fair Access Panel, an appropriate placement secured, and a school offer made. Once this offer has been made, the same process ensues regarding accepting or refusing places within 20 school days.

7. Education Otherwise (Elective Home Education - EHE)

- 7.1. The Education Act 1996 states that while education is compulsory, school is not, and parents/carers can choose to 'educate otherwise'. Parents or carers can elect to educate their child/children at home, and some choose to do so. There are many varied reasons for choosing 'education otherwise' and parents/carers should be aware of their responsibilities if they decide to home educate. These children are not defined as children missing education as even though they are not on roll at a school they are being educated.
- 7.2. The Local Authority has a role to play in ensuring that elective home education safeguards children and ensures that they receive a suitable education according to age, ability, and aptitude and to any special educational needs. Any safeguarding concerns should follow safeguarding protocols and professionals should make referrals to appropriate agencies, as necessary.
- 7.3. Medway Council monitors elective home education through a dedicated post within the AASSA team. The CME/EHE lead officer and Attendance manager oversees notification of children who are Electively Home Educated, or parents who are considering removing their child from school to Electively Home Educate. There is a clear process in place to track the recording of elective home education and it is undertaken jointly through multi-disciplinary co-operation:
 - 7.3.1. Parents inform the school in writing that they intend to remove their child from school roll to electively home educate.
 - 7.3.2. Notification is made to the CME/EHE officers, by school to inform them of the parent/carer's intention to EHE via a designated email address <u>homeeducation@medway.gov.uk</u>.
 - 7.3.3. Information of cases known to Attendance Officers where a decision has been made to electively home educate will be shared with the CME/EHE officers immediately.
 - 7.3.4. If appropriate, contact is made with parents to ensure that parent/carers understand their legal responsibilities if they intend to electively home educate.
 - 7.3.5. Contact is made by the CME/EHE officer to meet and offer advice, guidance and monitor on the education provided.
 - 7.3.6. If there are concerns, regarding the education provided and it is deemed inadequate parents/carers will be advised on roll their child/children at a school. If this does not happen this may result in pursuit of a School Attendance Order (under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996).
 - 7.3.7. If the CME/EHE officer is unable to engage with the family or if it appears the family are no longer living at the address, the child/children will be recorded as a CME and further investigations made.
 - 7.3.8. For further guidance please see <u>EHE policy</u>.

8. Excluded pupils (PEx)

- 8.1. The local authority must arrange suitable education for a pupil who has been excluded from the 6th day of their exclusion.
- 8.2. If children do not attend the provision arranged for them, following their exclusion, the Exclusions and Alternative Provision Officer will liaise with the provision and parent/carer. The provision and the officers within Education and SEND will provide CME/EHE officers with all appropriate correspondence to enable the Education courts officer to issue a school attendance order (SAO)

9. Notification routes and action to the local authority (LA)

- 9.1. Referrals to the CME Officer are welcomed from all partners, including schools as well as members of the public and any other interested parties, such as Virtual School and estate agents. Notification will be accepted in the form of a referral form, paper or electronic, telephone call, or face-to-face meeting depending on the referrer.
- 9.2. Schools that purchase the attendance advisory service, will complete the 2024-2025 AASSA referral form and email to their allocated attendance officer (AO).
- 9.3. All remaining schools will complete the 2024-2025 AASSA referral form and email to <u>cme@medway.gov.uk</u>.
- 9.4. The following information about the child is helpful to the CME Officer for the purpose of investigation:
 - Name
 - Date of birth
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Language spoken at home
 - Parents/carers names, including details of parental responsibility
 - Siblings' names
 - Last known school
 - Address, current and/or last known
 - SEN or EHCP
 - Any previous relevant history, e.g. any time spent as elective home educated.
 - Whether the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Child in Need Plan (CIN)
 - Other safeguarding concerns such as early help, family solutions, domestic violence
- 9.5. On receipt of a referral, the information will be recorded onto the database, which will trigger immediate action.

10. Child known to be in Medway area without school place

- 10.1. CME/EHE officers will contact parents to establish reason for CME. If parent/carer is actively seeking a school place or does not know the procedure for seeking a school place, then advice and support will be offered.
- 10.2. Enquiries made to partners, including Children's Social Care and other agencies to establish any additional risks to young person.

- 10.3. Monitor progress of securing a school place and contact the admissions team and schools to support swift enrolment of child, or request discussion at the Fair Access Panel if appropriate.
- 10.4. When child is successfully on roll at a school the case is closed to the CME/EHE Officer.
- 10.5. If resistance to securing a school place is encountered, the Education Courts Officer advises on court action to compel registration through a School Attendance Order.
- 10.6. Admissions team to identify a school place for the child, parent/carer advised and supported to secure the place for the child by the CME/EHE Officer.
- 10.7. The legal panel will decide whether to issue a School Attendance Order (SAO) to compel enrolment at a suitable school.

11. Child leaving/left Medway school with no forwarding school

- 11.1. Referrals are received directly to CME/EHE officer from school or other agency with as much information about the child as is known
- 11.2. Schools who purchase the AASSA traded service, refer to their allocated AO, who will make enquiries, including a home visit. CME/EHE officer checks address register databases to establish if family have moved to a new address.
- 11.3. Enquiries made to partners, including Children's Social Care and other agencies to establish any additional risks to young person.
- 11.4. If the child referred is subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Child in Need Plan (CIN) the social worker, working with the child will be alerted immediately.
- 11.5. AO to check that the school have uploaded information to the Common Transfer File (CTF) onto the lost pupil database, <u>school2school website</u>.
- 11.6. If any enquiries return information that indicates safeguarding concerns, then a referral will be made to social care.
- 11.7. If information indicates that a child has moved to another local authority or abroad, then contact is made with the new Local Authority and all information transferred. Once the new LA/country have confirmed they are resident, Medway CME are no longer responsible for their education. This case is then chased and investigated further until the child has started at a new school or appropriate provision, only then will the case be closed.

School-2-School (S2S) database

- 11.8. If the child is not located after extensive enquiries and checks, the school administrator must upload the child's CTF on the S2S database entering XXXXXX in the destination field (pupils with no known destination) so any new school will be able to make contact. They must also send a letter to the last known address saying the pupil is being removed from the school roll and has been entered on Medway Councils CME register.
- 11.9. The case will remain on the CME database until the child is located or is no longer statutory school age.

11.10. The CME/EHE officer will inform the Community Safety Unit, Kent Police, of pupils who cannot be traced.

12. Young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET)

- 12.1. The information advice and guidance team (IAG) <u>iag@medway.gov.uk</u> works with young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- 12.2. Children who are between 16 and 18 and have left compulsory education, do not officially fall under this policy. However, CME/EHE Officers will provide the IAG team with a list of Year 11 pupils known to them who may be at risk of becoming NEET.

13. Deletion procedures

- 13.1. Deletions from the admission register are provided by:
 - the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (S1 1995/2089), as amended by the Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 1997 (S1 1997/2624)
 - the Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2001 (S1 2001/2802)

The name of a pupil of compulsory school age may only be deleted from the attendance register for the reasons stated by these regulations. Find more information about regulation 8 - removal from school roll.

- 13.2. All schools (including independent schools) must notify the local authority within five days when they are about to remove or add a pupil's name from the school admission register through an on/off roll notification to <u>onoffroll@medway.gov.uk</u>. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admissions register at standard transition points, e.g. when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school or starting on the normal start date of the first year of education.
- 13.3. When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority (LA) must include:
 - The full name of the pupil,
 - The full name and address of any parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides,
 - At least one telephone number of the parent,
 - The pupil's future address
 - The pupil's destination school, if applicable,
 - The grounds in regulation 8, under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register.
- 13.4. Schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child; if unsuccessful, discussion with CME/EHE Officer/Attendance Officer must take place by 5th day of continuous absence and a CME referral must be completed within 10 days. After 20 school days of non-attendance, schools may remove pupil's name from the register. <u>Pupils must not be removed</u> from the school register if a CME referral has not been accepted by the LA.

13.5. When adding a pupil's name, notification to the local authority must include all the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil.

14. Conclusion

14.1. The roles of the CME/EHE Officer are pivotal in ensuring that those children in Medway at risk of being missing from education are quickly identified and promptly returned to a suitable education provision. By having clear guidance, policies, and procedures in place across Medway, all professionals and the public will be able to ensure support for some of the most vulnerable children within our community.

15. Complaints procedure

15.1. Resolution regarding complaints about children missing education officer should be made to the Lead Children Missing Education Officer in the first instance by telephone or writing to:

CME/EHE Lead Officer

Medway Council Gun Wharf Chatham ME4 4TR

01634 337308 e-mail: <u>cme@medway.gov.uk</u>

15.2. If the complaint relates to the actions of the officers, or the policy, contact should be made with the manager with responsibility for Children Missing Education, by writing to:

Attendance Manager

Medway Council Gun Wharf Chatham ME4 4TR

Tel: 01634 337310 e-mail: aassa@medway.gov.uk

16. Abbreviations

AOAttendance OfficerAASSAAttendance Advisory Service for Schools and ACINChild in Need PlanCiCChildren In CareCMEChild(ren) Missing from EducationCPChild ProtectionCSEChild Sexual ExploitationCTFCommon Transfer FileDFEDepartment for EducationEHCPEducation Health Care PlanEHEElective Home EducationFAPFair Access PanelIAGInformation Advice and Guidance team	Academies
•	
-	
EHCP Education Health Care Plan	
EHE Elective Home Education	
FAP Fair Access Panel	
IAG Information Advice and Guidance team	
LA Local Authority	
MISPERS Missing Persons	
NEET Not in Education, Employment or Training	
S2S Schools to Schools database	
SEN Special Education Needs	
SAO School Attendance Order	
TES Traveller Education Service	
YOT Youth Offending Team	



2024-2025 ATTENDANCE / CME (AASSA) REFERRAL FORM (Please complete all of section 1 and supply a current registration certificate and any relevant documents) ALL FORMS TO BE TYPED – HANDWRITTEN FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

	Please complete
School:	
UPN:	
Pupil legal name:	
Year Group:	
DOB:	
Preferred name (if different to above):	
Ethnicity:	
Male/Female:	
Synergy ID:	(LA USE ONLY)
Mosaic:	
Language spoken at home	
Address:	
Parent's/Carer's Full Name/s (who reside	1.
at the same address as the pupil, include salutation):	2.
Parent Telephone Numbers and Email	1.
address:	2.
Siblings (name and school if known):	

Attendance:	%	
Number of authoris sessions:	ed absence	Number of unauthorised absence sessions:

Reason for Referral to Local Authority	(please tick appropriate box)
Unauthorised absence	
CME? If yes complete additional information as well.	

What attempts have been made by the school to improve attendance? Please attach all school letters, meeting notes, interventions and communication log etc	Yes	No
Telephone calls / text		
Attendance guidance to parents letter (new legislation)		
School letter/s (include medical evidence letter)		
Attendance contract		

Number	
of weeks	

CHILD MISSING EDUCATION (Additional information must be completed) (Discussion with CME/EHE officer/ Attendance Officer must take place by 5th day of continuous absence Referral within 10 school days.

Student must remain on roll for 20 school days)

Emergency Contact numbers and emails (Please advise of all contacts and telephone

numbers/email addresses):

Forwarding home address and new school name/address if known (These must be obtained by the school even if address is abroad):

First day of attendance:

Last day of school attendance:

Circumstances:

ENQUIRIES MADE - all schools to complete.

(Please attach all contact names and numbers, email, date contacted and their outcomes)

oucomes		
Dates of telephone calls:	Telephone numbers:	Outcome:
Dates of Email:	Email address:	Outcome:
Dates of Letters sent:	Type of Letter:	Outcome:
Date of Home Visit: (Essential for every CME referral)	Name of person undertaking Home Visit:	Outcome: (Clarify whether family still reside at the property – provide copy of letter left)
Date of additional Home Visits:	Name of person undertaking additional Home Visit:	Outcome: (Clarify whether family still reside at the property – provide copy of letter left)

Child Missing Education Policy

Name of Referrer: Signature	Contact details:
Agency/School/Service:	Date:
Attendance Officer: Signature	Date received:
Children Missing Education Officer: Signature	Date received: