

Children Missing Education (CME) Policy

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1. Statement of Intent

At the Respect Collaboration Trust, we recognise all children are entitled to a full-time education, regardless of their circumstances. Children missing from education (CME) are at increased risk of underachieving and may become not in education, employment or training (NEET) in later life. CME can also be a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including abuse and neglect.

The Local Authority (LA) has a legal duty to identify children missing education and to help them return to suitable education. This policy sets out how Respect Collaboration Trust and its schools will work proactively to support the LA in fulfilling this duty.

For the purpose of this policy, a “child missing from education” is defined as a child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority, and not receiving a suitable education elsewhere.

This policy does not address pupils who are considered to be absent from education, which refers to registered pupils who are not attending regularly, including those who are persistently or severely absent from school. Procedures for addressing instances where pupils are not attending regularly are instead set out in the school's Attendance and Absence Policy.

2. Legal framework

2.1 This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended in 2016)
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended in 2018)
- The School Information (England) Regulations 2008 (as amended in 2018)
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- DfE (2019) 'Elective Home Education Guidance'
- DfE (2026) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2026) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2021) 'School Admissions Code'

2.2 This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Student Attendance Policy
- Admissions Policy

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Trust Board

- Ensure the Trust complies with statutory guidance on CME.
- Oversee the implementation and effectiveness of CME procedures across all schools.
- Review CME data and trends to inform trust-wide safeguarding and attendance strategies.

3.2 Director of Safeguarding and Attendance

- Lead on the development, implementation, and regular review of the Trust's CME policy, ensuring alignment with statutory guidance and best practice.
- Monitor compliance with CME procedures across all schools in the Trust, providing challenge and support to ensure robust safeguarding practice.
- Oversee the collection and analysis of CME data across the Trust, reporting patterns, risks, and outcomes to the Trust Board.
- For the implementation and holding leaders to account where it is not upheld.

3.3 Headteachers

- Ensure that all staff are aware of and follow the CME policy.
- Oversee the identification, monitoring, and referral of children missing education within their school.
- Liaise with the Local Authority and other agencies as required.
- Ensure accurate and timely record keeping of all CME cases and actions taken.

3.4 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / Deputy DSL

- Act as the lead professional for CME within the school.
- Receive and act upon reports of children missing education.
- Make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of any child suspected to be CME.
- Complete referrals to the Local Authority CME Officer as appropriate.
- Maintain detailed records of all CME cases, actions, and communications.
- Provide advice, support, and training to staff on CME procedures.

3.5 School Staff

- Be vigilant for signs that a child may be missing education.
- Report any concerns about CME immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL.
- Support the school's efforts to make reasonable enquiries and maintain contact with families.

3.6 Attendance Lead

- Work with the DSL, Headteacher and Local Authority to identify pupils at risk of becoming children missing education through persistent, severe or unexplained absence
- Support the DSL and Headteacher in following up on unexplained absences.
- Ensure that admissions and removals from roll are managed in line with statutory requirements and reported to the Local Authority.

4. Reasons for Children Missing Education

4.1 There are a number of reasons as to why children miss education, including the following:

- Failing to be registered at a school at the age of five
- Failing to make a successful transition
- Exclusion
- Mid-year transfer of school
- Families moving into a new area.

4.2 Aside from these reasons, if a child is missing from education, particularly repeatedly, this can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, such as the following:

- Abuse and neglect, including child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE), potentially involving county lines
- So-called 'honour-based' abuse, including FGM and forced marriage
- Mental health issues
- Risk of substance abuse
- Risk of travelling to conflict zones.

4.3 The school recognises that persistent absence, severe absence and repeated unexplained absence may be indicators of wider safeguarding concerns. Attendance information will therefore be considered alongside safeguarding information to identify children who may be at risk.

Staff will be aware that early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding relating to CME and to help prevent the risks of a pupil going missing in the future. All staff will be made aware of unauthorised absence procedures and this policy to ensure they know how to respond to possible cases of CME.

5. Children at Particular Risk of Missing Education

5.1 As there could be many reasons for a child to be missing from education, the school will use its professional judgement on a case-by-case basis. The following list, however, indicates groups of pupils who are most at risk of missing education and the procedures the school will follow in response:

- Pupils at risk of harm or neglect
Where this is suspected, local child protection procedures will be followed; however, if a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral will be

made immediately to children's social care services (CSCS), and the police if appropriate.

- Pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families

When a pupil from a GRT family leaves the school without naming their next destination school, the school will contact the LA. If necessary, the school will contact the CME officer for advice on the best strategies to ensure minimal disruption to the pupil's education.

- Children of Service Personnel

The school will contact the Ministry of Defence Children's Education Advisory Service for advice to ensure continuity of education for these pupils.

- Missing Children and Runaways

Should the school suspect a child has gone missing or run away, an appropriate staff member will consult the DfE for advice on missing children.

- Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System

In this case, LA youth offending teams are responsible for supervising children (aged 8 to 18). Where a young person is registered at the school prior to custody, the school will keep the place open for their return.

- Children of Migrant Families

The school will remain vigilant to the increased risk of a child missing education if they are part of a new migrant family who may not yet have settled into a fixed address, or may have arrived into an LA area without the authority becoming aware.

6. Process

6.1 Failure to Return Following an Absence

Where a pupil has not returned to school following a notified absence. Should a child fail to return at the expected date following a Leave of Absence, the DSL/DDSL should be notified immediately. This may result in court action and/or a penalty notice. Reasonable enquires will be made to establish the whereabouts of the pupil and CME procedures will be followed.

6.2 Request to Electively Home Educate (EHE)

Every parent has the right to request to Electively Home Educate their child. Should a parent write to school and request to Electively Home Educate their child, parents will be invited to discuss this.

On confirmation of EHE the school will delete the child from their admission register and notify the relevant bodies in the Local Authority. A letter will be sent to the parent by the Head Teacher notifying them of removal from school roll.

6.3 Moved out of Area – Destination Unknown

Should any member of staff receive notification that a child is moving out of area they should immediately notify the DSL/DDSL. In many cases, parents will notify school of where they are moving to however, should we be unaware of the destination of the child, the DSL/DDSL will co-ordinate all relevant checks and complete a referral to the CME Officer in the Local Authority.

6.4 Moved out of Area – Destination Known

Should any member of staff receive notification that a child is moving out of area they should immediately notify the DSL. If the family have given details of forwarding address and/or new educational provision, this information will also be passed on to the DSL. The DSL will then co-ordinate and manage relevant checks to clarify information given. The DSL will then complete a referral form to the Education Welfare Service in the Local Authority and the pupil will be removed from the admission register.

7. Safeguarding

7.1 Until the pupil is removed from the roll of the school, the school will still hold safeguarding responsibilities for the pupil and will continue to attempt safe and well checks unless there are exceptional circumstances for not being able to do so. If there are exceptional circumstances, the DSL will liaise with the Education Welfare Service to notify them. Where there are safeguarding concerns relating to pupils the local safeguarding children's procedures will be followed.

7.2 The school recognises that children missing education, particularly repeatedly or for prolonged periods, are potential indicators of abuse, neglect, child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, mental health concerns, radicalisation, or other safeguarding risks and will respond in line with the Trust Safeguarding Policy and local safeguarding procedures

7.3 In line with the Children Act 2004, the school will follow appropriate procedures when carrying out reasonable enquiries, such as the DSL conducting discussions with neighbours, relatives or landlords, to determine whether a child may be at risk of harm.

7.4 For the purpose of this policy, "reasonable enquiries" are defined as limited, investigative powers that the school may action to determine a child's whereabouts and whether they may be in danger.

7.5 Reasonable enquiries may include telephone calls, emails, letters, home visits, contact with emergency contacts, liaison with other schools, local authorities and partner agencies, where appropriate and proportionate.

7.6 The DSL will record that they have completed these procedures and, if necessary, make a referral to CSCS or the police.

8. Admissions Register

8.1 The school will ensure that the admissions register is kept up to date at all times, and will encourage parents, via communications such as emails and newsletters, to notify the school of any changes as they occur.

8.2 Pupils will be recorded on the admissions register at the beginning of the first day on which it has been agreed by the school, or the day that the school has been notified, as the date that the pupil will attend the school. Once a pupil has been recorded on the admissions register, the school will notify the LA within five days and will supply the LA with all of the details contained on the admissions register for the new pupil.

8.3 Where a parent notifies the school that their child will live at another address, the school will record the following information on the admissions register:

- The full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live
- The new address
- The date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address

8.4 Where a parent notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school, or will be attending a different school in future, the school will record the following information on the admissions register:

- The name of the new school
- The date when the pupil first attended, or is due to attend, that school

8.5 Parents are able to elect to educate their children at home and will subsequently withdraw them from school. This can happen at any time, unless the pupil is subject to a School Attendance Order. If a parent notifies the school that their child will be educated at home, the pupil will be deleted from the school's admission register and the school will inform the LA.

9. Removing a Pupil from the Admissions Register

9.1 The school will notify the LA that a pupil is to be removed from the admissions register as soon as any of the above criteria are met, and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is actually removed.

9.2 If a pupil's name is to be removed from the admissions register, the school will provide the LA with the following information:

- The full name of the pupil
- The full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives
- At least one telephone number of the parent with whom the pupil lives
- The full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable
- The name of the pupil's new school and their expected start date, if applicable
- The grounds for removal from the admissions register under Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended), as outlined in this policy.

9.3 Where the name of a pupil with a social worker is to be removed from the admissions register, the school will inform the pupil's social worker.

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually or at the point of statutory updates by the Director of Safeguarding and Headteacher.

11. GDPR

Data will be processed to be in line with our requirements and protections set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.