

# Children missing education

## Guidance and local arrangements

Children missing education are defined as children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education elsewhere: for example, at home, privately, or in alternative provision. They fall into two broad categories.

1. Those whose whereabouts and circumstances are known to the Local Authority but who have, for whatever reason, been out of education for 20 school days or more.
2. Those whose whereabouts and circumstances are unknown to the Local Authority.

Children and young people who are missing education may also be at risk of becoming missing more generally from home or from care. For more information on children missing visit: [www.mkscb.org](http://www.mkscb.org).

Local Authorities have a duty (Education and Inspections Act 2006) to make arrangements to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education. To fulfil the duty to provide an education for all children of compulsory school age the Local Authority will take all reasonable steps to:

- Track children and young people missing from education
- Identify those at risk of becoming missing from education
- Ensure a range of effective preventative interventions are in place
- Maintain contact with those missing, or at risk of missing, education.

### Who is at greatest risk and why?

Children fall out of the education system because they:

- Fail to start appropriate provision and therefore never enter the system
- Cease to attend due to exclusion (e.g. unofficial exclusions) or withdrawal
- Fail to make the transition between schools within or across the Local Authority area.

And where there is no systematic process in place to:

- Identify those children
- Ensure that they re-engage with appropriate provision in a timely way.

Research shows that the following are particularly at risk:

- Young people who have committed offences
- Children living in women's refuges
- Children of homeless families and/or living in temporary accommodation
- Young runaways
- Children with long term medical or emotional problems
- Children affected by substance misuse
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers
- Children of refugees and asylum seeking families
- Children in new immigrant families without a fixed UK address
- Children who have been trafficked to or within the UK
- Children in care
- Children who are privately fostered
- Young carers
- Teenage mothers
- Children who are permanently excluded from school
- Children who are unofficially excluded from school.

### **Removing children from the roll of a school**

All schools should be aware of their responsibilities regarding placing and removing children's names from a school roll and the marking of attendance registers. If a child who is currently on the school's roll fails to attend without reasonable explanation or contact from home, or a child who is expected to join a school fails to start, the relevant school staff should undertake an initial investigation. If this investigation fails to resolve these issues the school should inform the Local Authority. The Local Authority recommends that this initial investigation should be completed in 10 days or less.

Children should remain on the school roll until all the actions set out in this guidance note have been completed and they have been informed in writing to remove the child's details from roll. Following initial investigation by the school the Local Authority will aim to complete subsequent enquiries within 10 days.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 states that a school may only remove a child from their roll when a pupil:

- Registers at another school
- Is withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Has been permanently excluded
- Fails to return after an extended family holiday\*
- Has a medical condition prevents their return to the school
- Will be in custody for more than four months
- Has left the school but it is not known where they have gone\*
- Has another school named on a school attendance order
- Is above compulsory school age
- Dies.

\* Following efforts by both the school and the Local Authority to locate the pupil.

## **Authorised periods of absence**

Schools have very limited discretion to grant authorised periods of absence. Each application is considered individually by the school within the context of the national regulations.

Schools must alert parents to the legal position and the actions they may take if the child fails to return from an authorised period of absence by the agreed date. In the event that a school grants an extended period of absence, if the child fails to return by the agreed date and the school makes reasonable enquiries to establish why, the school should report the child as missing education.

## **Partners in the identification and referral of children missing from education**

Many, if not all, Local Authority services and those delivered with or by other partners have some level of responsibility around the issue of children missing from education. When any member of our workforce becomes aware of a child or young person who does not appear to be participating in education appropriately then they should make a referral to the Local Authority. Milton Keynes Council will co-operate fully with requests from other Local Authority areas for assistance in locating a child they believe may have moved to Milton Keynes.

## **Identifying and reporting children missing education**

The Local Authority named person for advice and to forward referrals to is:

Cathy Shaw, Monitoring and Compliance Officer – Setting and School Sufficiency and Access

[cathy.shaw2@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:cathy.shaw2@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

01908 25 4039

The officer responsible for ensuring that duties towards children missing education are met is:

Marie Denny, Head of Delivery - Setting and School Sufficiency and Access

[marie.denny@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:marie.denny@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01908 25 8035

The Local Authority has a clear process for when a child is missing from education. The first stage is the responsibility of the school, the second the Local Authority.

## **Stage 1**

The school should undertake reasonable actions to identify the whereabouts of the child. This includes telephoning all contact numbers, making enquiries with friends and family, making enquiries with schools attended by any siblings and wherever possible undertaking a visit to the home address. The form found at the end of this document should be used to record these actions as they are worked through. This investigation should occur within 10 days of the child going missing.

## **Stage 2**

If the first stage does not identify the whereabouts of the child then a member of the Setting and School Sufficiency and Access team will complete a wider database check. If the location of the child is identified then the school will be informed and if necessary the parents or carers will be supported by the Local Authority to apply for a school place closer to the new home address. If there are any safeguarding concerns a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub will be made by the Head of Delivery - Setting and School Sufficiency and Access using the appropriate form. If the child is found at this stage then the staff member will contact the school to advise that the child can be removed from roll.

However, if no trace can be made then a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub will be made by the Head of Delivery - Setting and School Sufficiency and Access who will then advise the school (in writing) to remove the pupil from roll and upload the Common Transfer Form (CTF) on S2S. The ONE database (the pupil database system the Local Authority uses) will also be updated by a member of the Setting and School Sufficiency and Access team.

Working with schools, the Local Authority aims to complete the two-stage search process in no more than 20 school days.

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### **Technical Note: Common Transfer Files**

If a school knows which school a child is moving to they should ensure that the Common Transfer File (CTF) is sent to the receiving school using S2S as quickly as possible. S2S is the Department for Education school to school website, which is a secure method of transferring pupil or other sensitive data between schools, Local Authorities and the Department for Education. It has been a statutory duty since 2002 for schools to upload a CTF file via the S2S website every time a pupil leaves a school. Receiving schools are then notified that a file is waiting for them to download. The website must also be used to post CTF files for children missing in education and for those leaving mainstream education.

If the new school is unknown, the CTF should be code XXXXXXXX (destination unknown) or MMMMMMMM (moved to Independent Sector or out of country, including Scotland) and uploaded onto S2S in the normal way. These records are then stored in a secure area of S2S known as the Lost Pupil Database. If a CTF file is rejected schools should recode the file MMMMMMMM. Schools should check S2S regularly to look for the CTF of new pupils which have been sent to them. If a new pupil is admitted and the CTF is not available, schools should ask for the Local Authority to complete a search of the children missing education database for the pupil's CTF which can then be forwarded to the school.

Milton Keynes Council Child Missing Education Report and Action Log		
Contact the Local Authority without delay if you have child protection concerns		
Name of person completing log		
Name of school		
Date log started		
CHILD	Pupils name	
	Date of birth	
	Sex	
	Ethnicity	
FAMILY	Parent(s)/carer(s) name	
	Last known home address	
	Contact numbers	
	Sibling details	
<b>STAGE 1: SCHOOL ACTIONS (TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 10 DAYS)</b>		
Actions to be completed by the school		✓
Have all contact numbers been telephoned?		
Have enquiries be made with friends of the pupil and family?		
Have enquiries been made at schools attended by any siblings?		
Has a visit to the home address been made?		
If the pupil has not been found, complete the below box and send form to the Local Authority		
Is there any further information on probable whereabouts of the pupil? <i>This box will expand – please provide as much information as possible.</i>		
<b>STAGE 2: LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTIONS (TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 10 DAYS)</b>		
Actions to be completed by the Local Authority		✓
Check for application for a new school place		
Check with partners	Housing/Council Tax	
	Health	
	Other (specify)	
Check with any relevant other Local Authorities		
<b>A) TRACE</b>		
Advise school		
Either	Support arrangements for return to school	
	Support parents or carers apply for a new school place	
Referral to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub considered		
<b>B) NO TRACE</b>		
Referral to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (mandatory)*		
Advise school in writing to remove pupil from roll		
Advise school to upload Common Transfer File (CTF) on S2S		
Update ONE as 'Child Missing Education'		

\* If the child/children are identified as living in Milton Keynes, arrangements for return to school or new school application will need to be made