

# **Children Missing Education (CME) Policy**

**September 2025**

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## Introduction

The London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) is committed to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable, full-time education. We recognise that Children Missing Education (CME) are particularly vulnerable to safeguarding risks, poor outcomes and exploitation.

This policy has been developed to support individuals working in local authorities and schools, alongside partner agencies and organisations, to be clear about their statutory roles and responsibilities and how they work together to identify and support CME.

**This document should be read alongside the statutory guidance listed below that have been issued by the Department for Education (DfE). Local authorities, Schools, Trusts and Governing Bodies must have regard to them, as part of their efforts to identify and improve support for children missing education:**

- [Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools - GOV.UK](#)
- [Summary of responsibilities for children missing education](#)
- [Working together to improve school attendance](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education](#)

## Who are Children Missing Education?

**Children Missing from Education (CME) in this document refers to all children of compulsory school age, are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.**

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

CME includes children who:

- are in the process of applying for a school place
- have been offered a school place for a future date but have not yet started
- are receiving elective home education (EHE) that has been assessed as unsuitable by the local authority
- have been recorded as CME for an extended period, for example where their whereabouts is unclear or unknown

CME are **not** children who

- are receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (for example, pupils who are electively home educated or attending alternative provision) which is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have

- are EHE but the local authority has not had an opportunity to assess whether the education being provided is suitable
- are registered at a school, even if they are persistently or severely absent from that school

Children Missing Education should **not** be confused with:

Children who are on roll at a school but are not in regular attendance. In this case, referrals should be made to the School Attendance Support Services (SASS) whose procedures are set out in the Hounslow SASS Non-Attendance and Term Time Leave Guidance.

### **The CME notification process**

There is a responsibility on everyone to refer a child who may be missing education.

- If you are a member of the public or any other agency, please complete the Children Missing Education CME1 Referral Form September 2025, this can be found at: [Children Missing Education CME1 Referral Form September 2025](#)
- If you are a school or educational provision, please complete the Children Missing Education CME2 Referral Form for Schools September 2025, this can be found at: [Children Missing Education CME2 Referral Form for Schools September 2025](#)

Please email any referrals to: [cme@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:cme@hounslow.gov.uk)

- Alternatively, you can contact us on by telephone on 020 8583 2768, or post to

Children Missing Education Officer  
Children's and Adults' Services  
Hounslow House  
7 Bath Road  
Hounslow  
Middlesex  
TW3 3EB

Upon receipt of a CME referral, Children Missing Education will then carry out further investigations. LBH promptly undertake all necessary actions including secure data recording, monitoring and tracking, engaging the child in suitable education, coordinating support and engaging with relevant agencies, facilitating school integration, maintaining accurate records, conducting regular follow-ups, and ensuring effective information sharing to ensure the child's timely access to appropriate educational provision.

## **The importance of information sharing to identify and support Children Missing Education**

Identifying and supporting CME is a shared responsibility, in order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all individuals involved in identifying and supporting CME should make sure their approach is child centred.

There is an expectation under the Children Act 2004 that all agencies will work together to promote the safeguarding and welfare of children and to share information so that children and young people do not 'slip through the net' and become missing.

There is a fundamental principle that all officers of the local authority and other partners have some level of responsibility around the issue of CME. If anybody is aware of any child or young person who does not appear to be accessing education appropriately, they should make a CME referral.

CME is a complex issue requiring a strategic approach between partners to share information and take prompt action to help with the identification and safeguarding of CME. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, we need everyone who comes into contact with them to understand their role in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

It is important to ensure that children are identified and monitored, referred appropriately, with needs assessed and coordinated interventions put in place. There is a network of professionals and key stakeholders who can contribute to the identification of CME. Colleagues in agencies working with children and families should be alert to any children of statutory age (5-16) who appear to be out of education.

Examples include:

- The School Attendance Support Service (SASS)
- GP or health care practitioners providing services to children or families
- Housing and housing Providers
- Children's social care
- Police & youth justice service
- Education (maintained schools, independent schools, academies, free schools, professionals, pupil referral units, special schools, and colleges)
- Children's centres
- Non-statutory agencies working with families or carrying out home visits
- HM Revenue and Customs
- UK Border Force Agency
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Public protection/ fire service
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership agencies
- Voluntary and community organisations, including faith groups and youth services
- Women's refuges
- Local authority CME Officers and related teams
- Home Office and partners supporting Asylum Seekers

Identification of CME might be by members of the local community (e.g. concerned neighbour, family member, employer). It is important that we support them to notify CME when they do identify a child or express concern about a situation.

### **Why children go missing from education**

There is the potential for children to fall out the education system or not enter the system as a result of some change in their circumstances. Children can go missing if there is no systematic process in place to identify them and ensure that they re-engage with appropriate provision.

It is acknowledged that LBH experiences high mobility amongst its population. Consequently, without an appropriate local authority response, there is the potential for significant numbers of children to be at risk of becoming CME or disappearing all together from education provision and contact with professionals able to support them while ensuring they have access to universal services and remain safe.

Cohorts of children who may be at greater risk of becoming CME:

- Pupils at risk of harm or neglect
- Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children of new migrant families
- Children who go missing from home or care
- Children with SEND whose needs are not being adequately supported
- Children who are excluded from school
- Children and young people supervised by the youth justice system
- Children of service personnel
- Children attending unregistered independent schools
- Children who cease to attend a school
- Home educated children who are not receiving suitable full-time education

### **Parents responsibilities**

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education.

When parents plan or decide to withdraw their child from school, they should inform the school how the child will continue to be educated, for example by providing the name and address of the new school. If this information is not yet available, parents must notify the school of the child's destination home address.

### **Schools' responsibilities**

Schools must monitor pupil attendance daily and address poor or irregular attendance promptly to prevent children becoming CME.

Schools must promptly investigate any unexplained pupil absences to determine the child's whereabouts.

Schools have a duty to work closely with local authorities to locate children at risk of CME and support their return to education. This includes conducting initial reasonable enquiries and cooperating in ongoing investigations.

If there are concerns about the child's safety, they should refer the case to children's social care (and police if needed). If the school believes the child has left without written notice of their future education, they must carry out reasonable enquiries. Where the case has been referred to the home local authority's CME team, the school must continue reasonable enquiries, maintaining communication with the local authority until the matter is resolved.

### **Reasonable enquiries for schools**

The following actions completed and recorded would contribute to a reasonable school enquiry if a child/young person stops attending a school without a known forwarding address and school:

#### **Within 1-3 days of absence:**

- Check with all members of staff who the child/young person may have had contact with;
- Check with the pupil's friends/ neighbours/ family contacts;
- Telephone calls made to any numbers held in the school records. (if this is an automated system please make telephone contact manually);
- Attempt telephone contact with all known emergency numbers;
- Speak to other agencies that have been working with the family for example Children's Services, Youth Justice;
- Check with any schools known to have siblings or relatives on their roll;
- Email parents and contacts on the school's up to date contact form;
- Write to the address of both parents (if they live separately and it is appropriate to do so);
- Contact school admissions or CME officer in the new area to establish if any application has been submitted. (if applicable, using the CME local authority contact list);
- Has any soft information been obtained? E.g. "we have heard they have moved to Scotland or other students say they have gone on holiday;
- Conduct a home visit if you have been unable to successfully locate the child's whereabouts and it is safe to do so (if school have a member of staff who has a responsibility to conduct home visits) Speak to neighbours if possible.

#### **Within days 3-10 days of absence:**

- Contact your School Attendance Support Officer (SASO) if referred to them or for advice;
- Refer to SASS for a contact visit if no contact has been made by parent and reason for absence is unknown
- If pupils whereabouts not established, refer to CME using CME 2 Referral Form
- Schools are legally required to maintain accurate admission registers, regularly update pupil information, and record any changes to pupils'

addresses or guardians. They must notify local authorities whenever pupils are added or removed from the register outside standard transition periods.

When adding pupils to the register, schools must enter names on the agreed start date and notify the local authority within five days if this occurs outside usual transition times.

There are strict rules on when schools can delete pupils from their admissions register. These are outlined in [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). When removing a pupil's name from the register, schools must follow legal grounds and, in some cases, conduct joint enquiries with local authorities to confirm the pupil's whereabouts before deletion. Schools must provide detailed information about the pupil's destination home and school details and the reasons for removal to the local authority.

Further guidance can be found in: [New LBH Off Roll procedures Sep 2025.docx](#)

[School admission register: deletion from the school roll - YouTube](#)

### **Local authority's responsibilities**

Local Authorities (LA) have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered as pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise.

Prompt and proactive intervention is essential for local authorities to effectively discharge their statutory duties under Section 436A, which mandates the identification of children of compulsory school age who are neither registered at a school nor receiving a suitable education, thereby ensuring their safety and access to appropriate educational provision.

To effectively identify, support, and prevent CME, local authorities should have clear written policies and processes in place to fulfil their CME duties, including effective tracking and enquiry systems, appointing a named contact for referrals, documenting actions taken for each case, setting and adhering to referral response times, and maintaining an up-to-date list of suspected and confirmed CME children.

- **Clear Processes:** Ensure all local services understand the definition of CME, have effective systems to identify and support CME children, regularly remind partners of policies, and maintain accountability.
- **Partnership Working:** Collaborate with schools, including independent ones, and other services to follow CME procedures, share information, and support timely enquiries, especially across local authority boundaries. Embed CME processes into wider local authority functions.
- **Information Sharing:** Use data from various sources to identify CME, support schools in tracking cases, maintain clear records, and continuously improve information sharing through collaboration.
- **Family Engagement:** Communicate with families to understand the reasons for CME and work together to support children back into full-time education.

- **Prevention:** Proactively prevent CME for example, by working with Schools, Social care, Health services, Police, SEND, early years at statutory transition points and wider local authority services.
- **Regular Review:** Continuously review and improve CME processes and outcomes, incorporating feedback from all relevant stakeholders.

### **Reasonable enquiries for CME**

- Key actions may include:
- Contacting parents using known details
- Checking with involved agencies and siblings' schools
- Verifying with previous and potential new local authorities and schools
- Engaging landlords if relevant
- Accessing local authority and external agency databases (housing, health, police, youth justice, etc.)
- Using secure systems like School to School (S2S) and Get Information About a Pupil (GIAP)
- Consulting national databases (DWP, Border Force, UKVI, MoD, Health)
- Conducting home visits and contacting relatives or neighbours when appropriate

This list is not exhaustive; enquiries should be tailored to each case. While reasonable enquiries may not always locate the child, they guide next steps, including referrals to police, social care, or the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office if international travel is involved.

### **Joint reasonable enquiries**

Local authorities and schools must promptly work together to conduct thorough and case by case enquiries when a child is identified as CME. Actions should prioritise the child's welfare and be taken without delay.

When a child's whereabouts or education status is unknown, local authorities and schools must collaborate to make reasonable enquiries to locate the child and confirm their education provision. Under Section 436A of the Education Act 1996, local authorities should clearly define schools' roles and ensure timely, proportionate, and coordinated enquiries based on the level of risk, emphasising effective communication and joint responsibility.

These enquiries should use all available information sources such as; contacting parents, agencies, schools, housing providers, and checking relevant databases to determine the child's whereabouts and circumstances.

Effective CME enquiries rely on strong collaboration between local authorities. When a child is believed to have moved to a different area, enquiries should be made with the new authority's contact. The receiving authority must respond promptly, add the child to their CME list if necessary, and confirm receipt before the previous authority removes the child from their records.

## **Summary of the statutory responsibilities for children missing education**

The DfE have published a table of responsibilities which provides a summary of the roles and expectations of parents, local authorities, schools, governing bodies and academy trustees to take action to identify and support CME. Please see Appendix A

### **Get Information About a Pupil (GIAP) system**

Local authorities and schools use the Get Information About a Pupil (GIAP) system to check if a suspected CME child is registered at another school by accessing pupil data via unique identifiers. They are encouraged to maintain updated CME lists and regularly monitor GIAP.

### **The School to School (S2S) system**

The School to School (S2S) system securely transfers pupil records between schools through Common Transfer Files (CTFs). Schools upload CTFs for pupils who leave without a known next school, helping track lost pupils. If a pupil arrives without a CTF, schools should ask their local authority to search S2S. Proper updating of contact details and adherence to information-sharing guidance is essential.

### **Home educated children who are not receiving suitable full-time education**

Parents have a legal right to educate their children at home, and the government is committed to supporting those who undertake this responsibility effectively.

In accordance with section 436A of the Education Act 1996, local authorities are required to make arrangements to identify, as far as is reasonably possible, children of compulsory school age who are not registered at a school and are not otherwise receiving a suitable education.

Home education can be highly effective when it is chosen deliberately, based on accurate information, and carried out with commitment. However, children who are not receiving a full-time, suitable education, home educated children who are not known to the local authority, or whose parents fail to respond to reasonable enquiries regarding the education being provided, may be at risk of being classified as CME.

Where a local authority is unable to obtain sufficient information to determine that a home educated child is receiving an appropriate education, it must act in line with its legal duties, as set out in the Department for Education's statutory guidance on elective home education.

Parents are strongly encouraged to co-operate with local authorities. If parents do not co-operate, usually local authorities must begin the Statutory Attendance Order (SAO) process which begins with a formal written notice to parents under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996.

### **Strategic Management & Hounslow's Safeguarding Partnership Board**

Monitoring by Senior Management is an important element of the CME procedures. There are scheduled monthly meetings between the CME officer and senior inclusion

advisor to monitor processes, numbers and to ensure that any patterns, trends and individual cases are effectively tracked. However, where urgent matters arise these are escalated and addressed immediately without waiting for the next scheduled meeting.

The service manager reports CME data to Hounslow's Safeguarding Partnership Board on a quarterly basis to ensure strategic oversight in relation to CME.

The CME procedures are reviewed in line with legislative changes and updated annually to ensure they remain effective and appropriate for identifying and addressing CME within the London Borough of Hounslow.

The CME Officer attends and contributes to multi-disciplinary forums, ensuring that information is shared effectively across agencies and CME are considered within a wider safeguarding context.

# Appendix A

## All children

Parents are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:	Schools, governing bodies and academy trustees are expected to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable fulltime education under <a href="#">section 7 of the Education Act 1996</a>.</li> <li>• If proposing to withdraw their child from school, notifying the school in writing that their child will no longer attend after a certain day and supply information to the school about how their child will be continuing to receive suitable education – for example, providing the name and address of the new school the child will be attending where known.</li> <li>• Notify the school in writing if their child will no longer attend a school after a certain day and will receive education otherwise than at school (e.g. elective home education).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperate with other agencies in improving children’s well-being, including protection from harm and neglect under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004.</li> <li>• Fulfil duties as set out in ‘Working together to safeguard children’ statutory guidance, including publishing a threshold document which sets out the local criteria for action to safeguard or promote the child’s welfare.</li> <li>• Where there is a concern that a child’s safety or well-being is at risk, take action without delay, considering whether a referral needs to be made to local authority children’s social care and calling the police if appropriate.</li> <li>• Fulfil duties to ensure pupils with an Education Health Care (EHC) plan are in receipt of the educational provision specified in the plan and where they are not, that this provision is made available to them.</li> <li>• Work together with schools on admissions processes to provide a school place for all children of compulsory age. Where the local authority co-ordinates in-year admissions for schools in their area, they must also set out on their website by 31 August how in-year applications will be handled and they must provide a suitable application form for parents to complete. Over-subscription criteria and relevant admissions policies should also be shared on websites.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On a day-to-day basis monitor pupils’ attendance through their daily attendance register, and work to address poor or irregular attendance in order to prevent children becoming CME.</li> <li>• Take action without delay where there is a concern that a child’s safety or well-being is at risk. If school staff have safeguarding concerns about a child, they should take immediate action, following their child protection policy and involving their designated safeguarding lead.</li> <li>• Carefully follow guidance on removing or adding pupils’ names from or to the admission register, which in some specific cases will involve joint actions to be undertaken between the school and local authority before this decision can be made.</li> </ul>

## Children at risk of becoming CME or suspected CME

Parents are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:	Schools, governing bodies and academy trustees are expected to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-operate with the local authority and school's informal enquiries to satisfy them that their child is in receipt of suitable education.</li> <li>• Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</li> <li>• Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promptly make enquiries in collaboration with the school that enable them to, as far as reasonably possible, identify the location of suspected CME and any provision of education they are receiving.</li> <li>• Implement effective tracking and enquiry systems with clear referral response times.</li> <li>• Appoint a designated contact for CME referrals, publishing contact details on the CME section of the local authority website.</li> <li>• Take steps to help prevent CME cases, for example working closely with special education needs and disability (SEND) and early years services, as well as targeted work ahead of school transition points and work with elective home education teams (EHE teams).</li> <li>• Form strong partnerships with schools to carry out reasonable enquiries under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 and ensure they quickly identify suspected Children Missing Education (CME) and understand the criteria for removal from roll, even when investigations involve different local authorities.</li> <li>• Collaborate with and share information effectively using data from various services, local authorities, and national agencies to identify Children Missing Education (CME). Collaborate with other local authorities to improve information sharing.</li> <li>• Arrange suitable education for children out of school due to exclusion, illness, or other reasons, if they would not receive it otherwise. This covers all compulsory school age children in the local authority's area, regardless of school type or whether they are on an admissions register under section 19(1) of the Education Act 1996.</li> <li>• Ensure elective home educating parents are providing suitable education for their children via informal enquiries. Where parents fail to satisfy that suitable education is being provided, School Attendance Orders (SAOs) can be served. Education Supervision Orders and work with School Attendance Support Teams can also be applied.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of becoming CME.</li> <li>• Ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexpected and unexplained absences are promptly enquired about.</li> <li>• Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance, as set out in the Department's <a href="#">Working Together to Improve School Attendance</a> statutory guidance.</li> <li>• Do their own initial proactive work to locate a child at risk of becoming a CME, before working jointly with their local authority to conduct further reasonable enquiries to identify their whereabouts.</li> <li>• Make a referral to the child's home local authority CME team as soon as possible if enquiries lead them to reasonably believe that the child will no longer be attending the school and the parent has not provided the school with written notice that the child will be attending another school or that education provision otherwise than at a school will be provided.</li> <li>• Continue to play a role in conducting joint reasonable enquiries even after they have submitted a CME referral to the local authority.</li> <li>• Provide the local authority with all of the information detailed in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 when making a deletion return to the local authority.</li> </ul>

## Children classified as CME

Parents are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:	Schools, governing bodies and academy trustees are expected to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-operate with the local authority to provide evidence of any suitable education otherwise than at school (e.g. elective home education) that will be provided.</li> <li>• Complete a school application at the earliest possible stage, once their child has been identified as CME,. Proactively engaging with the local to secure a place for their child.</li> <li>• Respond to local authority school attendance order (SAO) notices, promptly (within the set timeframe) applying for either the school/one of the schools named on the notice or a different school that will then be named on the SAO.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an active 'CME list' recording details of both confirmed and suspected CME and keep children on this list until they have received confirmation or evidence to suggest otherwise. Document action taken on individual confirmed cases.</li> <li>• Ensure time out of suitable education is kept to an absolute minimum, preventing repeated instances of children becoming CME, for example, by effective and supportive reintegration into school or by receiving education otherwise than at school if more appropriate.</li> <li>• Document action taken on individual confirmed cases.</li> <li>• Engage families by adapting communication to understand why a child has become CME and working together to support their return to fulltime education.</li> <li>• Check that a referral has been made where safeguarding concerns have been raised about a child identified as CME, and if not, alert children's social care. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, the police should also be involved.</li> <li>• Have a Fair Access Protocol to ensure that unplaced and vulnerable children, and those who are having difficulty securing a school place in-year, are allocated a school place as quickly as possible.</li> <li>• Share data with the Department for Education on CME following the <a href="#">Elective home education and children missing education: submit your data guidance</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work collaboratively with their local authority to support CME in their local area into education. This might also involve working with a child's home local authority if this is different.</li> <li>• Work with the local authority to provide a school place for CME at the earliest opportunity to ensure time a child spends out of education is kept to an absolute minimum.</li> <li>• Where schools manage their own in year admissions, set out on their website by 31 August how in-year applications will be handled. This must include how parents can apply for a school place and provide a suitable application form to complete.</li> <li>• Where schools manage their own inyear admissions, set out on their website by 31 August how in-year applications will be handled. This must include how parents can apply for a school place and provide a suitable application form to complete.</li> <li>• Offer appropriate support to successfully integrate children into their school, including having efficient decision-making processes for admissions in place to prevent delays and following the <a href="#">Working Together to Improve School Attendance</a> to reduce barriers to attendance.</li> </ul>