Children Missing Education Policy

Summary

Identifying, maintaining contact and supporting children resident in Reading who are missing education.

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Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Brighter Futures for Children

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Introduction

Therapeutic Thinking Principles

In 2018, Reading undertook a five-year commitment to become a trauma informed town. Reading Borough Council understands that it is a gradual process to reach the planned strategic goals. The long-term plans of becoming a trauma informed town may adapt the practices within this policy practice to take an altered form should it be considered more therapeutic to do so.

The impact of intervention should attempt to provide experiences that engender positive feelings in children and support them in their self-regulation. Interventions must not punish or victimise any children within the dynamic and should protect all children from further harm.

Preface

This policy is intended for the public, schools, professionals and practitioners. It is written to assist Reading Borough Council (RBC) in its implementation of effective systems for identifying, maintaining contact and supporting children resident in Reading who are missing education. RBC will routinely monitor how much educational provision our children and young people are receiving including the quality and appropriateness of this provision.

Data is shared with services tracking young people who become Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) over the age of 16 and young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) up to 25 years of age. These groups are not covered in this policy. However, the transfer of information on school leavers who are children missing education (CME) is covered in the context of transition to other monitoring roles/services.

Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

All Local Authorities are required to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a suitable full-time education. In relation to children and young people 'suitable education' is defined as:

"[...] education suited to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special needs the child may have"
- *Children Missing Education Guidance, September 2016, DfE*

All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to arrange suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age, unless:

"[...] the Local Authority considers that, reasons which relate to the physical or mental health of the child, it would not be in the child's best interests for full-time education to be provided for the child."
- *Children, Schools and Families Act, 2010, DfE*

Definitions

CME Children and Young People (CYP) in this document refers to all Reading resident children and Reading Children Looked After (CLA) of statutory school age in the care of Reading Borough Council who are:

- Not registered on a school roll and not being educated at home

A child is statutory school age when they are legally required to receive education from the term after their fifth birthday and up to the last Friday in June when turning 16 years of age.

Children and Young People may be at risk of becoming CME if they are:

1. On roll of a school but not attending/ receiving suitable or sufficient education
2. On roll of a school but on a reintegration timetable

Neighbouring authority children attending Reading schools will be managed through normal procedures of liaising with the child's home LA in addition to Reading and allowing them to support the child in accordance with their policies and procedures.

This policy describes the procedure for identifying children missing education, plus those at risk of missing education. It also describes how we help them move back into education or alternative provision and maintain contact to prevent them 'slipping through the net'.

The main focus of this document is on procedures and systems within RBC for children missing education. However, this is within the context of the wider remit of RBC to safeguard the welfare of all children.

Risk Factors

Exclusions

Children who are excluded from schools should not miss education, and the LA is committed to ensuring that children who are permanently excluded from day six of the exclusion receive full-time education. Where a pupil is given a fixed period exclusion of five days or more, schools have a duty to arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil from the sixth day for each period. Work should be sent home for the first five days.

More information on school and LA duties can be found in DfE Guidance:
School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Reintegration Timetables

Children that are not in school due to being placed on a reintegration timetable are at risk of missing education if their timetable is not implemented or monitored appropriately. Schools should take reasonable steps to ensure they consider all relevant guidance and advice when it comes to reintegration timetables. RBC will collate data and monitor the use of reintegration timetables to offer support and guidance where possible to aid timely reintegration to school.

Unofficial Exclusions & Off-Rolling

Any pupil suspended or excluded must follow lawful procedures as set out by the Department for Education. Asking a parent to take a child home instead of exclusion is not permitted. The Department for Education identifies children sent home for a 'cooling – off' period is also not permitted. Exclusions that are not lawful increase the risk that a child may go missing from education. All Reading schools must report all suspensions and exclusions to RBC.

Off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from the roll of a school without formal permanent exclusion or encouraging the parent to remove a child from school to home educate or to move to a new school. These examples of practice are not in place to support the needs of a child but are driven primarily by the interest of the school and is not permitted. (Ofsted). Ofsted and RBC believes that it is never acceptable. Children should be only removed from roll for reasons as set by the Department of Education in relevant statute.

*(More information on Off-Rolling can be found in RBC Guidance '**Unofficial Exclusions and Off-Rolling Policy'**, Aug 2019.)*

Children Looked After (CLA)

These young people are in the care of RBC. The Virtual School for CLA take the lead on supporting these children in their education, alongside any support required from any relevant RBC teams. It is important that their school place is kept open until there is agreement between the school and the authority with responsibility for their care that this place is no longer necessary.

RBC is under a statutory duty to ensure that an educational placement is secured prior to any change in care placement, including when a young person is moved from a care placement in one LA to one in another LA or, if placed in an emergency that an educational placement is secured within 20 school days.

All schools should have a designated teacher for CLA. These teachers are ideally placed to assist when identifying those looked after children currently in school who may be at greater risk of going missing from education. This is supported by the Virtual Head Teacher for CLA.

Children Subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan

Should a child who is subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan be at risk of going missing from education, the school must liaise with the appropriate local children's social care team in addition to the CME Officer. Children's social care has the lead responsibility for children subject to a Child Protection Plan and if such a child goes missing, they will follow child protection procedures and would take steps to locate the child. This is especially important for children at risk of abuse or neglect.

Children who go missing or are at risk of extra familial harm

If a child is suspected to be suffering harm as a result of exploitation, an Exploitation Team Around the Child (ETAC) meeting should be held within 72 hours of notification. This can run in parallel to other social care processes and does not replace the need for strategy meetings to respond to immediate risk. Education is a core protective factor for children that are at risk of extra-familial harm, and all steps should be taken to ensure they are attending full-time appropriate provision to aid the reduction of this risk. As such, an education representative makes up one of the core members of the ETAC panel. The Education Access and Support Team are a representative and shares information, advice, and guidance to support at a pupil level.

Children Supervised by the Youth Justice Service

Any young person supervised by Reading Youth Justice Service (YJS), serving either a community or custodial sentence, or Out of Court disposal and at risk of going missing from education or already out of mainstream education, will have their case identified by the worker (Education, Employment and Training) within the YJS and a relevant education placement will be sought in conjunction with children's social care. Education is known to be a strong factor for desistance from offending, and as such it is vital that children known to the YJS are supported to remain in appropriate Education settings.

Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families

Research has shown that many children from these families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. It is therefore important that schools inform RBC when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education. Although many are settled, some GRT families move regularly, and their children can be at increased risk of missing education.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive a suitable full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996). Although children and young people with an EHCP can be home educated, permission needs to be granted by RBC if they attend a special school. RBC must ensure that parents can make suitable provision, including providing for their child's special educational needs. If the parent's arrangements are suitable, RBC is relieved of its duty to arrange the provision directly but is responsible for ensuring the child's needs are met through an annual review.

It is within the parents' rights not to have to inform RBC if they take the responsibility to home educate if the child has never been registered at a school, however if the child's name comes to the attention of RBC as someone who may be missing education, then RBC has a duty to investigate this and contact the parents to find out if the child is receiving a suitable education with a view to providing further monitoring and support as appropriate.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Children with an Educational, Health and Care Plan or a disability are supported by an allocated case officer or worker from the SEND team. The SEND team take the lead on supporting these children in their education, due to having a more comprehensive understanding of their needs within school. Any further support required from any relevant RBC teams will work in conjunction with them. Some children may experience delays in entering the school system if they are presenting with special educational needs or disabilities beyond school capability to meet. In these instances, RBC will not accept discrimination of any kind, and will always challenge perceived discrimination.

In some instances where there are reasonable health and safety grounds which prevent admission for a period until resolved, or a child's needs will be best met in a particular specialist setting that is not currently available, the SEND team will work with schools and families to ensure that interim, appropriate alternative provision is made available.

Children with medical needs

When children are unwell and unable to attend school, they may still be able to access some education. Children should be in receipt of what they can reasonably manage, depending on their condition. In some circumstances, it is appropriate for RBC to implement alternative provision to ensure children do not miss out whilst they are recovering from illness or medical needs. Alternatively, remote education may also be appropriate. Schools should plan in advance where possible, but where it is apparent that a child will miss 15 or more days of school either consecutively, or sporadically, alternative educational plans should be considered.

Children in Alternative Provision without regular monitoring and quality assurance

Children in receipt of alternative provision for some or a majority of their education will require regular monitoring and quality assurance action to ensure that they remain safe and in receipt of suitable education. Local and national guidance on commissioning and alternative provision should be considered and implemented for all children that are in receipt of alternative provision.

Children of Service Personnel

Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently – both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice.

Reintegration Timetables

What is full time?

There is no legal definition of what constitutes full time education. However, many schools operate an average of 5 hours of education per day amongst their school day, with registration and breaks on top of this.

However, The Local Government Ombudsman has published assumptions that schools work to, as set out in their report 'Out of School… Out of Mind?' Updated in 2016. Reading Borough Council follows these assumptions and advises schools to do the same.

The number of hours teaching that constitutes a full-time education varies according to the year a child is in. The assumptions schools work on are set out below:

Reception and Years 1 to 2 (children aged 5 to 7): 21 hours
Years 3 to 6 (children aged 7 to 11): 23.5 hours
Years 7 to 10 (children aged 11 to 15): 24 hours
Year 11 (children aged 15 to 16): 25 hours

A reintegration timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution and must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

In agreeing to a reintegration timetable a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as an 'authorised absence'.

RBC requests information on pupils attending part-time from head teachers, it the responsibility of the head teacher or representative to provide this information. This is information will allow RBC the opportunity to investigate what additional support the school may require, respond to trends in data and ensure other key professionals, such as SEND are aware of the arrangements.

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary reintegration timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a phased return is considered as part of a re-integration package to be in the child's best interest.

Arranging a reintegration timetable

Reintegration timetables **are best** negotiated through Pastoral Support Programmes, Annual Reviews or Attendance Panels with a RBC officer in attendance or through re-integration panels to ensure a wide range of views and a robust rationale for it to be in the child's best interest

Reintegration timetables should have an agreed date for the return to full-time education, to ensure the plan is time limited.

Reintegration timetables must be a formal agreement between the school, parents, the child (as appropriate) or young person and RBC or other relevant professionals working with the child, and in no way must the family feel forced or coerced into the decision.

Arrangements must be kept under regular review, be time-limited and should include:-

- A detailed assessment of the child's needs
- Clearly documented Provision Map, Pastoral Support Programmes or Personal Education Plan reviews (as appropriate) showing interventions and outcomes, and multi-agency working (where appropriate)
- A detailed action plan which informs RBC of the timetable and demonstrates clear planned progression from part-time to full time provision that specifies additional help and support required
- Details of how the school will ensure that the child's education is maintained, through sending work home, and what arrangements are needed for it to be returned and marked
- A date when full time provision in school will be achieved, usually no more than 6 weeks from the commencement of the timetable. If the reintegration timetable is longer than this, the school should consider what other alternative provision, services or agencies may be required to ensure the child can reintegrate

Consultation with professionals

The pupil should be managed within the context of the SEND Code of Practice, including support provided from school for pupils who do not have an EHCP. Advice should be sought from the SEND team.

For EHCP pupils, reintegration timetables should be agreed through an Annual Review and their EHCP amended to reflect the new arrangement with regular monitoring reviews

For Children Looked After, a reintegration timetable should be discussed and agreed through a Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting or PSP meeting. This should involve the school's Designated Teacher for Children Looked After, Social Worker, Virtual School, Foster Carer and parent where appropriate.

A Social Care representative needs to be involved if the child or family has an allocated social worker.

Pupils re-integrating to school after a period of exclusion or permanent exclusion may benefit from gradual, supported re-integration to prevent further exclusion. The School Inclusion Officer can offer advice in these circumstances through consultation.

Pupils who are only able to attend school part-time due to serious illness who require additional alternative provision, will be monitored by the CME Officer

RBC staff are available to discuss issues related to reintegration timetables or exclusion and suspension with head teachers and senior managers including Cranbury College (Behaviour Services), Attendance Support Team, the SEN Assessment Team and the CME Officer or School Inclusion Officer. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) can also offer advice on Child Protection and Safeguarding issues.

Reporting & Monitoring

Reintegration timetable data is requested from all schools on a termly basis. This is requested in the form of a returnable spreadsheet or online Webform (see appendices). The Education Access and Support Service collates this information and will continue to follow up with schools if the data is not provided in a timely manner.

The Attendance Support Team regularly monitors school attendance registers and will also share this information with relevant personnel to ensure the data collection is up to date.

The Education Access and Support Service shares this with internal teams for awareness, monitoring, advice and intervention. Colleagues that receive this information include:

- Youth Justice Service
- Children's Social Care
- Attendance Support Team
- SEND Team
- Virtual School for Children Looked After (and extended duties)
- School Effectiveness Team

As part of assessment processes within Children's Social Care, information on reintegration timetables is also cross-referenced and regularly by the Education Access and Support Service.

Identification and Prevention

Early identification and prevention is key to minimising the impact of children missing education.

Key Teams supporting the identification and prevention of CME:

Attendance Support Workers (ASW)	Educational Psychology Service (EPS)
Family Help Team (FH) and One Reading Partnership Hub	School Effectiveness Team
Mental Health Support Teams (MHST)	Virtual School for Children Looked After (VS CLA)
Youth Justice Service (YJS)	Education Access and Support Service
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team (SEND)	Children's Social Care (CSC)
Early Years Settings (EY)	Voluntary & Community sector organisations
Primary & Secondary Schools	Children's centres & Nurseries
Health Services	Reading Inclusion Support in Education (RISE) Team

ASWs are part of the Education Access and Support Service and work in partnership with schools, parents, and other professionals to identify and support vulnerable children and their families where school attendance is an issue. If there is no improvement in attendance and/or where attendance remains irregular the local authority will take appropriate enforcement action.

Support to children and families may include offers of targeted support from Family Help by way of 'whole family working' under a Team Around the Family Plan. This offer can include parenting support and family work. Family Help deliver Parenting Courses which can have the effect of increased school attendance (if identified as an area of need) through enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents. Triple P is offered three times a year on a rolling basis. Referrals can be made as appropriate to other services within the Council such as Social Care, Health, SOURCE, and Youth Justice and Extra-Familiar Harm and to the voluntary sector. The Family Information Service will also raise parental concerns or those from the public regarding children missing education and pass on to the team appropriately.

Youth Justice Service works with young people at risk of offending/ participating in offending behaviour, schools and in liaison with other services such as the Police and Attendance Support Workers. YJS will communicate with the CME team to share concerns about school attendance & provision.

The School Effectiveness Team together with the Virtual Head Teacher for Children Looked After, The Head of Education Access and Support, Educational Psychology Service the SEND team support the safeguarding and education of children and young people through strategic and operational roles. The Head of Education Access and Support has the strategic lead for CME, School Admissions, Exclusions, Elective Home Education and is the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Panel (BWSCP) link with schools. The Reading Inclusion Support in Education Team (RISE) can support schools at a school-level to implement the Therapeutic Thinking Schools (TTS) Principles

Children's Centres and a high proportion of the early year's settings complete transition into school work. One of the key purposes of the children's centres is preparation for "school readiness."

Other agencies who might pick up knowledge about children missing education in Reading include: Schools (including Academies and free/community schools and Independent schools) and Cranbury College (Pupil Referral Unit), Housing Associations, Homeless Hostels, Women's Refuges, Accident and Emergency, NHS Walk-in services, Health Visitors, School Governors, Parent Partnerships, Police, Probation Service, as well as members of the public.

Publicity and promotion of the route to notify RBC of children who may be missing education is provided to agencies on a regular basis and is published on our website. It may be the case that another agency is aware of the arrival or existence of a child living in the local authority but not in education, before the internal or external partners are aware.

Every November the School Admissions Team routinely supplies every Reading nursery school/ nursery class within a primary school, private, voluntary and independent setting (PVI's) a flyer to distribute to Reading Residents who are eligible for admission to a reception class in the following September. This information, available on the website, Secondary transfer flyers are sent to all Reading primary schools and Reading resident parents of year 6 pupils.

RBC (Brighter Futures for Children) website contains updated information on how to notify RBC of children missing education, as well as targeted and routine promotion to external agencies and internal departments.

The identification of CME cases relies on effective communication from internal and external partners of RBC. A concern can be raised by a range of individuals, including the public. These concerns should be passed onto RBC and be 'triaged' by the Attendance Support Team, CME Officer or School Admissions Team.

Information gathering

All RBC teams that support the education of children have access to a database that holds information on where Reading children are placed (i.e. on roll) including Academies, Free Schools, those children at a school outside the borough and those electively home educated. Therefore, they can quickly identify if a named child is not on a school roll.

However, RBC does not currently have access to registers held by Academies or Independent schools. If there is minimum information held to identify a child, it may be necessary to check the child's name and other details, if available, against all educational provider rolls in the local area.

RBC has access to status information including through partner agencies, across local authority boundaries and multi-disciplinary teams, all shared via information sharing protocols.

Additional methods of identification

- We have access to most registers through the DfE Attendance Portal
- All schools have a safeguarding duty to report CME
- We request information on children receiving part-time education on a termly basis.
- Regular screening of most school registers is completed by the Attendance Support Team

Additional methods of preventative practice

- Reducing the likelihood that children fall out of or have reduced engagement with the education system, by e.g. audits of the rolls and registers of schools and sharing information across LA boundaries in a timely way.
- Cross-matching data reports from systems to identify children who may be missing education
- Identifying and locating children missing out on education, by e.g. notification of exclusions and the provision of named points of contact to receive notification of children from other agencies
- Re-engaging the child(ren) with appropriate educational provision, by e.g. multi-disciplinary panels, Admissions and Re-Admissions meetings, TAC/F (Team Around the Child/Family) meetings and pastoral support
- Checking the sufficiency and quality of part-time education
- Monitoring the length of time re-integration of CYP into full-time education and supporting school staff with re-integration where applicable
- Monthly review meetings of exclusion data
- Regular case review meetings for priority pupils, children in care and children with EHCP's

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home12 and may withdraw them from school at any time to do so, unless they are subject to a School Attendance Order

Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform RBC.

Schools

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying RBC at the earliest opportunity.

Schools must notify RBC when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the regulations as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

All schools are required to notify RBC within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. Schools will need to provide RBC with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

Schools must monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register. Schools should complete a CME referral for any child that has missed ten school days or more without permission. All schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences.

In line with the duty under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, the expectation is that the school and RBC will have in place procedures designed to carry out reasonable enquiries[1] to locate pupils.

Where a child is on a school roll and but is absent from school and the whereabouts are unknown, the school must do an S2S alert if they believe the child to have moved area and seek advice from CME Officer.

If a child is permanently excluded or fixed term excluded the school must follow exclusion procedures and notify the relevant RBC partners.

[1] See Appendix X for reasonable enquiries guidance

Local Authorities

Local authorities have a duty to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age.

Families moving between local authority areas can sometimes lead to a child who is unknown to any local authority and consequently missing education. Where a child has moved or where the destination of a child is unknown, we will work to identify relevant local authorities – either regionally or nationally – and check with them in order to ascertain where the child has moved.

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education. RBC will focus resources effectively in intervening early in the lives of vulnerable children to help prevent poor outcomes.

Some children who are missing from education can be identified and supported back into education quickly; other children who have experienced more complex problems face tougher obstacles to getting back into suitable education. RBC are committed to ensuring policies and procedures support all levels of need and will consider how themes and trends in barriers facing children accessing education are considered in our approaches.

RBC will, where possible, consult the parents of the child when establishing whether the child is receiving suitable education. Those children identified as not receiving suitable education will be returned to full time education either at a school or in alternative provision. RBC will take prompt action and support early intervention discharge this duty effectively and in ensuring that children are safe and receiving suitable education.

Where there is concern for a child's welfare, this will be referred to local authority children's social care. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, the police will also be involved. Where there is a concern that a child's safety or well-being is at risk, RBC will act without delay.

External partners

If a child has been potentially involved in a crime and is e.g. bailed or remanded, the Police and YJS contact the school and YJS alert the relevant RBC partners.

Any member of the public phoning in with concerns about any child missing education should come through to the CME Officer.

Named Role

The CME Officer is the role/person to whom referrals are made should there be a concern about a child who may be missing from education. This person is able to take notifications from within Local Authority boundaries, from colleagues within the Council and other agencies. Other local authorities around the country can also make enquiries through the School Admissions Team

Formal notification of CME cases/concerns from schools should be shared to RBC by completing the 'Missing Pupil Form' and sending this to CME@reading.gov.uk

CME Officer	School Admissions Manager – 0118 937 3666
CME@reading.gov.uk	Admissions@reading.gov.uk

Notification

It is key that internal partners, schools, NHS and other partner agencies and the general public understand who and how to notify a concern.

- We have a named role (plus back up) to whom notifications are made
- Clear responsibilities on the named person(s) for appropriate action

Post - Notification

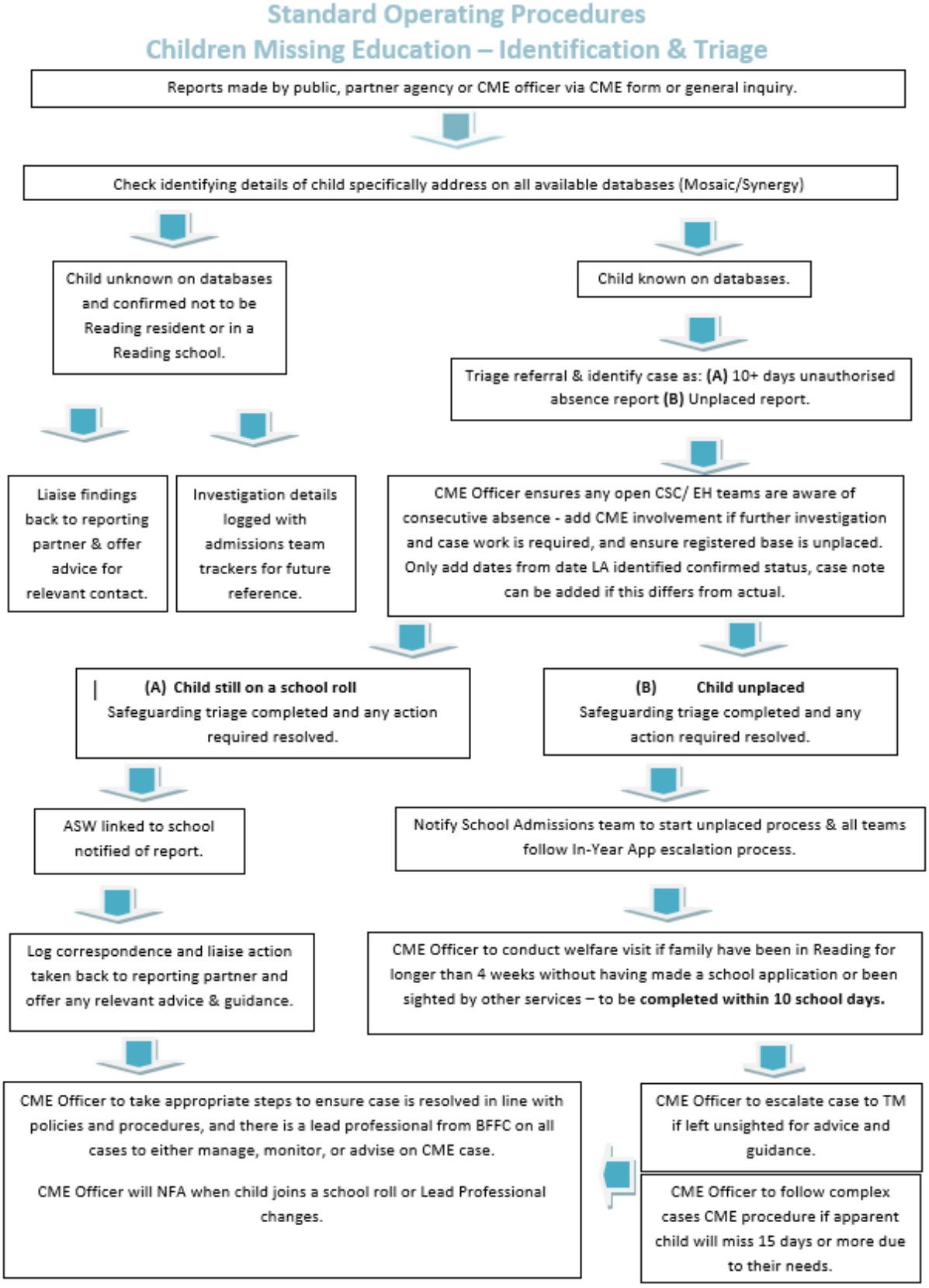
We work to ensure that every child is on roll of a school, regardless of circumstances, unless parents have elected to educate their child at home.

Post-notification practice:

- Supporting the timely placement of unplaced children, with alternative provision as an interim if appropriate
- Escalation policy for schools not admitting children within legal timeframes
- Regular case supervision to review progress & intervention of long-term and high need CME cases
- Liaison between services on updates or developments with CME issues for collaborative working
- Allocated lead professional who works with CME child to provide monitoring and support
- RBC intervention if reason to believe that parents are not providing a suitable education when home educating children e.g. School Attendance Order (SAO) (under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996).
- Regular collation and monitoring of reintegration timetables and consultation with schools to support full-time integration

- Regular collation and analysis of exclusion data to inform strategic actions to reduce days lost from school
- Regular consultation and advice sharing with schools on CME cases
- Attendance Support Team intervention for schools who buy into the service, basic support for those who do not
- Tracking of various categories of CME by CME Officer and School Admissions to ensure trends and themes are considered in strategic response

Appendix 1 – Standard Operating Procedures



Appendix 2

Key statutory guidance

Principal statutory duties are as follows:

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act: the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 14(1) of the 1996 Education Act: schools must be sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide all pupils with the opportunity of appropriate education (s. 14(2)). “Appropriate education” means, broadly education which is desirable in view of the pupils’ different ages, abilities and aptitudes and the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school (s. 14(3)).

Section 19 (1) of the 1996 Education Act requires every local education authority to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them. For these purposes, “suitable” education is defined as “efficient education suitable to the age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs the child (or young person) may have.” (s. 19(6)).

Section 19(4A) of the 1996 Education Act:

“In determining what arrangements to make under subsection (1) in the case of any child or pupil, a local education authority shall have regard to guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.”

Section 437 (1) of the 1996 Education Act: if it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they must serve a notice in writing on the parent (“a school attendance order”) requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 imposes a duty upon LAs and governing bodies to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. For these purposes, “functions” includes the powers and duties of LAs and governing bodies.

The Children Act 2004 includes various provisions relating to safeguarding and promotion of welfare of children, including:

(a) a duty upon each children’s services authority to promote co-operation between it and various other bodies to improve the well-being of children so far as relating to (amongst other things) education and training;

(b) a duty upon various bodies (including children's services authorities) to make arrangements for ensuring that their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and

(c) provision for the Secretary of State to put into place information databases for the purposes of arrangements under s.175 of the Education Act 2002 or (a) and (b) above, and a framework for the sharing of information contained in such databases for such purposes.

Children, Schools and Families Act of 2010: "Local Authorities must ensure that all children who fall within the scope of section 19 receive suitable full time education unless reasons that relate to their medical condition mean that this would not be in the best interests"

Further important Policies

DfE Research Report – A profile of pupil absence in England - 2011

Local Government Ombudsman Report – Out of School out of Mind Focus Report – September 2011, updated 2016

Child Centred System - Government's response to Munro review of child protection – July 2011

DfE Children Missing Education – Sept 2016

DfE School Admissions Code 2021

Education Act - 2011

DfE Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement – May 2023

Good practice for Gypsy/Traveller Achievement and for Supporting Asylum Seeking and Refugee children which are part of the Department's Aiming High strategy to raise Minority Ethnic Achievement: Aiming High: Guidance on Supporting the Education of Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children - A Guide to Good Practice

DfE - Keeping Children Safe in Education – September 2023

DfE - Children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014

DfE - Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions December 2015

Appendix 3

Acronyms

Acronyms in this document, arranged in alphabetical order:

AST	Attendance Support Team
ASW	Attendance Support Worker
BWSCP	Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Panel
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAT	Children's Action Team
CBDS	Common Basic Data Set
CLA	Child/ren Looked After
CSS	Children's Support Service
CC	Cranbury College - Pupil Referral Unit, Home & Hospital Teaching
CME	Children Missing Education
CTF	Common Transfer File
DfE	Department for Education
EMS	Education Management System
ESO	Education Support Officer
FE	Further Education
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
LA	Local Authority
LPD	Pupil Database
NHS	National Health Service
PAM	Pupil Admission Meeting
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit

PSP	Pastoral Support Plan
RBC	Reading Borough Council
s2s	school2school
SAO	School Attendance Order
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLA	Service Level Agreement
TVP	Thames Valley Police
YOS	Youth Offending Service

Appendix 4 – Missing Pupil Form

Missing Pupil Form

School Name	
Child's Name	
Parents Name & Contact Details	
UPN No.	
Date of Birth	
Address	
Ethnicity	
Date Missing	
Date posted to S2S (If applicable)	
Subject to Pupil Premium	
First Language if not English	
Current % attendance	

Please tick (or leave blank if unknown). Please provide any further comments/concerns overleaf

	Yes	No
1. Has the child gone missing with their family? **If the answer is 'yes' to this question then consider recording as unauthorised absence unless other risk factors are known.**		
2. Is the child in care or have a child protection plan?		
3. Is there planned or current Children's Social Care involvement (e.g. an initial assessment or a section 47 assessment)?		
4. Is the child subject to a Child in Need Plan?		
5. Is this child a Young Carer?		
6. Is there good reason to believe that the child may be the victim of a crime?		
7. Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying? e.g:		
a. Is there any known history of substance or alcohol dependency within the family?		
b. Is there any known history of domestic violence?		

c. Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?		
8. Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g:		
a. Does the child need essential medication or health care?		
b. Was the child noted to be depressed prior to their unexplained absence?		
9. Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk (e.g. rites of passage or forced marriage planned for the child)?		
10. Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?		
11. Is the child new to the Country or recently returned to the UK?		
12. Is this child/family Asylum Seekers?		
13. Has there been a recent, sudden or unexpected change in the child's behaviour?		
14. Was there any significant incident that may have contributed to the child's unexplained absence?		
15. Has the child been a victim of bullying?		
16. Does the child have special educational needs?		
17. Has there been any change in the child/family's financial circumstances?		
18. Is there a risk of eviction from the family home?		
19. Is this a family of traveller heritage?		

If the answer is 'yes' to any one of these questions and there are further concerns please contact your designated Child Protection lead and/or social care for advice.

Supplementary information

Question No.	Comment / Concern
	Attach separate sheet if appropriate
	Actions taken
	Attach separate sheet if appropriate

	Has a referral been made to:		
	Yes	No	
	☐	☐	Education Welfare Service
	☐	☐	Children's Social Care
	☐	☐	Police
	☐	☐	Any other service (please define)

If in the case of any immediate danger always contact 999 emergency services as appropriate.

Name:

Role:

Date:

Please return to cme@reading.gov.uk

Appendix 5: Reasonable Enquiries

The term 'reasonable enquiries' grants schools and local authorities a degree of flexibility in decision-making, particularly as the steps that need to be taken in a given case will vary. The term 'reasonable' also makes clear that there is a limit to what the school and local authority is expected to do.

There are particular situations where a school cannot remove a child from the school roll, until joint enquiries have been completed and resolved, schools should pay particular attention to these areas to ensure compliant removal from roll.

When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown, it is reasonable to expect that the local authority and the school will complete and record one or more of the following actions:

a. make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details;

b. check local databases within the local authority;

c. check Key to Success or school2school (s2s) systems;

d. follow local information sharing arrangements and where possible make enquiries via other local databases and agencies e.g. those of housing providers, school admissions, health services, police, refuge, Youth Justice Services, children's social care, and HMRC;

e. check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and/or the Border Force;

f. check with agencies known to be involved with family;

g. check with local authority and school from which child moved originally, if known;

h. check with any local authority and school to which a child may have moved;

i. check with the local authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is;

j. in the case of children of Service Personnel, check with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS); and

k. home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.

This list is not exhaustive or prescriptive, and so local authorities and schools should treat each case on its individual merits and use their judgement, ensuring they have taken into account all of the facts of the case. It should be recognised 14 that the type of reasonable enquiries required to try to locate a child will differ from case to case and additional enquiries to those suggested in this section may be necessary.

Making these enquiries may not always lead to establishing the location of the child, but will provide a steer on what action should be taken next, for example, to contact the police, children's social care and, in cases where there may be concerns for the safety of a child who has travelled abroad, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.