



Ark All Saints Academy

Children Missing in Education Protocol

1 INTRODUCTION AND LEGAL CONTEXT

Who are ‘children missing education’?

- 1.1** Children are defined as missing education if they are of statutory school age (5-16) and are not on a school roll AND not receiving a suitable education at home or in alternative provision.
- 1.2** Children may come to miss education for a number of reasons, including the following:
- they may never have started in a school;
 - they may cease to attend school, due to exclusion or parents withdrawing them;
 - they may have left primary school but not completed transition to secondary school, e.g. because parents do not believe that they have been offered a satisfactory option;
 - they may have moved into a new area, including those from abroad.
- 1.3** Southwark faces particular challenges with a highly mobile population and significant movement in and out of the borough throughout the school year.
- 1.4** Children missing opportunities are plainly at risk of educational under-achievement, with a potential long term impact on their opportunities. In addition, research shows that children missing education are at higher risk of becoming involved in crime, substance misuse, and other harmful behaviour. Ofsted (2014) has identified that ‘Children who are missing from home, school or care are at greater risk of sexual exploitation’.

Local Authority responsibility

- 1.5** Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 states that Local Authorities ‘must make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age but:
- a) are not registered scholars at a school, and
 - b) are not receiving suitable education¹ otherwise than at a school.

¹ “suitable education”, in relation to a child, means efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs she/he may have

1.6 'Children missing education: Statutory guidance for local authorities' (Department for Education, 2013) states that Local Authorities should:

- have 'robust procedures and policies in place to enable them to meet their duty in relation to these children, including appointing a named person to which schools and other agencies can make referrals';
- 'undertake regular reviews and evaluate their processes to ensure that these continue to be fit for purpose in identifying and dealing with CMEs in their area';
- 'consult the parents of the child when establishing whether the child is receiving suitable education';
- 'have procedures in place to prevent children at risk of becoming CME';
- ensure that 'those children identified as not receiving suitable education' are 'returned to full time education either at a school or in alternative provision'.

2 IDENTIFYING AND TRACKING CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

Notification of potential CME

2.1 Southwark's process for identifying and tracking children missing education is led through the Early Help Service in Children's and Adults' Services - Education. The Head of the Early Help Service is the named person for CME.

2.2 Many children who may be missing education are identified by schools. DfE guidance on School Attendance (2014) states that 'All schools (including academies) must inform their local authority of any scholar who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the scholar is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- have been permanently excluded.

The local authority should be notified in advance of the deletion, when the school becomes aware that the deletion will be made'.

2.3 Children may also be identified as potentially missing education through a number of other sources:

- children may come into contact with health or other services who identify that they do not appear to be in school;
- children may be found out of school during the school day by truancy patrols or the police, with no record of them being on a school roll;
- other local authorities may inform Southwark that a child has moved into the area;
- members of the public may notice that a child of school age does not appear to be in school.

2.4 Southwark positively encourages schools, other agencies and members of the public to inform the Early Help Service of children who they believe may be missing education by completing a CME referral form and sending it to earlyhelp@southwark.gov.uk. The CME referral form is available at: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2746/children_missing_from_education_referral_form

2.5 In addition to following up on referrals, Southwark uses the termly school census returns to identify children who may be missing education. Children who leave the roll of a school without appearing on the roll of a new school will be treated as potentially CME.

Checking children potentially missing education

2.6 In the first instance, checks are carried out by the Early Help Central Team on all children identified as potentially CME (whether through referral or through census analysis). These will include:

- checking on the Capita One system and school census returns to identify if the child is on the roll of a school in Southwark;
- checking Capita One, Care First and Synergy to identify what contact details are available for the family, and whether they are currently being supported by Early Help or Children's Social Care;
- checking with the Council's housing and/or housing benefit teams to identify current address;
- contacting the parent(s) by telephone if number is available to determine whether the child is on roll at another school or is being home-educated;
- contacting the social worker or Early Help lead professional, where a case is currently open, to identify if they have any information about the child's school;
- sending a letter to parents at last known address requesting information on the school the child is attending;
- checking that any identified siblings are attending school.

2.7 In all cases, information received from parents, professionals or data systems will be verified by contacting the school to confirm whether or not child is attending.

2.8 In the majority of cases, at this stage, children identified as potentially CME are found to be actually on the roll of a school or being home-educated. Details on systems will be amended, and referrers informed of the outcome. However should this not be the case, and no reply to the letter to the parent has been received within five working days, the referral will be passed to the relevant Early Help Locality Manager who will allocate the case to a member of the team to conduct a home visit.

2.9 If after visiting the home, the Early Help Team have not been able to speak to parents and to clarify the child's education arrangements, further checks to seek information will be carried out via Housing, Immigration Enforcement or Maisy as appropriate. Other Local Authorities will be contacted if there is an indication that the family may have moved into their area.

2.10 Once all reasonable efforts to locate the family have been exhausted, the case will be loaded on to the 'Lost Scholar' section of the national S2S (School to School) system. This will enable other Local Authorities to identify the child should he/she start attending a school in their area.

2.11 Southwark retains a list of all children referred as potentially missing education, and the outcome. However, children will not be classified as CME for data monitoring purposes until the checks and a home visit have been carried out and it has been confirmed that the child has been consistently absent from education for at least twenty days.

2.12 Children who are confirmed as being home-educated are not as classified as CME. In exceptional circumstances where the Local Authority has grounds for believing that a child is not in fact receiving a suitable education, (even though the parent has informed the LA this is the case) the protocol for Home Education will apply.

3 SUPPORTING CHILDREN BACK INTO EDUCATION

- 3.1** Children who do not have a school place will be supported in finding a place through Southwark's Admissions Team. The service has an 'in year' admissions process and a Fair Access Protocol to ensure that all children whatever their circumstances are able to access and secure a school place as quickly as possible or alternative provision.
- 3.2** Where parents are declining to engage with the Admissions process or may not otherwise be meeting the requirement to ensure that their child receives a suitable education, the case will be referred to the Early Help Service Locality Team for follow up case work.
- 3.3** In some cases children identified as potentially missing education will be found to be on the roll of a school but with poor attendance or persistent absence. The Early Help Service, through its Education Welfare Officers, will work with the school and the family to support an improvement in the child's attendance.

4 PREVENTING CHILDREN FROM BEING AT RISK OF CME

- 4.1** The following groups may be particularly at risk of becoming CME:
- children with poor school attendance, in particular those approaching or exceeding the 20 day absence limit when a school must inform LA of its intention to remove child from school roll;
 - children permanently excluded from school, or at risk of permanent exclusion;
 - young people being supported through the Youth Offending Service;
 - young parents of statutory school age;
 - children of homeless families living in temporary accommodation;
 - unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees or children of asylum seeking families
 - children living in refuges for women affected by domestic abuse;
 - children from a Gypsy/traveller background;
 - children being Electively Home Educated where there are concerns about whether a suitable education is being provided;
 - children facing delay in being allocated a suitable school place through in-year Admissions;
 - new arrivals to the Borough who delay seeking a school place or are identified as "hard to place".
- 4.2** Southwark monitors children at risk of missing education through its Children at Risk of Missing Education Monitoring Group, led by Early Help Service managers. The main purpose of the Monitoring Group is to ensure there is no drift, delay or avoidance in following up cases where there are concerns.
- 4.3** It is acknowledged that Children Missing Education may be at great risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and rigorous monitoring, reporting and follow up will assist in identifying and addressing emerging issues.

5 SAFEGUARDING

- 5.1** Should there be concerns that a child believed to be missing education may be at risk of harm, a safeguarding referral will be made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- 5.2** Where children missing education are also identified as missing from home Southwark's protocol for Children missing from home or Care will be followed.
- 5.3** Where children missing education are currently open to Children's Social Care, details of the CME enquiry will be sent to the relevant social worker to assess impact on risk.