



CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

(CME)

POLICY

December 2014

IDENTIFYING AND MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH CHILDREN MISSING OR AT RISK OF GOING MISSING FROM EDUCATION

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IDENTIFYING AND MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH CHILDREN MISSING OR AT RISK OF GOING MISSING FROM EDUCATION

1. Introduction

This policy is intended to inform Local Authority (LA) officers, schools, governing bodies and other involved agencies about the policy and procedures to be followed in order to identify and maintain contact with children missing education and current developments for identifying those at risk of going missing from education. This policy should be read in conjunction with current legislation and guidance listed in Appendix A & B.

The Policy is offered with the aim of providing best practice for safety of children who are registered with West Berkshire schools, live in West Berkshire and Electively Home Educated, and who are or go missing from school, and give rise to concern that they may be classified as missing, whereabouts unknown.

The term "Children Missing from Education (CME)" refers to all children of compulsory school age who are neither on a school roll, not being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more).

The policy has been produced to support the Local Authority Schools, Governing Bodies and other agencies in meeting its statutory duties relating to the provision of education, the safeguarding and welfare of children. It should be used in conjunction with Berkshire Child Protection Procedures. It relates to current Legislation and Related Guidance (see Appendix A).

2. Why Do Children Go Missing From Education?

Children can fall out of education in a number of ways. They can:

- Fail to start appropriate provision and, therefore, never enter the educational system
- Cease to attend following a period of official exclusion from school
- Cease to attend because of unofficial exclusion
- Are withdrawn by their parents¹, sometimes after a dispute with the school
- Live a lifestyle which involves travelling, such as a Travellers, gypsies or migrant workers' children
- Be from the mobile or transient population within the UK such as refugees, and asylum seekers
- Fail to complete a transition between providers, i.e. at a point of transfer between key stages; unable to find a school or not attempting to find a school following a house move and/or moving between Local Authority areas
- Becoming a missing family or child
- Become caught in a variety of complex barriers to education including bullying, family crises such as eviction, homelessness, bereavement or being a carer
- Cease to attend due to long-term medical conditions or disabilities
- At risk of sexual exploitation, including children who have been trafficked to, or within the UK
- At risk of 'honour' based violence including forced marriage – particularly 15-16 year old girls from Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi families
- At risk of female genital mutilation.

¹All references to include carers and a single parent.

3. Minimising the risk to children who are missing education

To limit the opportunity for children to go missing when they fall out of the education system West Berkshire Council has a range of processes and procedures including:-

- Procedures to identify and locate missing education through regular truancy sweeps.
- Monitoring and tracking children missing education
- Monitoring children educated by their parents
- Identifying children who are 'travelling' through liaison with EMTAS
- Multi-agency agreement on procedures to be adopted when children go missing or run away from home or from the care of the Local Authority
- Policy/procedure for 'Hard to Place' pupils dealt with by our Pupil Placement Panel.
- Ongoing monitoring and tracking of children excluded from School
- Monitoring of pupils' transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3
- Regular truancy patrols in the community by Police and Education Welfare Officers.
- Monitoring of 'Looked After Children' through the work of the Life Chances Team
- Multi-agency meetings (Primary PAR) to discuss children of concern e.g. CSE and vulnerable groups.

4. Notification Routes

The Education Welfare Service/Principal EWO manages the process of children known to be missing from education. The Assistant Education Welfare Officer maintains updates and tracks pupils on the West Berkshire missing pupil list.

The details of any pupil who has been out of education provision for four weeks or more should be given to the Assistant EWO. This is currently:

Carole Beswick-Lisle
West Street House
West Street
Newbury
RG14 1BZ

Tel: 01635 519797

Any statutory or voluntary agency from within West Berkshire should notify the Education Welfare Service Asst EWO, if they identify any such child. The preferred method of notification would be in writing using the form Appendix D (also email). Notifications may also come from many other sources including other Local Authorities and information from members of the public. CAFs may also be used.

5. Multi-agency Meetings

Pupil at Risk (PAR) Panel

Meets regularly for primary age pupils in West Berkshire will discuss any of the cases where there is concern raised about a pupil missing education.

Life Chances

Pupil Placement Panel (PPP)

Helps to find school places for pupils who are hard to place or hard to keep in school.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Multi agency meetings are held regularly, usually fortnightly, and considers the best outcomes for those who are at risk of CSE.

6. Identifying Available Provision and Places

Pupils identified as needing a school place may be referred to the Pupil Placement Panel. (PPP) This meeting is held at least fortnightly and places pupils in schools. Referrals are sent to the Pupil Placement Panel (PPP) Coordinator based at West Street House, West Street, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 1BZ

7. EHE

Children withdrawn from school to be home educated by their parents. (Known as Elective Home Education in West Berkshire). Parents have a legal right to home educate their children but they must prove that the education is 'suitable' and 'efficient'. If the education is not satisfactory action is taken to ensure the child receives appropriate education. Guidance notes are available on the West Berkshire Council website: <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=27794>.

8. The Role of Schools

Schools use a range of strategies when a pupil is absent from school which usually starts with a first day contact. Other actions will include letters home, meetings and referral to EWS. In addition to referring patterns of absence below 80%, school staff should notify their named Education Welfare Officer if a pupil has 10 or more consecutive days of unauthorised absence from school. If there are particular concerns about the child a referral to the EWS will be much sooner than this. The EWS keeps a database on missing children. Pupils who are missing from school for 10 or more consecutive days and their whereabouts are unknown should be reported to the schools named EWO who will ensure that their details are added to this database and appropriate actions taken.

Transition times – Nursery, Reception, Year 7

When a pupil is expected to join the school either at a normal time of starting (Nursery, Reception or Year 7) or at any time if a pupil does not arrive the school should firstly try to make contact with the parents by telephone or letter. If after one week no contact has been made the school should contact Admissions Dept to find out if the child has been registered elsewhere. After two weeks the school should inform their Education Welfare Officer who will follow the procedure for 'missing pupils'. The Notification of a child without a school place form should be used. Appendix D. The pupil should not be removed from roll until the Education Welfare Officer has ascertained the pupil's whereabouts and safety and has confirmed that the pupil is registered at another school or is being educated otherwise.

Pupils who disappear

If a pupil 'disappears' without any warning the Schools Designated Person for Safeguarding Children should notify the Education Welfare Service Children and Young Persons Safeguarding Worker. Where a pupil has a statement of SEN the SEN team should be notified. Notifications should always be followed by written confirmation within 48 hours. Appendix D The Local Authority staff will follow the West Berkshire, Education Welfare Service guidance on Missing Pupils (Procedures for missing/lost pupils) Appendix B. See also Appendix C.

Removal from the school roll

There are strict rules on when schools can delete pupils from their admissions register. These are outlined in Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 as amended (see Appendix C).

When a pupil is deleted from the Admission Register the school must clearly indicate the date and the reason for the removal from roll. In the event of a pupil moving to another known school the name of the school and the leaving date should be indicated in the releasing schools (SIMS) system. An electronic Common Transfer File of the pupils' records should be generated and sent to the new school within 15 days via s2s, (a secure DfE database which holds details of missing pupils).

In the event of a parent informing the school in writing that a child is being withdrawn to home educate the school should inform the Education Welfare Officer who will ensure that contact is made with the parents by letter, and the local procedures are put in place for monitoring the situation.

The school should inform their named Education Welfare Officer when a pupil has 10 or more day's consecutive unauthorised absence. The school should email the full details to their named EWO. This will follow a range of actions taken by school staff when a child is absent from school.

9. The use of s2s (a secure DfE database which holds details of missing pupils).

If a school know which school a pupil is moving to the school should ensure that the Common Transfer File is sent to the receiving school via s2s as quickly as possible. The new school may then request additional information e.g. Personal Education Plan. More information about this system can be found in Appendix B

When a child who is known to the Education Welfare Service moves to another Local Authority the Education Welfare Officer should contact the local Education Welfare Service to monitor the placement.

Reasonable enquiries by the Education Welfare Officer should include assessing a missing child's vulnerability. The Education Welfare Officer should make enquiries by visiting the child's home and asking for information in the community as appropriate and check with any agencies known to be working with the family.

If a child continues to be missing from school for four weeks and the Education Welfare Officer has exhausted enquiries and has been unable to locate the pupil and their family enquiries are

made with the Referral and Assessment Team (R&A). Where there are any concerns about the pupil a referral is made immediately to R&A. It is then permissible for the child's name to be removed from the school roll and details of the child uploaded to the DfE s2s.

The Education Welfare Service or any other agency becomes aware the child has moved to another school the service should ensure all relevant agencies are informed so that arrangements can be made to forward records from the previous schools.

10. Looked After Children

The LACES team closely monitors school attendance of all LAC. Education Welfare Officers are aware of LAC at their schools and discuss these at their consultation meetings.

11. The involvement of other agencies

All agencies who become aware of a pupil missing from Education should inform the Assistant Education Welfare Officer, so that the procedures for missing/lost pupils can be followed.

12. Child Protection Concerns

If there are any Child Protection concerns then the Child Protection Procedures must be followed. The Berkshire Local Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Procedures can be found at <http://berks.proceduresonline.com/index.htm> or e-mail child@westberks.gov.uk