North Lincolnshire Council

Children Missing from Education Policy

January 2025

Purpose of Document	To provide a corporate policy for children missing education
Reference/Version	Version 2
Review Date	February 2026
Intended Audience	Schools, Education Providers and Alternative Provisions

1.0 Introduction

This document provides an outline of North Lincolnshire Local Authority's policy and partner agency approach for identifying, registering and tracking Children Missing from Education (CME). It also identifies the statutory responsibility of schools, academies, independent and free schools.

North Lincolnshire Council believes all children and young people should **thrive in their families, achieve in their schools and flourish in their communities**. Children are best placed to do this if they are accessing their education provision on a regular basis.

This policy has been produced to effectively support the implementation of the duty that local authorities have to identify children who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at a school. This policy implements the revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England, issued in August 2024.

The duty applies to all children and young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at school. This includes children and young people who are educated at home, in private education or in alternative education provision. It does not apply to children and young people who are registered at a school but failing to attend. The duty to identify children missing from education reinforces existing duties placed upon schools to monitor attendance for pupils registered at their school.

'If a child or young person is receiving an education, not only do they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, but they are also in an environment that enables local agencies to safeguard and promote their welfare. If a child goes missing from education they could be at risk of significant harm.'

The purpose of the section 436A of the Education Act 1996 is to ensure that local authorities' arrangements enable them to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (e.g. privately or in alternative provision). Those children identified, as not receiving suitable education should be returned to full time education either at a school or an alternative provision. This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age.

Children not receiving a suitable education are at increased risk of a range of negative outcomes that could have long-term damaging consequences for their life chances. For example, they are at risk of not attaining the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life and are at significant risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) once they have reached the compulsory school leaving age.

They could also be more vulnerable and may be from disadvantaged families (experiencing multiple risks such as poverty, substance misuse, mental ill-health and poor housing), travelling communities, subject to forced marriages, immigrant families, be unaccompanied asylum seeking or trafficked children, and any child may be at risk of neglect, abuse, child sexual or criminal exploitation or may be disengaged from education.

Children at risk of harm and neglect, families of Armed Forces, children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families, missing children and runaways, children at risk of child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and children supervised by the Youth Justice System are highlighted as particularly at risk of missing education. However, this list is not exhaustive.

2. Legislative Framework

In preparing this policy, the Local Authority has had regard to the following legislation and guidance:

- Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (added by section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- Education Act 1996 (section 7, 8, 14 and 19)
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 4 and 38)
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
- Children Missing Education, Statutory Guidance for local authorities, August 2024
- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, which places a duty on local authorities to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

3. Meaning of 'Children Missing Education'

The national definition of children who are not receiving a suitable education is:

"A compulsory school-age child who is not on the roll of a school, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority, and who is not receiving a suitable education at home".

Suitable education is defined as:

"Efficient full-time education suitable to a child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have".

Alternative provision is defined as:

"Educational provision arranged by local authorities or schools, and made off-site by a voluntary or private sector provider or by a Pupil Referral Unit or Short Stay School".

4. Purpose

4.1 The purpose of the CME Policy is to establish a set of principles which all schools, services and partner organisations can sign up to in order to ensure that children living in North Lincolnshire are safely on roll at a school, placed at alternative educational provision or electively home educated at the parents' request.

4.2 The policy has been designed to help the council meet its statutory duties in relation to the provision and the safeguarding and the welfare of children. It does not replace any of the current child protection or existing safeguarding procedures and therefore this policy should be read in conjunction with existing safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures.

We are committed to ensuring that:

- All children who may be missing from North Lincolnshire schools, including independent schools, academies and free schools, are located without delay
- Support is given to other local authorities to locate missing children who may have moved into North Lincolnshire
- Use is made of the DfE's central School2School (s2s) database
- Joint reasonable enquiries are made with schools and designated local authority (LA) staff to locate children who are missing from school as soon as possible
- All children living in North Lincolnshire are in receipt of a suitable education in accordance with their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have
- All children living in North Lincolnshire are safeguarded and their welfare promoted

5. Tracking and Monitoring

Statutory guidance updated in August 2024 ensures local authorities and schools make procedures even more robust to prevent children becoming 'missing'.

5.0 North Lincolnshire Council has effective tracking and enquiry systems in place and an appointed named person (CME Co-ordinator) to whom schools, other agencies and the public can make referrals regarding children who they believe are missing. Schools should refer children by day 11 at the latest and earlier if there are concerns identified.

5.1 The CME Co-ordinator for North Lincolnshire Council is:

- Scott Belton – email: scott.belton@northlincs.gov.uk Tel: 01724 296169
- Email for general enquiries: educationinclusioncandc@northlincs.gov.uk

5.2 If a pupil ceases to attend a school and their whereabouts or destination school is not known, a CME referral form should be completed and sent to the CME Co-ordinator for action to be taken. Schools, the Local Authority (and other agencies where necessary) need to act as soon as possible to make reasonable enquiries

5.3 Ensure a co-ordinated, partnership approach in relation to investigating CME in order to ensure children have been located in a timely manner and their access to education confirmed.

5.4 Raise awareness of the CME policy and practice including training events for schools, school governors and partner organisations

6. Children for whom there are Child Protection or other Serious Welfare Concerns

6.1 Should a child not access their education provision and there is an immediate safeguarding or welfare concern for that child, the school's designated safeguarding lead must immediately contact the Children's Services through the Single Point of Contact 01724 296500 and/or the Police. In particular, consideration should especially be given to the vulnerabilities listed if any of the below apply to a child who may become missing:

- has a child protection plan
- is subject to serious concerns about their health, safety or welfare
- is living in a family where there are concerns about domestic abuse, substance abuse, mental health problems or learning difficulties
- may be in contact with a person who poses a risk of harm to children and young people
- may be at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation
- is subject to a care order
- is looked after by the local authority
- may be the victim of or involved in a crime
- may be taken out of the country illegally (e.g. abducted)
- may be taken out of the country for an illegal act (e.g. forced marriage, female genital mutilation, child trafficking)
- is privately fostered

6.2 Schools should submit a CME referral alongside any additional information sharing with statutory partners.

7.Children moving in or out of North Lincolnshire Schools

7.1 Procedures are in place for local authority staff, schools and other agencies in circumstances where:

- a child moves from a North Lincolnshire school and a destination school has not been identified i.e. the child may be missing education
- Another local authority (LA) contacts North Lincolnshire Council to establish if a missing child from their area has moved into North Lincolnshire
- A child is referred by school, another agency or by a member of the public (anonymously or not) because there is reason to believe that the child is not receiving a suitable education
- Children missing should not normally be removed from the school roll until they have been continuously absent for at least 20 school days and both the school and the LA have made joint reasonable enquiries to locate them.

8.When a Child Leaves a North Lincolnshire School to be Home Educated

8.1 If a parent/carer informs a North Lincolnshire school, in writing, that they are removing their child in order to home educate, the school should inform the LA's Elective Home Education Team (EHE) prior to removal.

Please see North Lincolnshire EHE policy.

9. When a Child Moves Outside of England

9.1 It is our duty, whenever possible, to confirm that a child who has left a North Lincolnshire school has arrived at a new school safely. When a child moves outside of England, the school the child is leaving should obtain both a forwarding address for the child and the name and address of the child's new school. If this information cannot be obtained within a reasonable timescale following the move, child should be referred to CME.

10. Contact Details:

Any concerns about children missing education should be referred to:

Email educationinclusioncandc@northlincs.gov.uk

For advice and guidance :

Scott Belton – CME Co-Ordinator

Tel: 01724 296169

Email scott.belton@northlincs.gov.uk

Exceptions for CME

Children with an education, health and care plan (EHCP)

For the purpose of in year transfer, children with EHCPs are not covered by this protocol. Their needs are considered separately through their plans and consultation process, in accordance with the 'Special Educational Needs Code of Practice'.

Schools must not delay in admitting children with special educational needs and children with disabilities or medical conditions. Where there is a prior need for particular support, or for reasonable adjustments, the school should involve the appropriate support services to ensure they are placed quickly.

Children in Care

For the purpose of in year transfer, children in care are not covered by this protocol. These children must be admitted through in-year processes supported by the Virtual School team, however schools should immediately seek advice and support from the CME officer and/or social care should there be a concern that a child in care has potentially become a CME.

Appendix 1 – CME Referral Form

Children Missing Education Referral Form

Please complete and return this form **by email** to educationinclusioncandc@northlincs.gov.uk with details of pupils who have unauthorised absence whose **whereabouts cannot be traced..**

This form should **not** be used for matters of persistent absence **(see guidance notes below).**

CHILD'S DETAILS					
SURNAME*					
FIRST NAME*					
GENDER*		**DOB***		**YEAR GROUP**	
ETHNICITY		**EAL**		**IF YES PLEASE INDICATE FIRST LANGUAGE**	
UPN*:					
CURRENT ADDRESS* (include post code)					
PARENT'S NAME/PHONE NO*					
CURRENT/PREVIOUS SCHOOL*					
DATE LAST ATTENDED:					
PUPIL STATUS* (Please tick/delete as appropriate)					

	YES	NO
Does the child have a history of non-attendance?		
Is there a pattern of unauthorised term time leave?		
Is this child subject to Private Fostering?		
Do you have any supporting documentation to support relocation out of North Lincolnshire? Please attach.		

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS	
NAME	
JOB TITLE	
TEAM NAME	
TEL NO	
EMAIL	
DATE	

ACTIONS TAKEN PRIOR TO REFERRAL				
OUTCOME OF HOME VISITS/PHONECALLS				
DATE	AM	PM	ADDRESS VISITED: (if different from above)	WHO DID YOU SPEAK TO? (State relationship to the pupil as well as forename and/or surname)

SAFEGUARDING RISK APPRAISAL (TO BE COMPLETED BY DSL)	
Risk Assessment* (are there any known concerns/safeguarding risks; is this child known to Children's Social Care/subject to a Child protection assessment/plan?)	-
Date any concerns referred to SAP:	-
Outcome of referral to SAP:	-

OUTLINE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES

Please return completed form to: educationinclusioncandc@northlincs.gov.uk

GUIDANCE NOTES

- This form **should be** used for reporting pupils of statutory school age who are absent from school for no longer than 5 consecutive days without authorisation and **whose whereabouts are unknown.**
- For general reference consult the Department for Education's statutory guidance on children missing education 2024.
- This form **should not** be used for reporting pupils who are absent from school without authorisation **who remain resident at their known address or have moved to another known address.**
- Pupils who leave school and transfer to another school, or who leave school to another district and parents confirm their new address, should be reported to the School Admissions Service.
- Under the Education, Pupil Registration Regulations, schools and academies have a duty to carry out 'reasonable enquiries' into the whereabouts of pupils who meet the criteria for referral via this form. The enquiries schools and academies are expected to undertake are outlined in the checklist with their outcomes recorded on this form**.**

CHECKLIST

In most circumstances, the school's enquiries will commence **from the first day of unauthorised absence.** Have you:

- ✓ Called the CME team for background checks on the family e.g. schools attended by siblings?
- ✓ Has the DSL ensured that any safeguarding concerns have been promptly referred to SPOC (Single Point of Contact) on 01724 296500
- ✓ Tasked appropriate staff to check with all members of staff who the child may have had contact with?
- ✓ Checked with the child's friends, siblings and known relatives at this school or other schools?
- ✓ Tasked appropriate school staff to conduct telephone calls to ALL numbers held on the child file?
- ✓ Tasked appropriate staff to conduct home visit(s) to the last known address of the child?
- ✓ If possible, enquired of neighbours as to the location of the family?
- ✓ Sent a letter to the last known address and recorded the outcome?

ALSO:

- ✓ **If there is good reason to believe that a crime may have been committed, have you made a prompt referral to the Police? E.g. this is a very sudden, unexpected situation and/or there are cultural reasons to suspect that the child is at risk or there have been past suspicions concerning the child and family which, together with the sudden disappearance, are worrying?**
- ✓ **If the child is subject to a child protection plan or investigation, has the social worker been informed of the child's absence?**
- ✓ **Similarly as above if the child is a child in care?**

In the three instances above, SPOC should be informed immediately.