

# **CME: Children Missing Education Policy**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to clarify Hampshire County Council's children missing education (CME) procedures and the joint responsibilities of all agencies, schools (including their governing bodies) and the local authority.

Children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation (Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024).

## **Scope**

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

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

Children missing education (CME) are being deprived of their right to an education and are unlikely to reach their full potential. As such, Hampshire Local Authority has established both policies and operating procedures to support the aim of every child to receive full-time, appropriate education.

## **Policy Statement**

Hampshire County Council acknowledges that education is a protective factor and the best way for us to ensure the welfare of children is to ensure that they are on a school roll or in receipt of suitable education otherwise than at school; and that when pupils are removed from roll, it is done so lawfully. Safeguarding procedures should be followed when necessary.

## **The meaning of 'Children Missing Education'**

The government defines CME as: Children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

## Partner agencies

It is the responsibility of all professionals working with families to notify Hampshire's CME team if they become aware of a child of compulsory school age who is not enrolled at a school and is not receiving education otherwise than at school. Information sharing is vital for early intervention.

An electronic referral form for schools is available which provides agencies with the ability to refer to us, without time restrictions, in a secure way. [Inclusion Support Service School Forms \(Mendix\)](#)

Any other profession or person can refer to us by sharing the details to [CME@hants.gov.uk](mailto:CME@hants.gov.uk)

Key external partners who may directly engage with children missing education include, but are not limited to:

- Schools and academies
- Health professionals
- Voluntary and Community Organisations
- Police
- Other Local Authorities

## Legislative framework

Local Authorities 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 pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise.

**The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024**  
**The Children Act 2004**

Define the grounds under which a child can be removed from a school's admissions register. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 can be found at: [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)

The Children Act 2004<sup>1</sup> places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information. To fulfil the requirements of the CME Policy, the authority has procedures in place to facilitate collaboration between stakeholders to ensure the early identification and intervention of children who are not receiving a suitable education. All stakeholders have a responsibility for CME. See operational guidance for further details.

**Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024**

Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024 highlights that improving school attendance is everyone's business, as it is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils.

## Children who are at risk of missing education

There is general agreement that certain groups of children may be at a higher risk of becoming CME.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 outlines in detail, expectations upon schools and states that appropriate safeguarding responses should be in place for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect.

## Tracking and monitoring

Guidance was introduced by the DfE in September 2016 to ensure Local Authorities and schools strengthen current procedures to prevent children becoming 'missing'.

Hampshire Local Authority has effective tracking and enquiry systems in place and an appointed named person (CME Officer) to whom schools, other agencies and the public can make referrals regarding children who they believe are missing education.

A referral should be sent to [CME@hants.gov.uk](mailto:CME@hants.gov.uk) or the online CME referral form for schools can be found here: [Inclusion Support Service School Forms \(Mendix\)](#)

The CME Officer will maintain the CME database for updating, reporting and review. In most cases a reasonable barrier to education can be overcome. This is identified by effective enquiries as part of consultation with families and working with schools/agencies to establish what, if any, reasonable grounds a child has to either not be in receipt of suitable education or fail to attend their named school.

If a parent is not engaged or is non-compliant in satisfying the Local Authority that their child is receiving suitable education or reasonable efforts are being made to return the child to education, the CME Officer will initiate a School Attendance Order (SAO) by referring the case to Legal Intervention Team (LIT). Schools should investigate children missing education from their first day of absence in accordance with the school attendance policy and local authority CME guidance materials. Referrals can be made by an online form to the CME Officer after 20 days (or 40 missed sessions). Schools should refer cases to the Local Authority (LA) by sending the completed referral to notify the LA that the child is at risk of becoming CME and is currently a Pupil Missing Out On Education (PMOOE.)

Schools, the Local Authority and other agencies, where necessary, need to act as soon as possible to make reasonable enquiries.

## Hampshire CME goals

As a Local Authority, Hampshire is committed to supporting the following goals:

- all children living in Hampshire 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 Hampshire are safeguarded and their welfare promoted.
- all pupils who may be missing from Hampshire schools, including independent schools, academies and free schools, are located.
- support is given to other Local Authorities to locate missing children who may have moved into Hampshire
- joint reasonable enquiries are made between schools and designated Local Authority staff to locate children who are missing from school as soon as possible.

## Contact details

**Children Missing Education Officer**  
Children's Services, Inclusion Support Service  
Elizabeth II Court North  
Winchester, SO23 8UG  
**Phone** 01962 845363  
**Email** [cme@hants.gov.uk](mailto:cme@hants.gov.uk)

Elective Home Education team	<a href="mailto:ehe@hants.gov.uk">ehe@hants.gov.uk</a>
Attendance	<a href="mailto:attendance.queries@hants.gov.uk">attendance.queries@hants.gov.uk</a>
Reduced Hours Provision	<a href="mailto:ReducedHoursData@hants.gov.uk">ReducedHoursData@hants.gov.uk</a>