Policy Information Sheet

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1. Statement of Intent

Hartlepool Free School recognises Children Missing from Education (CME) as a safeguarding issue. All children are entitled to a full-time education, regardless of their circumstances. Unfortunately, children missing from education (CME) risk underachieving, and not being in education, employment or training (NEET) in later life, and it can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including abuse and neglect.

The LA has a legal duty to identify when there are CME and help them back into education. This policy highlights what our school will do to help the LA with its duty.

For the purpose of this policy, a **"child missing from education"** is defined as a child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children may also be regarded as CME if the education they are receiving is not suitable, for example where it is not full-time or not matched to their needs.

This policy does not address pupils who are considered to be absent from education, which is where a registered pupil is not attending regularly, including where they are persistently or severely absent from school. Procedures for addressing instances where pupils are not attending regularly are instead set out in Hartlepool Free School's Attendance Policy.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended in 2018)
- The School Information (England) Regulations 2008 (as amended in 2018)
- The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended in 2014)
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- The Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015
- DfE 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- DfE 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023'
- DfE 'Children missing education'

- DfE ‘School Admissions Code’

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy.

3. Definition

Hartlepool Free School will recognise that CME includes children who:

- Are in the process of applying for a school place.
- Have been offered a school place for a future date but have not yet started.
- Are receiving elective home education (EHE) that has been assessed as unsuitable.
- Have been recorded as CME for an extended period, e.g. where their whereabout is unclear or unknown.

Hartlepool Free School will recognise that CME does not include children who:

- Are receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school, e.g. they are home educated or attending alternative provision, which is suitable for the child’s needs.
- Are receiving EHE but the LA has not had an opportunity to assess whether the education being provided is suitable.
- Are registered at a school, even if they are persistently or severely absent from school.

For the purpose of this policy:

- The term **“pupil”** will be used when referring to children who are **on the school roll**, including those who may be at risk of becoming CME through absence or transition.
- The term **“child”** will be used when referring to children who are **already missing education** – that is, children of compulsory school age who are not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school, in line with the above definitions.

4. Principles

Early identification, partnership working, safeguarding-led responses and timely information sharing.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The appropriate school staff will be responsible for:

- Entering pupils on the admissions register.
- Undertaking reasonable enquiries to establish absences in the event that a pupil fails to attend school on the agreed or notified date, and considering notifying the LA.

- Keeping an accurate and up-to-date admissions register by encouraging parents to inform them of any changes.
- Monitoring pupils' attendance through a daily register.
- Meet each week to discuss and keep a record of vulnerable students and actions taken.
- Agreeing with the LA what intervals are best to inform them of pupils who are regularly absent from school, or who have missed 10 days of education or more without permission.
- Removing pupils from the admission register where they have not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence or are absent from Hartlepool Free School without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, and Hartlepool Free School and the LA have failed to establish the pupil's whereabouts after making reasonable enquiries.
- Notifying the LA if any pupil is to be deleted from the admission register in the circumstance outlined in Regulation 9 of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Arranging full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed-period exclusion.
- Providing information to the LA regarding standard transitions, if requested to do so by the LA.
- Being proactive in locating pupils at risk of becoming a CME.
- Offering appropriate support to successfully integrate pupils into Hartlepool Free School.

The Trust Board will be responsible for:

- Where reasonably possible, ensuring Hartlepool Free School holds more than one emergency contact number for each pupil.

All staff will be responsible for:

- Being alert to the potential need to implement early help for a pupil who is frequently missing or goes missing from care or home.
- Being aware of Hartlepool Free School's procedures for managing unauthorised absence and children missing from education.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated to the DSL or deputy DSL.

The LA will be responsible for:

- Establishing the identities of children in the area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving education provision otherwise, in line with the LA's duty under the Education Act 1996.
- Providing full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a suspension.
- Serving notices on parents to assure the LA that their child is receiving a suitable education, when concerns regarding this are brought to the LA's attention.

- Issuing School Attendance Orders to parents who fail to assure the LA that their child is receiving a suitable education, and the LA believes that the child should attend school.
- Prosecuting parents that do not comply with a School Attendance Order.
- Prosecuting or fining parents of school-registered children who fail to ensure their children attend school regularly.
- Ensuring that children identified as not receiving suitable education are returned to full-time education either at Hartlepool Free School or elsewhere.
- Ensuring that Hartlepool Free School demonstrates prompt action and effective early intervention procedures to ensure children are safe and receiving suitable education.
- Applying to court for an Education Supervision Order for a CME.
- Ensuring that children who return to full-time education are appropriately supported, taking into account the reasons why they missed education in the first place.
- Arranging suitable provision for pupils with SEN statements or EHC plans where their parent chooses for them to be home educated and reviewing this annually.
- Liaising and sharing information with other agencies to support children who miss education.
- Sharing the fact that a pupil has a social worker with Hartlepool Free School.
- Referring to the LA's CSCS where there is concern for a child's welfare, as well as the police if there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed.

Parents/Carers will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that their children, if of compulsory school age, are receiving suitable full-time education.
- Notifying Hartlepool Free School in writing where they will be home-schooling their child, in order for the child to be removed from the admissions register.
- Where requested, meeting with Hartlepool Free School, LA, and other key professionals to consider whether home education would be in the best interests of their child, particularly where they have SEND, are vulnerable, or have a social worker – ideally, this would be done before a final decision has been made.
- Notifying Hartlepool Free School regarding any absences or changes to the pupil's education arrangements.
- Supplying information to Hartlepool Free School about how their child will continue to receive suitable education if proposing to withdraw their child from Hartlepool Free School.

6. Reasons for children missing education

Hartlepool Free School will be alert to the following circumstances, which may result in a child becoming CME, and will notify the LA in line with statutory requirements:

- Children who have moved into or out of the area, including those who have recently arrived in the country
- Children who are awaiting the outcome of a school application or who have not taken up the place offered

- Children who have been withdrawn from school by their parents for EHE, where the education provided is later assessed as unsuitable
- Children who have been permanently excluded and for whom suitable alternative provision has not yet been arranged
- Children who have been removed from a school roll without a confirmed new school place or without evidence of suitable education otherwise
- Children whose whereabouts are unclear or unknown, or who have been recorded as CME for an extended period

Hartlepool Free School will be clear that pupils who are on a school roll but are absent because of illness, persistent absence, or other reasons will not be CME if they are receiving suitable education arranged by Hartlepool Free School or the LA. These cases will be managed as persistent absence under the Attendance Policy and safeguarding procedures, with appropriate referrals made where necessary.

7. Pupils at particular risk of missing education

Hartlepool Free School will be alert to particular groups of pupils who may be more vulnerable to becoming a CME.

Hartlepool Free School will be especially alert to the following groups of pupils.

- **Pupils at risk of harm or neglect** – Hartlepool Free School will follow local child protection procedures where abuse, neglect or exploitation is suspected. If a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, Hartlepool Free School will make an immediate referral to children's social care and contact the police where appropriate.

- **Pupils of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families** – Hartlepool Free School will communicate effectively with families, liaise with the LA, and notify the LA when a pupil leaves without a known destination school, particularly at transition points.

- **Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and new migrant families** – Hartlepool Free School will work with the LA to ensure these children are placed on roll promptly and to share information where education has not yet been arranged.

- **Pupils who go missing from home or care** – Hartlepool Free School will follow safeguarding procedures, notify the LA of any concerns, and work with partners to reduce risks.

- **Pupils with SEND whose needs are not being adequately supported** – Hartlepool Free School will work closely with parents and the LA to review support, and will request an early review of an education, health and care plan where appropriate.

- **Pupils who are excluded from school** – Hartlepool Free School will notify the LA without delay of all suspensions and permanent exclusions, in line with statutory requirements, and will take steps to minimise disruption to the pupil's education.

- **Pupils supervised by the youth justice system** – Hartlepool Free School will liaise with youth offending teams and the LA to support continued access to suitable education.

- **Children of service personnel** – Hartlepool Free School will liaise with the LA and the Ministry of Defence advisory service to support continuity of education where families move at short notice.

- **Pupils attending unregistered independent schools** – If Hartlepool Free School becomes aware that a pupil is attending an unregistered setting, it will raise concerns with the LA and, where appropriate, with Ofsted.

- **Pupils who cease to Hartlepool Free School** – Hartlepool Free School will notify the LA where a child stops attending and their future arrangements are unknown, so that appropriate support can be arranged.

- **Pupils not receiving suitable full-time education** – Hartlepool Free School will notify the LA where it becomes aware of home education that may be unsuitable, and will cooperate with LA enquiries.

8. Induction and training

Hartlepool Free School will ensure that the safeguarding response to pupils who are at risk of, or children who go missing from, education is explained to all staff during their induction.

Hartlepool Free School will provide annual safeguarding and child protection training to all staff. This training will include:

- Updates on the different safeguarding concerns that children missing education may represent, including risks of harm, exploitation, neglect or radicalisation

- Information about any changes to the early help process

- Clarification of each staff member's role in identifying concerns, recording information, and referring to the designated safeguarding lead or directly to children's social care where appropriate

Hartlepool Free School will ensure that staff are confident in recognising early indicators of CME and understand how to respond in line with Hartlepool Free School's safeguarding procedures and statutory guidance.

9. Working with others

The statutory duty to identify CME rests with the LA; however, Hartlepool Free School will take a proactive and preventative approach before working jointly with the LA to locate a pupil at risk of becoming a CME. Where it is necessary to submit a CME referral to the LA, Hartlepool Free School will continue to play its role in conducting joint reasonable enquiries.

Hartlepool Free School will work collaboratively with the LA to return CME in the local area into education.

Hartlepool Free School recognises that when families move from one LA to another, there is a risk that children may be lost in the system and consequently miss education. The LA will work with other LAs, regionally and nationally, to reduce this risk. The LA will raise awareness of its procedures with local schools, partners and agencies working with children and families. Hartlepool Free School will ensure that staff are familiar with these procedures and when they need to be followed.

Hartlepool Free School will use the DfE's secure internet system, S2S, to transfer pupil information to another school when a pupil moves. This information will be transferred through a common transfer file (CTF).

Hartlepool Free School will uphold its duty to send a CTF to the new school when a pupil moves to another school within England or Wales. Hartlepool Free School will use S2S to upload CTFs of any pupils who have left but their next school is unknown, or the pupil has moved abroad.

If a new pupil arrives at Hartlepool Free School without a CTF transferred alongside them, Hartlepool Free School will contact the LA to locate the CTF through the S2S system.

If a pupil with a social worker is absent Hartlepool Free School for an unexplained reason or they are missing from education, Hartlepool Free School will inform the pupil's social worker.

10. Safeguarding

Hartlepool Free School will take immediate action where there is a concern that a pupil's safety or well-being is at risk. All staff will follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and will report concerns without delay to the DSL. The DSL will consider whether a referral to LA children's social care is required and, where appropriate, whether the police should be contacted, particularly if there is a concern that a pupil is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Hartlepool Free School recognises that CME can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. Where there are concerns that a pupil missing from education is linked to a safeguarding issue, action will be taken in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Hartlepool Free School will play an active part in its involvement to identify and support CME and ensure that this approach is child-centred.

In line with the Children Act 2004, Hartlepool Free School will follow appropriate procedures when carrying out reasonable enquiries, such as the DSL conducting discussions with neighbours, relatives or landlords, to determine whether a child may be at risk of harm.

For the purpose of this policy, **"reasonable enquiries"** are defined proportionate checks undertaken to establish a pupil's whereabouts and safety. Hartlepool Free School will carry our such enquiries within its remit and support the LA in its wider enquiries where necessary.

The DSL will record the actions taken and, if necessary, make a referral to CSCS or the police.

Where the whereabouts and safety of a child is unknown, Hartlepool Free School will promptly notify the LA and cooperate with its reasonable enquiries. This may include:

- Contacting parents using known contact details.
- Sharing information from Hartlepool Free School's records with the LA.
- Cooperating with the LA if it conducts checks with other agencies or undertakes home visits.

Please note: This list is not exhaustive – Hartlepool Free School and LA will use their judgement towards what reasonable enquiries are appropriate, once all the facts of the case have been taken into account.

11. Information sharing

Hartlepool Free School will share information with the LA in line with statutory requirements and local CME procedures. This includes:

- Providing statutory returns to the LA when a pupil is added to or removed from the admission register, or where attendance raises concerns.
- Sharing relevant pupil information promptly where a child leaves Hartlepool Free School without a confirmed destination, or where there are concerns about CME.
- Cooperating with the LA and other partners in making reasonable enquiries to establish a child's whereabouts.
- Informing a pupil's social worker without delay where a pupil with a social worker is absent or missing from education.

Hartlepool Free School will ensure that all information sharing complies with data protection legislation and statutory guidance and prioritises safeguarding.

12. Attendance and admissions register

Hartlepool Free School will ensure that the admissions register is kept up to date at all times, and will encourage parents, via communications such as emails and newsletters, to notify Hartlepool Free School of any changes to their child's personal details and education arrangements whenever they occur.

The attendance register will be closely monitored on a daily basis to ensure that proactive steps are taken to address poor or irregular attendance to prevent children become CME. Hartlepool Free School will cooperate with the LA to accommodate any requests to access the attendance and admissions registers to carry out statutory functions.

Appropriate support will be provided to successfully integrate pupils into Hartlepool Free School, including the incorporation of efficient decision-making processes for admissions in place to prevent delays.

Poor attendance identified in the attendance register will be referred to the LA by an attendance return. Where a pupil resides in a different LA area from Hartlepool Free School, the school will notify and work with the pupil's home area LA to enable effective joint working between all involved parties.

Pupils will be recorded on the admissions register at the beginning of the first day on which it has been agreed by Hartlepool Free School, or the day that Hartlepool Free School has been notified, as the date that the pupil will attend Hartlepool Free School. Once a pupil has been recorded on the admissions register, Hartlepool Free School will notify the LA within five days, and will supply the LA with all of the details contained on the admissions register for the new pupil.

Where a parent notifies Hartlepool Free School that their child will normally live at another address, whether in addition to or instead of their current address, Hartlepool Free School will record the following information on the admissions register:

- The full name of the parent with whom the pupil will normally live with
- The address
- The date from when it is expected the pupil will start normally living at this address

Where a parent notifies Hartlepool Free School that the pupil is registered at another school, or will be attending a different school in future, Hartlepool Free School will record the following information on the admissions register:

- The name of the new school
- The date when the pupil first attended, or is due to attend, that school

Parents are able to elect to educate their children at home and will subsequently withdraw them from school. This can happen at any time unless the pupil is subject to a School

Attendance Order. If a parent notifies Hartlepool Free School that their child will be educated at home, the pupil will be deleted from Hartlepool Free School's admission register and Hartlepool Free School will inform the LA.

13. Removing a pupil from the admissions register

Hartlepool Free School will ensure that guidance on removing or adding pupils' names from or to the admissions register is closely followed. In some specific cases, this will involve joint actions to be undertaken between Hartlepool Free School and LA before decisions can be made.

Hartlepool Free School will inform the LA of any pupil who will be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of Hartlepool Free School by their parent and are being educated outside the school system, e.g. home-schooled.
- No longer normally live a reasonable distance from Hartlepool Free School and are not expected to attend again.
- Are detained under a sentence of detention, and Hartlepool Free School does not reasonably believe they will return after the detention ends.
- Have been permanently excluded.
- Have died.
- Have been registered at another school, unless a school attendance order is in force or this school is agreed as the pupil's main school.
- Are registered at more than one school but have failed to attend Hartlepool Free School and the proprietor of any other schools concerned have consented to the deletion.
- Have been granted authorised leave but have failed to attend Hartlepool Free School within 10 school days of the leave ending, and Hartlepool Free School and the LA have jointly made reasonable enquiries which either:
    - Have not located the pupil, or
    - Have located the pupil and agreed there are no reasonable grounds to believe they will return.
- Have been continuously absent from Hartlepool Free School for at least twenty school days without authorisation, and Hartlepool Free School and the LA have jointly made reasonable enquiries which either:
    - Have not located the pupil, or

    - Have located the pupil and agreed there are no reasonable grounds to believe they will return.

- Have been the subject of a school attendance order that has been amended by the LA to name another school.
- Have been the subject of a school attendance order that has been revoked by the LA because arrangements have been made for suitable education otherwise than at school.
- Will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next resumes (e.g. following the summer break), and the relevant person has indicated the pupil will not attend Hartlepool Free School, or the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements for sixth form.
- Hartlepool Free School will notify the LA that a pupil is to be removed from the admissions register as soon as any of the above criteria are met, and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is actually removed.

When making a deletion return to the LA, Hartlepool Free School will provide the following information from the admission register:

- The full name of the pupil
- Their current address
- The full name and address of any parent the pupil normally lives with
- At least one telephone number by which any parent the pupil normally lives with can be contacted in an emergency
- If applicable, the pupil's future address, the full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil will start living there
- If applicable, the name of the pupil's new school and when the pupil began or will begin to attend
- The reason set out in regulation 9 – of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 – under which the pupil's name has been deleted.

Where the name of a pupil with a social worker is to be removed from the admissions register, Hartlepool Free School will inform the pupil's social worker.

Where a pupil has not returned from a leave of absence within 10 school days, or has been continually absent for 20 school days, joint reasonable enquiries between Hartlepool Free School and the LA will be carried out before the pupil's name is deleted. When a pupil is located and their circumstances are established, Hartlepool Free School and the

LA will agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend again before removing their name from the admissions register.

To support an effective CME process, Hartlepool Free School will maintain its duty to make a return to the LA in line with regulation 13 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 whenever a pupil's name is added to or removed from the admissions register outside of standard transition times. Hartlepool Free School will recognise that the LA may extend this to include standard transition times.

To prevent the risk of CME, Hartlepool Free School will ensure that the correct removal of names from the register supports lawful exclusions, effective monitoring of pupil movements and reduces the risk of off-rolling.

14. Adding names to the admission register

Hartlepool Free School will enter a pupil's name on the admission register on the first day that the school and a person with control of the pupil's attendance have agreed that the pupil will attend. Where Hartlepool Free School has a duty to admit the pupil, the name will be entered on the register on the first day a person with control of the pupil's attendance has notified the school that the pupil will attend. If no date has been agreed or notified, the name will be entered on the first day the pupil attends Hartlepool Free School. All names will be entered from the beginning of the first session.

If a pupil does not attend on the agreed date, Hartlepool Free School will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and will work with the LA where necessary.

Hartlepool Free School will also make a return to the LA within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. This will include all information about the pupil that is held within the admission register. Where the LA has requested it, Hartlepool Free School will also provide this information at standard transition points.