

Children Missing Education Policy

Revised August 2025

**Children & Adults' Directorate
Education and SEND
Gun Wharf
Dock Road
Chatham
ME4 4TR**



1. Introduction

- 1.1. Under [Section 436 A of the Education Act 1996](#), as amended by the Education Inspections Act 2006, are required to make arrangements, as far as possible, to identify children of compulsory school age who are residing in their area and are not receiving a suitable education. This duty is underpinned by the Department for Education's statutory guidance, [Children Missing Education – Guidance for Local Authorities \(August 2024\)](#)
- 1.2. Suitable education is defined as full time education suitable to age, ability, and aptitude and to any special education needs, the child may have. The duty applies to children of compulsory school age who are not on school roll and are not receiving a suitable education at home, privately or in alternative provision.
- 1.3. The purpose of the Child Missing Education (CME) Policy 2025 is to establish a set of principles which all agencies can subscribe to and to ensure that Medway Local Authority:
 - 1.3.1. Fulfills its statutory duty to provide an education for all children of compulsory school age.
 - 1.3.2. Locates, assesses monitors and tracks children and young people missing education to support their educational progress and wellbeing.
 - 1.3.3. Identifies those missing from education and those at risk of becoming so.
 - 1.3.4. Produces, monitors and evaluates CME data for Elected Members and Senior Officers in Children and Adult Directorate.
 - 1.3.5. Operates within a strategic, multi-agency framework where all partners share information to support the identification and re-engagement of children missing education.
- 1.4. Medway Local Authority is committed to ensuring that every child has access to suitable education provision.

2. Who is a child missing from education (CME)?

- 2.1. There is an obligation on parents to ensure that children in their care receive an education. [Section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#) details this obligation:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- 2.1.1. *to his age, ability, and aptitude, and*
- 2.1.2. *to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”*

- 2.2. Most children receive education through schools in the public and private sector, some children are electively home educated, and others are in alternative provision, such as pupil referral units (PRU). There are processes in place to monitor the quality of education and attendance of pupils in these education establishments and children within these education frameworks are not considered CME.
- 2.3. For the purposes of this policy, Children Missing Education (CME) refers to children of compulsory school age who are not registered at any formally recognised education provider, and whose parents have not made suitable arrangements for elective home education in accordance with Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. Children identified

as CME are considered particularly vulnerable, as they may fall outside the scope of routine monitoring and safeguarding systems.

- 2.4. Statutory guidance clearly states that where any professional identifies a child who is not in education then the children missing education protocol should be followed. [DfE Working Together to safeguard children](#) is clear that: “Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child’s needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action.”

3. Children at risk of becoming CME

- 3.1. At different points in a child’s life, they may become more vulnerable to becoming CME, there are some recognised factors that increase this risk and attention must be paid to these. The list of vulnerable groups is neither exclusive nor exhaustive, but it offers a checklist for partners:

- 3.1.1. Children not registered by parents/carers at a school when they reach statutory school age (no later than the term after their fifth birthday).
- 3.1.2. Children not registered by parents/carers at transition points e.g. Year 2 – Year 3 and Year 6 – Year 7
- 3.1.3. Children transferring between local authorities
- 3.1.4. Children moving out of the country
- 3.1.5. Frequent house moves; periods of homelessness or time spent in refuges.
- 3.1.6. Family breakdown.
- 3.1.7. Parents/carers attempting to “withdraw” children from school.
- 3.1.8. Schools off-rolling pupils without the correct checks and procedures being followed. [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#).
- 3.1.9. Suspensions, (Exclusion - official and unofficial).
- 3.1.10. Children being home educated however not officially registered as Electively Home Educated.

- 3.2. Certain groups of children are more likely to be affected by the factors listed above and include:

- 3.2.1. Children in Care (CiC).
- 3.2.2. Children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP).
- 3.2.3. MISPERs (Missing Person).
- 3.2.4. Refugee and asylum seekers.
- 3.2.5. Gypsy, Roma and Travelling families.
- 3.2.6. Unaccompanied minors.
- 3.2.7. Children who have experienced domestic violence or other adverse family circumstances such as parental mental health, substance, and alcohol misuses (Toxic Trio).
- 3.2.8. Children with special educational needs (SEN).
- 3.2.9. Migrant families.
- 3.2.10. Young Carers.
- 3.2.11. Children who have had attendance difficulties at school.

- 3.3. Missing education is also linked to other problems including increased risk of:

- 3.3.1. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- 3.3.2. Becoming a child Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- 3.3.3. Criminal and anti-social behaviour.
- 3.3.4. Illegal employment.
- 3.3.5. Becoming teenage parents.

- 3.3.6. Mental Health.
- 3.3.7. Forced Marriage.

3.4. To successfully safeguard the children who may fall into one of these groups a multi-agency approach is essential. Information sharing protocols are used to enable swift notification of children at risk of becoming CME and clear robust procedures in place to affect immediate remedial action.

4. The duty of the Local Authority (LA)

4.1. CME Tracking and Re-engagement Procedures

Medway Local Authority has established robust policies and procedures to effectively log, track, and locate children identified as missing education. These systems are designed to ensure that children are identified promptly and supported to re-engage with suitable education provision in a timely and appropriate manner.

4.2. Multi-Agency Collaboration

The active contribution of partner agencies is essential to the effective identification, monitoring, and re-engagement of children missing education. Collaborative working ensures that children and families are supported holistically, and that timely interventions can be made to secure access to suitable education provision.

4.3. Role of Schools

Schools play a vital role in protecting children from continued CME status by offering places on roll and promoting good attendance. They also serve as the first point of alert when a pupil is not attending, enabling timely investigation and swift action to re-establish educational provision.

4.4. Responsibilities of Frontline Agencies

In paragraph 17.97 of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report, Lord Laming recommended that:

“Front line staff in each of the agencies which regularly come into contact with families with children must ensure that in each new contact, basic information about the child is recorded. This must include the child’s name, address, age, the name of the child’s primary carer, the child’s GP, and the name of the child’s school if the child is of school age. Gaps in this information should be passed on to the relevant authority in accordance with local arrangements.”

Medway Local Authority continues to raise awareness among partner agencies regarding the procedures for notifying the local authority when a child is suspected to be missing education. It is often the case that another agency becomes aware of a child’s presence in the area before the local authority is formally notified.

4.5. Role of Health Professionals

Health professionals—including Accident and Emergency staff, Health Visitors, General Practitioners, School Nurses, Child Protection Designated Nurses, Paediatricians, Midwives, and practitioners from Medway Young Person’s Wellbeing Services (CAMHS/NELFT)—are vital sources of information. Their contact with families may reveal children who are not receiving education, and their notifications are essential to the CME identification process.

4.6. Role of Other Services

The Police, Medway Youth Service, and other school support services are expected to notify the CME Officer when there is concern that a child is out of school and there is no evidence of enrolment at any educational setting.

4.7. Community-Based Identification

Community stakeholders such as letting and estate agents may also play a role in identifying children missing education. Where appropriate, they may provide information to the CME Officer to support families in securing school placements and accessing educational provision.

4.8. Role of Social Care and Early Help Services

Social Workers, Family Solutions/Early Help practitioners, and Youth Workers may identify children who are at risk of becoming CME and are encouraged to share relevant information with the CME Officer to support enquiries and investigations. Where cases are identified and additional support is required, the CME Officer will liaise directly with Social Care, Family Solutions/Early Help and Medway Virtual School to coordinate appropriate intervention.

4.9. Role of School Admissions and Transport Team

The School Admissions and Transport Team works in close partnership with the CME Officer to prevent children from becoming CME during key educational transition points, including:

- Children who have been allocated a Year R place but have not been placed on roll once they reach statutory school age.
- Transfers from infant to junior school.
- Transfers to secondary school.

Clear and established processes ensure effective joint working between teams. Referrals are also made to the CME Officer where a school has refused a place and the parent/carer has not confirmed alternative educational provision.

4.10. CME/EHE Lead Responsibilities

CME/EHE Lead is responsible for the local authority statutory DfE Elective Home Education (EHE) and Children Missing Education (CME) data collection.

4.11. Coordination Between CME and EHE Functions

Established working arrangements are in place between CME and EHE, to ensure that children at risk of CME are appropriately monitored and referred. For further detail, please refer to [Medway Local Authority's Elective Home Education \(EHE\)](#).

4.12. Annual Information Sharing

Up-to-date referral procedures and CME guidance are shared annually with all relevant agencies, including Health Services, Police, Virtual School, Social Care, Family Solutions/Early Help, Independent Schools, and Estate Agents. This ensures continued awareness and supports the timely identification and referral of children who may be missing education.

5. Role of the Children Missing Education team

5.1. Medway Local Authority has a designated Children Missing Education (CME) Officer, with strategic oversight provided by the Attendance Manager, who acts as the CME Lead.

5.2. The CME Officer is responsible for monitoring and tracking CME data, ensuring that all identified children within Medway are supported to access suitable education provision. The Officer provides advice and guidance to parents/carers regarding school applications and liaises with relevant partners and other local authorities to facilitate appropriate placements.

- 5.3. A secure database is maintained to record information on children who have moved into the area without confirmed education provision. This system tracks the progress of each case until the child is placed in suitable education, ensuring that no case is closed prematurely.
- 5.4. The database also includes details of children who have been removed from a school's admissions register following all reasonable enquiries to establish their whereabouts. These enquiries may include home visits, checks with housing providers, and searches of address register databases. Schools are advised to upload the pupil's records via a Common Transfer File (CTF) to the statutory "Lost Pupils/No Trace" database.
- 5.5. The Attendance Manager provides quarterly reports detailing the number of CME cases entering and leaving Medway. These figures are submitted as part of the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) dataset.
- 5.6. The Attendance manager is responsible for CME and duties include:
 - 5.6.1. Oversee the implementation of procedures to safeguard children missing education.
 - 5.6.2. Supervise the CME Officer and Attendance Officers (AO) to ensure that casework is of a high-quality standard and conforms to the statutory duty.
 - 5.6.3. Provide guidance to schools regarding their responsibilities in relation to CME.
 - 5.6.4. Strengthen partnerships with external agencies to support timely identification and referral of CME cases.
 - 5.6.5. Oversee legal processes where necessary, including the initiation of School Attendance Orders (SAOs).
 - 5.6.6. Ensure CME procedures are regularly reviewed and updated in line with changes to government legislation and guidance.
 - 5.6.7. Submit quarterly and annual CME reports to the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP).

6. Medway School Admissions and Transport Team

- 6.1. All families have the right to apply for a mainstream school place at any time during their child's education (up to and including Year 11); through either the main co-ordinated admissions processes (for Year R in primary/infant school, Year 3 in junior schools and Year 7 in secondary schools) or the in-year (casual) admission processes for all other year groups and after the end of the co-ordinated admissions processes. Admissions Transition Protocols are reviewed and shared annually for all schools to ensure collaborative work with the CME team to ensure children have education provision.
- 6.2. For the main co-ordinated admissions processes, parents/carers must apply for their preferred school(s) through the Local Authority where they live (e.g. if they are a Medway resident). For Medway Residents, applications must be sent to the School Admissions and Transport Team at Medway Local Authority or made online.
- 6.3. The application will be processed in accordance with the co-ordinated admissions schemes and a decision made on whether a place can be offered. A parent/carer will have the right of appeal to any school they applied for that did not offer their child a place.
- 6.4. Full details on the main admissions processes are available on the Medway Local Authority website www.medway.gov.uk/admissions.

- 6.5. For the in-year (casual) admissions processes, parents/carers must complete an application for each individual school they wish to apply for and return the application direct to the school.
- 6.6. The application will be processed and if available, and the child meets the entry criteria (for selective schools), a school place will be offered. If a place cannot be offered, the family will be advised of their right to appeal.
- 6.7. School has a duty to provide Medway Local Authority with the details of every application and its outcome. In cases where a place has not been offered, the School Admissions and Transport Team will contact the parents/carers to ascertain what education provision they are making for their child. Parents/carers can request Medway Local Authority to allocate a place at the nearest school with a vacancy.
- 6.8. Once a school place is offered parents/carers have 20 school days to accept or refuse the place directly with the school. If following this time, the place has not been accepted, it can be withdrawn, and the family will be referred to the CME Officer.
- 6.9. In some cases, where the information provided determines that the child falls under the Medway agreed Fair Access Protocols (FAP), the child will be discussed at the Fair Access Panel, an appropriate placement secured, and a school offer made. Once this offer has been made, the same process ensues regarding accepting or refusing places within 20 school days. Where a child is known to Children's Social Care (CSC), representation at the Fair Access Panel (FAP) will be made with the support and involvement of the allocated Social Worker and the Medway Virtual School. This ensures that the child's educational needs, safeguarding considerations, and care plan are fully reflected in any placement decisions.

7. Education Otherwise (Elective Home Education - EHE)

- 7.1. The Education Act 1996 states that while education is compulsory, school is not, and parents/carers can choose to 'educate otherwise'. Parents or carers can elect to educate their child/children at home, and some choose to do so. There are many varied reasons for choosing 'education otherwise' and parents/carers should be aware of their responsibilities if they decide to home educate. These children are not defined as children missing education as even though they are not on roll at a school they are being educated.
- 7.2. The Local Authority has a role to play in ensuring that elective home education safeguards children and ensures that they receive a suitable education according to age, ability, and aptitude and to any special educational needs. Any safeguarding concerns should follow safeguarding protocols and professionals should make referrals to appropriate agencies, as necessary.
- 7.3. Medway Local Authority monitors elective home education through a dedicated post. The CME/EHE lead officer and Attendance manager oversees notification of children who are Electively Home Educated, or parents who are considering removing their child from school to Electively Home Educate. There is a clear process in place to track the recording of elective home education and it is undertaken jointly through multi-disciplinary co-operation:
 - 7.3.1. Parents inform the school in writing that they intend to remove their child from school roll to electively home educate.
 - 7.3.2. Notification is made to the EHE team, by school to inform them of the parent/carer's intention to EHE via a designated email address homeeducation@medway.gov.uk.

- 7.3.3. Information of cases known to Attendance Officers where a decision has been made to electively home educate will be shared with the EHE team immediately.
- 7.3.4. If appropriate, contact is made with parents to ensure that parent/carers understand their legal responsibilities if they intend to electively home educate.
- 7.3.5. Contact is made by the EHE team to meet and offer advice, guidance and monitor on the education provided.
- 7.3.6. If there are concerns, regarding the education provided and it is deemed inadequate parents/carers will be advised on roll their child/children at a school. If this does not happen this may result in pursuit of a School Attendance Order (under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996).
- 7.3.7. If the EHE team is unable to engage with the family or if it appears the family are no longer living at the address, the child/children will be recorded as a CME and further investigations made.
- 7.3.8. For further guidance please see [EHE policy](#).

8. Excluded pupils (PEX)

- 8.1. The local authority must arrange suitable education for a pupil who has been excluded from the 6th day of their exclusion.
- 8.2. If children do not attend the provision arranged for them, following their exclusion, the Exclusions and Alternative Provision Officer will liaise with the provision and parent/carer. The provision and the officers within Education and SEND will provide CME team with all appropriate correspondence to enable Medway Local Authority to issue a school attendance order (SAO)

9. Notification routes and action to the local authority (LA)

- 9.1. Referrals to the Children Missing Education (CME) team are welcomed from all sources—partner agencies, schools, the Virtual School, estate agents, members of the public, and other interested parties. Notifications may be submitted via the electronic CME referral form, by telephone, or through face-to-face contact, depending on the referrer’s circumstances. All referrals are treated with urgency and care, contributing to the timely identification and support of children missing education.
- 9.2. All schools to complete the CME 2025-2026 referral form and email to their allocated attendance officer (AO).
- 9.3. The following information about the child is helpful to the CME Officer for the purpose of investigation:
 - Name
 - Date of birth
 - Address, current and/or last known
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - English as an Additional Language (EAL)
 - Parents/carers names, including details of parental responsibility
 - Siblings’ names
 - Last known school, dates on and off rolled
 - Entitlement to Free School Meals (FSM)
 - SEN or EHCP
 - Any previous relevant history, e.g. any time spent as elective home educated.

- Whether the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Child in Need Plan (CIN), Child in Care (CiC).
- Other safeguarding concerns such as early help, family solutions, domestic violence

9.4. Upon receipt of a referral, the information is promptly recorded onto the CME database. This action initiates immediate follow-up procedures to assess the case and determine the appropriate course of action to support the child's return to suitable education.

10. Child known to be in Medway area without school place

10.1. The CME team will contact the parent/carer to establish the reason the child is currently missing education. This includes determining whether the parent/carer is actively seeking a school place or is unaware of the appropriate procedures. Where necessary, advice and support will be provided to facilitate access to suitable education provision.

10.2. Enquiries will be made with relevant partner agencies, including Children's Social Care, Medway Virtual School and others, to determine whether there are any additional risks or safeguarding concerns relating to the child.

10.3. The CME team will monitor the progress of securing a school place and liaise with the School Admissions Team and individual schools to support timely enrolment. Where appropriate, cases may be referred for discussion at the Fair Access Panel.

10.4. Once the child is successfully placed on roll at a suitable school, the case will be closed by the CME team.

10.5. In instances where there is a delay in securing a school place or a school place has been refused and the child remains without suitable education; Medway Local Authority will consider legal action. This may include initiating a School Attendance Order (SAO) to compel registration at an appropriate educational setting.

11. Child leaving/left Medway school with no forwarding school

11.1. Referrals are received directly to CME team from partner agencies with as much information about the child as is known, refer to 9.4

11.2. All schools must consult with their allocated Attendance Officer within 5 days of a pupil's absence. In accordance with safeguarding requirements, schools are expected to complete a home visit to establish the pupil's whereabouts prior to submitting the CME Referral Form 2025-2026. Once completed, the referral form should be submitted via email to the designated Attendance Officer within 10 working days.

11.3. Enquiries made to partners, including Children's Social Care and other agencies to establish any additional risks to young person.

11.4. If the child referred is subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Child in Need Plan (CIN) the social worker, working with the child will be alerted immediately.

11.5. AO to check that the school have uploaded information to the Common Transfer File (CTF) onto the lost pupil database, [school2school website](#).

- 11.6. If any enquiries return information that indicates safeguarding concerns, then a [referral will be made to social care](#).
- 11.7. When information suggests that a child has relocated to another local authority or moved abroad, Medway CME will contact the relevant authority to transfer all necessary information. Once confirmation is received that the child is now resident in the new area, Medway CME ceases responsibility for their education. The case remains open and is actively followed up until confirmation is received that the child has enrolled in a new school or suitable educational provision. Only then will the case be formally closed.

School-2-School (S2S) database

- 11.8. If a child cannot be located following extensive enquiries and checks, the school must first conduct a home visit to verify that the pupil no longer resides at the last known address. If residency is not confirmed and the child remains missing, the school administrator must upload the child's Common Transfer File (CTF) to the S2S database, entering XXXXXXX in the destination field to indicate a pupil with no known destination. This ensures that any new school can make contact if the child re-enrols. Additionally, a letter must be sent to the last known address informing the parent/carer that the pupil is being removed from the school roll and has been added to Medway Local Authority's Children Missing Education (CME) register.
- 11.9. The case will remain on the CME database until the child is located or is no longer statutory school age.
- 11.10. The CME team will inform the Community Safety Unit, Kent Police, of pupils who cannot be traced.

12. Young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET)

- 12.1. The information advice and guidance team (IAG) iag@medway.gov.uk works with young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- 12.2. Children who are between 16 and 18 and have left compulsory education, do not officially fall under this policy. However, CME team will provide the IAG team with a list of Year 11 pupils known to them who may be at risk of becoming NEET.

13. Deletion procedures

- 13.1. Deletions from the admission register must comply with the provisions set out in:
- The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (SI 1995/2089),
 - As amended by the Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 1997 (SI 1997/2624),
 - And the Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2001 (SI 2001/2802).

A pupil of compulsory school age may only be removed from the admission register for reasons explicitly stated within these regulations. For detailed guidance, refer to Regulation 8, which outlines the lawful grounds for removal from roll. The latest version of the regulations can be accessed via legislation.gov.uk.

- 13.2. **All schools (including independent schools) must notify the local authority within five days when they are about to remove or add a pupil's name from the school admission register through an on/off roll notification to onoffroll@medway.gov.uk .** This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admissions register at standard transition points. These include instances where the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by the school or is due to commence the first year of education at another school on the standard start date. In such cases, removal from the register is considered routine and does not trigger the same reporting requirements. .
- 13.3. When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority (LA) must include:
- The full name of the pupil,
 - The full name and address of any parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides,
 - At least one telephone number of the parent,
 - The pupil's future address
 - The pupil's destination school, if applicable,
 - The grounds in regulation 8, under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register.
- 13.4. **Schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child; if unsuccessful, discussion with CME team/Attendance Officer must take place by 5th day of continuous absence and a CME referral must be completed within 10 days. After 20 school days of non-attendance, schools may remove pupil's name from the register. Pupils must not be removed from the school register if a CME referral has not been accepted by the LA.**
- 13.5. When adding a pupil's name, notification to the local authority must include all the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil.

14. Conclusion

- 14.1. The role of the CME team is central to ensuring that children in Medway who are at risk of missing education are swiftly identified and supported back into appropriate educational provision. By establishing clear guidance, robust policies, and consistent procedures across Medway, professionals and members of the public are empowered to safeguard and support some of the most vulnerable children in our community.

15. Complaints procedure

- 15.1. Resolution regarding complaints about children missing education officer should be made to the Children Missing Education Lead Officer in the first instance by telephone or writing to:

CME/EHE Lead Officer
Medway Local Authority
Gun Wharf
Chatham
ME4 4TR

01634 337308
e-mail: cme@medway.gov.uk

15.2. If the complaint relates to the actions of the officers, or the policy, contact should be made with the manager with responsibility for Children Missing Education, by writing to:

Attendance Manager
Medway Local Authority
Gun Wharf
Chatham
ME4 4TR

Tel: 01634 337310
e-mail: aassa@medway.gov.uk

16. Abbreviations

AO	Attendance Officer
AASSA	Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies
CIN	Child in Need Plan
ciC	Children In Care
CME	Child(ren) Missing from Education
CP	Child Protection
CSC	Children's Social Care
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CTF	Common Transfer File
DFE	Department for Education
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan
EHE	Elective Home Education
FAP	Fair Access Panel
IAG	Information Advice and Guidance team
LA	Local Authority
MISPERS	Missing Persons
MVS	Medway Virtual School
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
S2S	Schools to Schools database
SEN	Special Education Needs
SAO	School Attendance Order
TES	Traveller Education Service
YOT	Youth Offending Team

