

Oxfordshire County Council

**Children Missing Education
Policy**

2013-2016



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Although the main focus of this document is the policy on Children Missing Education (CME) in Oxfordshire, the work should be seen in the context of the wider responsibility of the Local Authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children living within the county boundaries. Agencies all have responsibility to ensure children are not missed. The lead responsibility for children missing education lies with Oxfordshire County Council.

1.2 At Oxfordshire County Council the designated officer with responsibility for Children Missing Education is: Sue Bainbridge, Schools and Learning Manager.

1.3 **Day-to-day responsibility for administration of the Children Missing Education procedure lies with the Pupil Tracking Officer. If you know of any child who is not receiving an education, or you know of a child who has gone missing from school, or you want to discuss any concerns about such a situation, please contact:**

**Alan Blackmore
Pupil Tracking Officer
Social Inclusion Team
Third Floor, County Hall
New Road
Oxford OX1 1ND**

Telephone: 01865 810515

Email: missing.pupils@oxfordshire.gov.uk

1.4 However, if:

- You have a serious concern about the safety of a child.
- You think a child is being harmed or at risk of being harmed.
- You are worried that a child is living in circumstances where they are treated badly and not cared for properly.

You **MUST** contact Children's Social Care on:

Access to Information and Services Team (in office hours): **0845 050 7666**

Emergency Duty Team (outside office hours): **0800 833 408**

Banbury Assessment Team: **01865 816670**

Oxford Assessment Team: **01865 323048**

Abingdon Assessment Team: **01865 897983**

1.5 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities in England and Wales to make arrangements to identify children and young

people of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area. Section 157 of Working Together 2013 places a duty on local authorities in relation to their education functions, the governing bodies of maintained schools and governing bodies of further education institutions (which include sixth form colleges) to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are either pupils at a school or who are students under 18 years of age attending further education institutions. The same duty applies to independent schools (which includes academies/free schools) by the regulations made under Section 157 of this Act.

- 1.6 The Department for Children Schools and Families (now Department for Education) document "Working Together to Safeguard Children" published in March 2010 says: *"There is a Children Missing Education (CME) named point of contact in every Local Authority. Every practitioner working with a child has a responsibility to inform their CME contact if they know or suspect that a child is not receiving education. To help local agencies and professionals find children who are missing from education and identify those at risk of going missing from education, guidance was issued in July 2004"*.

2 CONTEXT

2.1 This policy is intended to inform Local Authority staff, schools, headteachers, governing bodies and other agencies about how we minimise and prevent “Children Missing Education”. It relates primarily to children who are of statutory school age who do not currently have a school place or whose provision is unknown. It should be read in conjunction with:

- The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006
- Statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving education (DfES 2009)
- Oxfordshire County Council attendance, behaviour and safeguarding policies
- Oxfordshire County Council’s In Year Fair Access Protocol

2.2 The DfES document “Identifying and Maintaining Contact with Children Missing or at Risk of Going Missing from Education” defines Children Missing Education as:

“all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in an alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually four weeks or more).”

This definition is adopted in this Children Missing Education Policy.

2.3 Oxfordshire County Council acknowledges that it is a key responsibility of the Local Authority and its schools to promote the educational achievement of all children resident within the county or attending its schools. The best way to promote these outcomes for children is to ensure that, as far as possible, children of compulsory school age are either enrolled with a school or registered as being “Electively Home Educated”.

2.4 The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information appropriately. This principle underpins Oxfordshire’s policy on Children Missing Education, and there is an expectation that all agencies and professionals will work together to ensure that children are safe, healthy and participating in education.

2.5 There are certain points at which children are most at risk of becoming missing from education, and the most common reasons include:

- Children not registered by parents/carers at school when they reach statutory school age.
- Children not registered at school for the start of secondary school (Year 7).
- Frequent house moves, periods of homelessness or time spent in refuges.
- Family breakdown.

- Parents “withdrawing” children from school.
- Schools taking pupils off roll without the correct checks and procedures being followed.
- Exclusion.
- Children being “home educated”, but not officially registered as such.

2.6 Certain groups of children are more likely to be affected by the factors listed above, including:

- Children in public care (Looked After Children).
- Children who have been the subject of a Child Protection Plan.
- Refugees and asylum seekers.
- Gypsy, Roma and Travelling families.
- Children who have experienced domestic violence or other adverse family circumstances.
- Children with special educational needs.
- Migrant families.
- Children who have had attendance difficulties.
- Children who are subject to sexual exploitation.

2.7 The cost to children missing out on education can be very high – to themselves, their families, and society as a whole. Children who do not engage in education are unlikely to gain any formal qualifications, and a fragmented educational history can result in low levels of functional literacy and numeracy in adult life.

2.8 Missing out on learning is also linked to other problems in later life, including:

- Unemployment
- Homelessness
- Criminal and anti-social behaviour
- Sexual exploitation
- Substance abuse
- Teenage parenthood
- Mental health and self-esteem issues
- Physical health issues (including those linked to poverty)

3 THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

- 3.1 As a Local Authority, Oxfordshire County Council has a duty under s436A of the Education Act 1996 to establish (as far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in our area who are not registered pupils at a school or receiving some other form of suitable education. Part of this duty, therefore, requires us to have details of those pupils registered at all schools who are ordinarily resident within Oxfordshire.
- 3.2 Oxfordshire County Council also has a duty to act in accordance with the statutory guidance for Local Authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education (published in January 2009). This requires us to “put in place arrangements for joint working and information sharing with other local authorities and relevant partner agencies that come into contact with children and families”. The guidance makes clear that such “partner agencies” will include all types of education providers, both maintained and independent schools, and local authorities are recommended to maintain a database of all school-age children, along with how they are being educated.
- 3.3 It is understandable and appropriate that schools should be concerned about revealing personal information about pupils. All information will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Under paragraph 5(c) of Schedule 2 to the Act, personal information can be disclosed where necessary for the exercise of any function given to any person under a statutory enactment.
- 3.4 There are several situations in which a child may become missing from education, and the following paragraphs set out the procedure where:
- The school is informed that a child is leaving, but no new school is confirmed within four weeks (paragraph 3.5).
 - The school is informed that a child is going abroad, but is not given full details of the child’s address and new education provision (paragraph 3.6).
 - A child stops attending, or fails to return from holiday, without explanation (paragraph 3.6).
 - A child is allocated a place at a school, but there is no contact from the parents/carers, or the child does not start as arranged (paragraph 3.7).
 - A child is permanently excluded from school (paragraph 3.8).

In all cases, a child should not be removed from roll unless his/her new educational provision has been confirmed, or the Pupil Tracking Officer has accepted a referral and has taken over responsibility for tracking the child.

- 3.5 When a school is informed that a child is leaving, but there is no contact from a new school within four weeks, the school should complete a referral to the Pupil Tracking Officer (contact details at paragraph 1.2) using the CME referral form (Appendix 1). An earlier referral will be accepted where the school has concerns about whether a school application will be made. Any information the school has

obtained about the destination of the family should be supplied. The Pupil Tracking Officer will advise when the child can be removed from the school's roll (it will normally be possible to backdate the removal to the last day of attendance).

- 3.6 If a child is attending a school in another country, the school here may not receive confirmation that the child has started there. Where a school is informed that a child is going abroad, but does not have full details of new educational provision, a referral should be made to the Pupil Tracking Officer as set out in paragraph 3.5.
- 3.7 When a child stops attending without explanation, or does not return from holiday at the appropriate time, the school should first attempt¹ to contact the parents/carers in accordance with its attendance policy. On the fourth day of absence, the school will make a referral to the Early Intervention Hub using the Hub referral form (Appendix 2). A home visit will be carried out by Early Intervention staff. If the visit establishes that the family has left the address, Early Intervention staff will refer to the Pupil Tracking Officer who will apply tracking procedures. At the same time, a check will be made with Children Social Care to establish if the family are known. The Pupil Tracking Officer will advise when the child can be removed from the school's roll (it will normally be possible to backdate the removal to the last day of attendance).
- If the visit establishes that the child is at the address and not attending school, the attendance procedure will continue to be applied leading to action by the Attendance and Engagement Service if other measures are unsuccessful. Please note that the CME procedures set out in this document apply only when the whereabouts of the child is not known – where a child remains on roll but is failing to attend, attendance and engagement procedures will apply.
- 3.8 When a child is expected to join a school and does not arrive, the school should initially try to contact the parents/carers by telephone or letter to find out why. If this is not successful, the school should contact the School Admissions Team (admissions.schools@oxfordshire.gov.uk or (01865) 815175) to establish if the child has been registered elsewhere. If, after four weeks, the child has not been located, the school should complete a referral using the CME referral form (Appendix 1).
- 3.9 When a child is permanently excluded, the school should ensure that the Local Authority is aware so that Social Inclusion procedures can be applied.
- 3.10 When a child is removed from the school's admission register, the school should indicate the date and the reason for removal from roll. Where the new school is known, this should be indicated, including the new school's seven digit local authority identifier.

¹ This applies to any school, maintained and non-maintained, including academies.

3.11 When the new school is unknown and the child is removed from roll in accordance with this procedure, the “Reason for Leaving” on SIMS should show “Unknown Destination”. The common transfer file should also be completed, and coded XXX XXXX (destination unknown) or MMM MMMM (moved to independent sector or out of England and Wales). It can then be uploaded to S2S in the normal way. These records are securely stored in an area of S2S known as the Lost Pupils Database.

Pathway for Children Missing Education (if reason for absence not known) – Schools and Early Intervention Service

DAY 1- 3 School should telephone missing student, family, named contacts to investigate why the pupil is absent from school.

DAY 4 - If the pupil is still missing and no further information has been obtained, School to complete missing pupil referral form and send to the relevant Hub via Hub team email.

DAY 5 - The Hub will contact the School’s admissions to ensure that the missing pupil is not on role at a new School. If pupil is still deemed missing the case will be allocated to a worker within the Hub. Appropriate enquiries will be made of other agencies, including GP, Police, Community Health etc.

The allocated Hub worker will visit the last known home address within 48 hours. If there is no response a card will be left requesting immediate contact. Additionally, if appropriate, Hub worker will approach neighbours for information

Following the home visit, if parents fail to make contact within 2 working days, the Hub Worker will complete a referral to the Children Missing Education Administrator. **The Hub Worker will also discuss the case with Children’s Social Care/Police to agree action and consider if this needs to be viewed as a safeguarding issue.**

4 THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

- 4.1 On receipt of a referral, the Pupil Tracking Officer will check the Capita One database to establish any change of address or school. If the family's new address is known and is outside the county, the Pupil Tracking Officer will liaise with the local authority for that area. If the address is not known, enquiries will be sent to the following agencies as applicable: Thames Valley Police, Children and Families Assessment Teams, district housing teams, Youth Offending Service, and the Primary Care Trust. These agencies will be asked to check their own records to help trace the family. Any information will be followed up with the appropriate local authority.
- 4.2 If no information can be obtained from these sources, the Pupil Tracking Officer will upload a message to S2S, which will be available to every local authority, requesting any information about the child.
- 4.3 At this point the Pupil Tracking Officer will contact the child's last school, confirming the date on which the child's name can be removed from roll (bearing in mind the requirements of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006). If it has not already done so, the school will also be asked to upload a common transfer form to S2S as a missing pupil file (see paragraph 3.9).
- 4.4 Where these procedures are unsuccessful in tracing the child, the Pupil Tracking Officer will continue to monitor referrals, re-check with other agencies and re-post details on the S2S database at regular intervals.
- 4.5 The Pupil Tracking Officer will use the Capita One database to run regular reports to identify children who have left a school without full details of their destination being recorded. The Pupil Tracking Officer will raise any queries with the school concerned, and, if the child's educational provision has not been established, will open a referral and follow the procedure set out above. The designated officer for CME will receive regular reports of all children missing education including those who have been permanently excluded.
- 4.7 The Admissions Team receives details annually of all children known to the Primary Care Trust who are of the age to make application for rising 5 school places. The Admissions Team will pass to the Pupil Tracking Officer details of all children who reach statutory school age who are not on a school roll and for whom other provision has not been notified. The administrator will open CME referrals for these children and will try to establish their educational provision using the procedures above.
- 4.8 Oxfordshire County Council will regularly take steps to remind partners and schools of their duties concerning children missing education.

5. THE ROLE OF OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

5.1 When another local authority or another agency informs Oxfordshire County Council that a child has moved into our area, this notification will be forwarded to the Pupil Tracking Officer who will:

- Check the Capita One database.
- Contact the named school, if there is one, to ask them to speak to the previous school.
- Liaise with the School Admissions Team over any pending application.
- If no application has been received, ask the Early Intervention Service to visit any address supplied.
- Respond to the referring agency or local authority.

6 THE ROLE OF OTHER AGENCIES

- 6.1 If any agency has a concern that a child is missing education, they have a duty to inform the Pupil Tracking Officer of any welfare concerns (refer to 1.3).

7 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

- 7.1 If parents/carers wish to electively home educate their child, the school must remove the child from its register at the point written notification is received from the parent expressing this intention.
- 7.2 Schools should inform the Elective Home Education administrator (eotas@oxfordshire.gov.uk or (01865) 810605) when children are removed from roll in these circumstances. The administrator will contact the family to offer support and establish the child as “registered” EHE.
- 7.3 It is, of course, up to the parents/carers to decide whether they wish to engage with the EHE Visitors Team.

8 CHILDREN REPORTED TO THE POLICE AS MISSING

- 8.1 When any young person under the age of eighteen is reported to the police as missing, Oxfordshire County Council has a duty to carry out an interview with the young person within 72 hours of his/her return. This procedure is the subject of a separate policy [link required] and should be distinguished from the CME procedure.
- 8.2 However, young people reported to the police as missing may also be registered as CME. The Pupil Tracking Officer will check the names of young people reported to the police as missing against the CME register and will ensure that any match is made known to the officer carrying out the interview.

9 AUDIT

There is a requirement for information and data to be subject to regular review by the Children, Education & Families Directorate and the Quality Assurance Sub-Group of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (OSCB). An annual report should be presented to the full OSCB.

APPENDIX 1



MISSING CHILDREN MEMO – Enquiries to administrator

Please send to:

Alan Blackmore, Oxfordshire County Council, Third Floor, County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

Email: missing.pupils@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Enquiry from – Name: Address:				
Telephone : Fax: Email: Date of Enquiry:				
Name of Child Surname		First Name	DOB	School last attended
UPN No:			SEN: Yes / No	
Parent / Carer:				
Last known address:				
Address believed to have moved to:				
Local Authority:				
Any other information, including last date of attendance:				



Early Intervention Hub Suspected Missing Pupil Referral Form

Referrer please complete all sections of form as fully as possible

Please note: Referrals will only be accepted when accompanied by evidence of school based intervention

PUPIL DETAILS

SurnameNCYUPN No.
Other Surname(s) pupil may be known by Date of birth
Forename(s) Gender
Address
Post Code
Current School
Previous School (If Known)

REFERRAL DETAILS

Referral Date Referred by (name of Referrer)
Phone No Email Address

PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER DETAILS

Person(s) with whom the child lives.

Title:..... Surname:	Title:..... Surname:
Forename:	Forename:
Address (if different)	Address (if different)
.....Post Code:Post Code:
Home Phone:	Home Phone:
Mobile :	Mobile:

Parental Responsibility? Parental Responsibility? Yes No

Relationship to Pupil Relationship to Pupil

Other relevant Information / known family members:

INTERVENTION PREVIOUSLY TRIED BY SCHOOL

School should have carried out the following actions before referring to the Early Intervention Hub.

Child's Name:.....Date of Birth:

(Tick Box)

Yes No

Dates

Has school attempted to contact parents?

Has school attempted to phone other named contacts?

Have school attempted to obtain information from current involved professionals / previous school.

Additional Information / Previous Concerns

INITIAL HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

Activity	Risk Posed	Risk		
		High	Medium	Low
1. Home Visit	Aggressive pupil			
	Aggressive parent			
	Previous history of aggression			
	Threatening environment			
	Known drugs/drink abuse			
	Possible drugs/drink abuse			
	Other (please specify)			