

# The Willows School Academy Trust

*The Willows School Academy Trust*



*Learning, Achieving, Succeeding*

## Children Missing Education Policy

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## Table of Contents

<b>Attendance Expectations</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Legal Context</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Purpose of the CME Policy</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Aim of the Policy</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Definition of CME</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Definition of Children at Risk of Missing Education</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>The Role of the Multi Agency Teams</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Stakeholders</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Reducing the Risk of Children Missing Education</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Children missing education - Guidance and local arrangements</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Who is at greatest risk and why?</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Adding or removing children from the school roll</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Making joint reasonable enquiries</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Technical Note: Common Transfer Files</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Reporting children missing education</b> .....	<b>8</b>

## **Attendance Expectations**

Attendance at school is key to children making good progress. All families are encouraged positively to make sure their children attend every day. Attendance is monitored daily to identify any pupils not in school. On day one of any absence the parents of any absent pupils are contacted to find out the reason why.

Any request for extended (special) leave, outside of holidays will be refused, unless parents can provide evidence that the extended leave is necessary due to special circumstances. Special circumstances may include:

- An emergency family situation
- Bereavement
- A physical or emotional wellbeing intervention
- A unique 'memory making' activity that is not otherwise accessible.

In all cases parents are asked to provide a return date and if possible, copies of flight details.

Any parents/carers requesting special leave must request this in writing by completing an application form for 'leave of absence from school' which must be submitted to the Headteacher. In considering the request for extended leave, the school will be mindful of risks to children including FGM (See FGM Policy). Each request will be considered by the Headteacher where all cases will be considered with fairness and equity. The pupil's wellbeing is central to all decisions made.

## **Introduction**

The Willows School is concerned about any child missing education not only in the way that it impacts on the individual's potential achievement but also in relation to their safety and welfare. The purpose of the CME Policy is to ensure that children and young people missing education are re-engaged in appropriate education provision in the shortest possible time, with lasting success and that 'no child slips through the net'.

## **Legal Context**

[The Children Act 2004](#) places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information. [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) placed a new duty on all local authorities in England and Wales for them to make arrangements to identify [CME](#) in their area. The duty applies to all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and are not receiving a suitable education.

## **Purpose of the CME Policy**

The purpose of the CME Policy is to establish a set of principles to ensure children and young people are safely on roll at a school. This policy should be read in conjunction with our Child Protection and Safeguarding policies and procedures.

## **Aim of the Policy**

- To assist the school, local authority and partner agencies in identifying CME.
- Raise awareness of the notification process.
- Explain how children will be tracked and monitored until they are re-engaged in education.

- Explain the mechanism to access appropriate education provision.
- Provide clarity to stakeholders on how children can be tracked across boundaries when a child moves to another local authority area.

### **Definition of CME**

For the purpose of this document a child missing education is defined as: *'Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is not on a school roll being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately, or in alternative provision) and who had been out of any education provision for a substantial period of time (practice nationally is four weeks or more). ' .....Department for Education*

### **Definition of Children at Risk of Missing Education**

- Children and young people with poor school attendance are often the most vulnerable and are more likely to become children missing from education.
- The Willows School and the Local Authority recognise that the duty to identify children not receiving education does not apply in relation to children who are registered at school who are not attending regularly. The authority's CME strategy does, however, include the reinforcement of duties that already exist for schools and therefore supports the monitoring of children at risk of missing education in the future.
- The monitoring of children at risk of missing education is carried out in partnership with schools where attendance of individual pupils gives cause for concern with the aim of reducing the risk in the future.

### **The Role of the Multi Agency Teams**

To reduce the risk of children and young people falling out of the education system, the authority has developed teams and services that support the work needed in this area. These teams work closely together to ensure there is coherence and consistency within the system. These teams ensure that the process for identifying, investigating and finding CME is carried out. The duties and responsibilities of these teams include:

- Tracking CME.
- Ensuring all notifications of CME are correctly recorded on the relevant databases.
- Investigating relevant databases
- Coordinating casework in relation to investigating CME including working closely with relevant services and agencies to determine appropriate provision for the child.
- Ensuring admission into school through the admissions process
- Reviewing and monitoring cases held until re-engagement in education is successfully secured through the CME/EWO team – Pupils missing out on education.
- Providing relevant reports for relevant agencies/boards
- Hold regular CME meetings to review complex and urgent cases.
- Raise awareness of the CME policy and practice including training/awareness raising events for school governors and partner organisations.

### **Key Stakeholders**

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information. In order to fulfil the requirements of the CME policy the authority works in collaboration to ensure the early identification and intervention of children

who are not receiving a suitable education. All stakeholders have a responsibility for CME. The Willows School works closely with stakeholders to ensure the safety of a child.

Key stakeholders include:

- Local Authority
- Children's Services including Admissions, Out of School Team, Equality for Minorities (Ethnic Minority and Travellers), Parent Partnership, Education Welfare Officers
- SENDIASS
- Health
- Voluntary Organisations
- Police
- CAMHS

### **Reducing the Risk of Children Missing Education**

All officers, schools, academies and the general public have a moral and corporate responsibility in relation to CME. Parents who do not ensure their children are accessing a 'suitable' education can be deemed as breaking the law. Anyone who becomes aware of a child or young person who does not appear to be accessing education should refer this child to the Children with Disabilities Social Work Team or the SEND inclusion team at Hillingdon Council.

The authority in partnership with the other agencies listed above aims to ensure that all colleagues in all agencies who become aware of a child who is living in the authority but not in identified education provision, will notify the authority.

### **Children missing education - Guidance and local arrangements**

Local Authorities have a duty (Education and Inspections Act 2006) to make arrangements to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education.

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Children and young people who are missing education may also be at risk of becoming missing more generally from home or from care. For more information on children missing visit: <https://hillingdonsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk/>

### **Who is at greatest risk and why?**

Children fall out of the education system because they:

- Fail to start appropriate provision and therefore never enter the system.
- Fail to make the transition between schools within or across the Local Authority area.
- Cease to attend due to exclusion or withdrawal.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education. Schools and local authorities are encouraged to make judgements on a case to case basis:

- **Pupils at risk of harm/neglect** – children may be missing from education because they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Schools should follow local child protection procedures. The Department's guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024](#) provides further advice on safeguarding children.
- **Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families** – research has shown that many children from these families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. The local authority GRT Officer can advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring continuous access to education.
- **Children of Service Personnel** – families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently. Schools should contact the MoD Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) on [RC-DCS-HQ-CEAS@mod.gov.uk](mailto:RC-DCS-HQ-CEAS@mod.gov.uk) for advice.
- **Missing children and runaways** – children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education.
- **Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System** – children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education. The local authority Youth Offending Team (YOT) are responsible for supervising these children (aged 8 to 18)
- **Children who cease to attend a school** – where the reason for the child's non-attendance is unknown, an investigation should be done to ensure the child has access to full time suitable education.
- **Children of new migrant families** – children of new migrant families may not have yet settled into a fixed address therefore increasing the risk of the child missing education.

### **Adding or removing children from the school roll**

Statutory guidance regarding children missing education means that **all schools** (including academies and independent schools) **must** notify the local authority of all lawful deletions from roll in accordance with [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

When removing a pupil from roll, The Willows School will inform the local authority of the full name and contact details of any parent and the pupil's future address and destination school if applicable by return email. The Willows School will make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the local authority before removing the pupil from roll.

The Willows School will also notify the LA within 5 days of adding a pupil's name to the register at a non-standard transition point. If a child who is currently on the school's roll fails to attend without reasonable explanation, or a child who is expected to join a school fails to start, the relevant school staff will undertake an initial investigation. If this investigation fails to resolve these issues The Willows School will inform the local authority. The Local Authority recommends that this initial investigation should be completed in 10 days or less.

Following initial investigation by the school the Local Authority will aim to complete subsequent enquiries within 10 days.

Children should remain on the school roll until all reasonable enquiries have been completed.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 states that a school may only remove a child from their roll when a pupil:

- Registers at another school
- Is withdrawn to be educated outside the school system.
- Has been permanently excluded.
- Fails to return after an extended family holiday\*
- Has a medical condition that prevents their return to the school
- Will be in custody for more than four months.
- Has left the school but it is not known where they have gone\*
- Has another school named on a school attendance order
- Is above compulsory school age.
- Dies.

\* Following joint reasonable enquiry by both the school and the Local Authority to locate the pupil.

### **Making joint reasonable enquiries**

When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown, the local authority and The Willows School will complete and record one or more of the following actions:

- Liaise with Children's social care where the child has an allocated worker.
- Liaise with any relevant medical/nursing team
- Liaise with other involved agencies e.g. Hospice support, care agencies.
- Maintain contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details.
- Check with agencies known to be involved with family.
- Check with local authority and school from which the child moved originally, if known
- Check with local authority and school to which a child may have moved.
- Check with the local authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is
- Home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.

If the school does not identify the whereabouts of the child, then a member of the Children Missing Education team will complete a wider database check. If the location of the child is identified, then the school will be informed and if necessary, the parents or carers will be supported by the Local Authority to apply for a school place closer to the new home address.

If there are any safeguarding concerns, or if no trace can be found, then a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will be made. If the child is traced at this stage, then the school will be advised by the Local Authority that the child can be removed from roll.

However, if no trace can be made, the school will be advised in writing to remove the pupil from roll and upload the Common Transfer Form (CTF) on S2S.

Working with schools, the Local Authority aims to complete the second stage search process in no more than 20 school days.

## Technical Note: Common Transfer Files

If a school knows which school a child is moving to, they should ensure that the Common Transfer File (CTF) is sent to the receiving school using S2S as quickly as possible. S2S is the Department for Education school to school website, which is a secure method of transferring pupil or other sensitive data between schools, Local Authorities and the Department for Education. It has been a statutory duty since 2002 for schools to upload a CTF file via the S2S website every time a pupil leaves a school. Receiving schools are then notified that a file is waiting for them to download. The website must also be used to post CTF files for children missing in education and for those leaving mainstream education.

## Reporting children missing education

For advice, concerns or referrals email Hillingdon's participation team at [childrenmissingeducation@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:childrenmissingeducation@hillingdon.gov.uk) or call [01895 250858](tel:01895250858)

Also contact can be made with the home LAs where out of Hillingdon pupils reside:- Ealing, Harrow, Barnet, Bucks, Herts, Slough, Surrey (see respective websites for contact details).

## Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- [Children Missing in Education \(August 2024\) \(see guidance for further links\)](#)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Working together to improve school attendance
- Admissions / attendance Policy
- Child Sexual / Criminal Exploitation policy
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024](#)
- [Arranging education for Children who cannot attend school because of health needs.](#)
- Behaviour in Schools
- Working Together to Safeguard Children Dec 2023

Signed

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Chair of Governors