

Children Missing from Education (CME) – Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB)

Procedures

Definition of Children Missing Education

For the purpose of the Statutory Guidance on Children Missing Education (2015), children missing education are defined as those who are not on a school roll or receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. Those who are regularly absent or have missed 10 school days or more without permission may be at risk of becoming 'children missing education'.

Recognition and Response

Enquiries into the circumstances surrounding a child who is missing from school can be effectively supported by schools adopting an admissions procedure which requires a parent/carer to provide documentary evidence of their own and the child's identity and status in the UK, and the address that they are residing at. These checks should not become delaying factors in the admissions process.

If a member of school/educational establishment/college staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents/ carers, what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the designated safeguarding teacher/advisor should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability.

From the first day that a child does not attend school and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps should be taken:

- A trained staff member will make contact with the parents/carers (person with parental responsibility for the child) to seek reassurance that the child is safe at home;
- The outcome of the contact should be assessed and if there are any concerns a consultation with the school/establishment/colleges designated safeguarding adviser should take place to consider the child's vulnerability.

In the following circumstances a referral to children's social care and /or the police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime;
- The child is subject of a Child Protection plan;
- The child is subject of s47 enquiries;
- The child is looked after;
- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
- There is a history of the family moving frequently;
- There are serious issues of attendance.

The answers to further questions could assist a judgement whether or not to inform LA children's social care and the police:

- In which age range is the child?
- Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Has the child been a victim of bullying?
- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g.
- Does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g.
- Rites of passage or forced marriage planned for the child?
- Has the child got a disability and/or special educational needs?
- Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying? e.g.
 - Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?
 - Is there any known history of domestic violence?
 - Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?

The length of time that a child remains out of school could, of itself, be an alerting factor of risk of harm to the child. Accordingly if a situation is not resolved within 3 days the Education Welfare Service should be contacted, then referrals should be made to the police and LA children's social care, as appropriate over the next two weeks.

Extended leave of absence can be authorised by the head teacher, at which point a return date is set. In these cases the time line for enquiries starts from when the child does not attend school on the expected return date, not from the day the extended leave started.

Notifications and Actions

Day one

If the answers to any of the points set out in the previous section indicates that there are concerns about the child's safety then a referral should be made to the police and children's social care on day one. The education welfare service should be informed and requested to assist in locating the child.

Step one:

- Contact the local police station (24 hour response);
- Any suspicion/evidence of crime must be clearly stated;
- The circumstances and all available information regarding the child and family will be required.

Step two:

- The missing person report will be risk assessed and the local police response team will carry out immediate actions;
- The investigation will be progressed by the police response team, in conjunction with either the local Missing Persons Unit and/or the CID.

Step three:

- The missing person report will generate a notification to the police;
- The police will work with, and refer information to Birmingham City Council children's social care;
- LA children's social care, who must be contacted as soon as possible in these circumstances, will also liaise with the the Police Public Protection Unit in order to identify, and act upon, any suspicion of child abuse or child related crime.

Step four:

The school / educational establishment / college should work in collaboration with children's social care and the police and a safeguarding education representative should participate in any strategy discussions, s47 enquiries and Child Protection Conferences which may arise.

Reasonable enquiry:

If the judgement reached on day one is that there is no reason to believe that the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, then the school may delay making a referral. The process of 'reasonable enquiry' has not been identified in regulations, however this includes school staff checking with all members of staff whom the child may have had contact with, and with the pupil's friends and their parents, siblings and known relatives at this school and others.

School staff should also make telephone calls to any numbers held on record or identified, sending a letter to the last known address, home visits by some school based staff and consultation with local authority staff.

Days two to twenty-eight

If the above response was unsuccessful, the school should contact the local authority Children Missing in Education (CME) Team, Tel: 0121 303 4983. The local authority should make enquiries by visiting the child's home and asking for information from the family's neighbours and their local community, as appropriate.

The CME Team should also check databases within the local authority, use agreed protocols to check local databases, e.g. LA housing, health and the police; check with agencies known to be involved with the family, with the local authority the child moved from originally, and with any local authority to which the child may have moved.

The child's circumstances and vulnerability should be reviewed and reassessed regularly jointly by the school's nominated safeguarding advisor and the CME Officer in consultation with children's social care and the police as appropriate.

Child missing from school for more than four weeks

A child may not be removed from the school roll before the end of four weeks. After 4 weeks the child's Common Transfer file should be uploaded to the Department for Education secure site for the transfer of pupil information when a pupil moves between schools. The Local Authority Children Missing in Education Team must also be informed.

Transfer of information when a pupil changes school

[The Education \(Pupil Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2000 \(SI 2000/297\)](#) (as amended by SI 2001/1212 and SI 2002/1680) governs the transfer of information between schools.

- Regulation 10(3) states that 'The head teacher of the pupil's old school shall send the information within fifteen school days of the pupil's ceasing to be registered at the school'.

However:

- Regulation 10 (4) states that 'This regulation does not apply where it is not reasonably practicable for the head teacher of the old school to ascertain the pupil's new school or where the pupil was registered at his old school for less than four weeks'.

If the CME team or any other agency becomes aware the child has moved to another school the service should ensure all relevant agencies are informed so that arrangements can be made to forward records from the previous school.