Children Missing Education Policy

This policy has been entirely adopted by SCPS from the OCC model policy.

OCC Latest version: August 2026

Version 2.2

Check of latest OCC version: September 2026

Date of ratification by governors: 07.10.26

Date of next review: September 2027

Reviewing the Policy

1.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head teacher and monitored by the governing body. This policy is wholly adopted from the OCC model policy so the annual review will check that this policy contains the latest version issued by OCC.

1.2 If no changes are found the document will be reissued with the latest check date with no further approval needed.

1.3 If changes are found the document will go through the SCPS policy approval and ratification process.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline how Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) fulfils its statutory responsibilities in relation to Children Missing Education (CME), highlighting the statutory responsibilities of the schools, academy trusts, governing bodies, management committees and proprietors within OCC.

1.2 Children not receiving a suitable education are at increased risk of exploitation, social disengagement, criminality, radicalisation, forced marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and sexual exploitation. It is therefore essential that OCC, schools, and partner agencies work together to track and support all children who may be missing from education.

1.3 OCC recognises that some children may be at increased risk of becoming missing from education. This may include, but is not limited to, children who move frequently between local authority areas, children recently arrived in the UK, children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, children leaving custody, children at risk of exploitation, children with complex safeguarding needs, children whose elective home education has been assessed as unsuitable, and children without a confirmed educational destination following a school move.

1.4 For the purposes of this policy, 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 school. Pupils who remain on a school roll but are not attending are not classified as CME and must be managed through school attendance and safeguarding procedures, in line with statutory attendance guidance.

2.0 The Law Relating to Children Missing Education

2.1 This policy has been developed with regard to the statutory guidance Children Missing Education, published by the Department for Education, and should be read alongside Working Together to Improve School Attendance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, and Working Together to Safeguard Children. Schools, academy trusts, governing bodies, management committees, proprietors and the Local Authority must have regard to relevant statutory guidance when carrying out their duties in relation to children missing education. This policy is underpinned by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Children Missing Education - statutory guidance for local authorities and schools.
- Education Act 1996 -Section 436A.
- Children Act 1989 & 2004 - Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Working together to safeguard children.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

2.2 The purpose of the duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 is to ensure that local authorities make arrangements, so far as it is possible to do so, to identify children of compulsory school age in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise.

2.3 Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on relevant partners to cooperate to improve the wellbeing of children. In the context of Children Missing Education, this supports effective joint working, information sharing and multi-agency enquiries where a child's whereabouts, safety or educational provision cannot be established.

3.0 Responsibilities of Schools in Oxfordshire

3.1 All schools, academy trusts and governing bodies should have regard to the Children Missing Education statutory guidance, implementing appropriate policies, procedures and staff awareness arrangements to support the identification, prevention and resolution of CME cases.

3.2 Promote and support regular school attendance, identifying and responding promptly to emerging patterns of absence that may place a child at risk of becoming a child missing education (CME). Schools and partner agencies should act promptly where there are indicators that a child may be at risk of becoming CME, including unexplained absence, repeated school moves, failed transitions, missing transfer information or concerns about a child's welfare or whereabouts.

3.3 Maintain accurate and up-to-date pupil records, including contact details for parents and carers, emergency contacts, and information regarding any educational destination when a pupil transfers school.

3.4 Undertake reasonable enquiries where a pupil has ceased attending school or their whereabouts are unknown, in order to establish whether the child is receiving a suitable education and remains safe.

3.5 Schools must notify the Local Authority when a pupil's name is deleted from the admission register, where required by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Schools must provide the prescribed information to the Local Authority within the required timescales and must not delete a pupil from roll unless one of the statutory grounds for deletion applies. Where a pupil's destination or whereabouts are unknown, schools must complete and record all reasonable enquiries before deletion, unless an immediate safeguarding response is required.

3.6 Work collaboratively with the Local Authority and partner agencies, sharing information in a timely manner where there are concerns that a child may be missing education or their whereabouts cannot be established.

3.7 Ensure the timely and secure transfer of pupil records, including the use of Common Transfer Files (CTFs), when pupils move between educational settings.

4.0 The Local Authority's Responsibilities

4.1 Under section 436A of the Education Act 1996, local authorities must make arrangements to establish, so far as it is possible to do so, the identities of children of compulsory school age in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. This duty is complemented by schools' legal responsibilities around attendance monitoring and safeguarding procedures.

4.2 "Suitable education" is defined as efficient, full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs (SEN) they may have.

4.3 OCC will consult with parents or carers, schools and relevant agencies when establishing whether a child is receiving suitable education. Where a child is identified as not receiving suitable education, OCC will take appropriate steps to support the child's return to suitable full-time education as quickly as possible. This may be through admission to a school or, in exceptional circumstances, through suitable alternative provision. Any alternative provision arranged must be appropriate to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

4.4 CME statutory guidance expects local authorities to have effective arrangements for joint working and information sharing with other local authorities and relevant agencies. To support this, OCC will:

- Liaise with relevant professionals when a child is reported as CME. This includes, but is not limited to schools, health, police and Social Care.
- Work closely with CME officers from other local authorities.

4.5 OCC will maintain accurate, secure records of CME cases to enable effective pupil tracking. OCC will use these records to help discharge its responsibilities under Section 436A of the Education Act 1996.

4.6 In line with section 10 of the Children Act 2004 and statutory CME guidance, OCC will maintain procedures to support effective joint working, information sharing and reasonable enquiries where a child's whereabouts, safety or educational provision cannot be established.

4.7 Reasonable enquiries will be lawful, necessary and proportionate, and will be undertaken in accordance with safeguarding duties, data protection legislation and local information-sharing protocols. All enquiries will be recorded clearly and will focus on establishing the child's whereabouts, safety and whether they are receiving suitable education.
In OCC, this procedure includes:

- contact with parents or carers by telephone, email, letter, text message or home visit where appropriate.
- contact with schools, previous schools, other local authorities and education providers;
- checks with relevant internal Local Authority systems and DfE information systems;
- liaison with health, social care, police, housing or other relevant agencies where appropriate;
- proportionate checks with relatives, neighbours, landlords or housing providers where necessary;
- social media or other online enquiries only where lawful, proportionate, necessary and recorded.

5.0 Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

5.1 Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 requires parents to provide an efficient, full-time education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child and to any special educational needs which the child may have.

5.2 OCC encourages parents to notify their child's school of any moves or changes in circumstances to ensure that OCC can fulfil its duty to identify children missing from education.

6.0 Safeguarding

6.1 The welfare and protection of all children is of paramount concern and the responsibility of the whole community. Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to make arrangements for ensuring that the functions conferred on them are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children resident in Oxfordshire.

"A Local Education Authority shall make arrangements for ensuring that the functions conferred upon them in their capacity as a Local Education Authority are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children."

6.2 The CME Team will always follow Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Panel (OSCP) Safeguarding procedures and work with relevant agencies and individuals to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children and, in the event of any concerns about the welfare of a child missing education, initiate and follow established procedures.

6.3 Referrals and escalations will be made by CME officers to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) where information gives rise to safeguarding concerns. CME Officers will explain the reasons for any welfare concerns to parents in accordance with procedure. CME officers may offer mediation to schools and families prior to a child's removal from roll.

6.4 Where information becomes available to the Local Authority giving rise to reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the Local Authority has safeguarding duties under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and may initiate enquiries through Children's Social Care. Where a child may be a Child in Need, consideration may also be given to duties under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

7.0 The CME Service

7.1 CME Officers must ensure that all reasonable care is taken to ensure their safety, be advised by any risk assessment information and report any concerns about health, welfare and safety issues to their manager in the first instance. They will adhere to all elements of the Lone Working Policy consistently.

7.2 The Children Missing Education team can be contacted via:

ChildrenMissingEducation@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

8.0 Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, local procedures or service delivery arrangements. Review will include consideration of CME casework, audit findings, safeguarding learning, school feedback, data trends and any changes to national or local policy requirements.

Version Control

Annual review of all documents in line with Service delivery plans and/or when updates to national statutory guidance, policy or Legislation.

Version: 3.0
Date: 11th August 2026
Local Authority Officer: Assistant Director, Schools and Settings (Sufficiency)
Review: August 2027

References

- Children Missing Education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools, Department for Education Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools - GOV.UK
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance, Department for Education Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, Department for Education Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK
- Education Act 1996 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents
- Education Act 2002 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents
- Children Act 1989 & 2004 Children Act 2004
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024