



# Children Missing Education Policy

London Christian School is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its pupils.

## Definition of Children Missing Education

In [Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities \(2016\)](#), 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'.

There will not always be a safeguarding concern for children and young people who are missing education. Most children and young people are moving schools supported by their parents/carers, schools and local authority admissions services. A smaller number, however, are at risk of dropping out or disengaging from education and being out of school can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

## Risks

These 'missing' children can be vulnerable; it is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage these children back into appropriate education provision as quickly as possible. It is important to establish, at the earliest possible stage, the reasons for the child being missing.

Possible reasons that should be considered include (but are not limited to):

- Children at risk of harm or neglect;
- Children who fail to start appropriate provision and never enter the system;
- Children who have stopped attending due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal by parents/carers;
- Failure to complete a transition between schools;
- Children at risk of forced marriage or FGM;
- Children from families who are highly mobile (Gypsy, Roma or traveller families);
- Children from the families of service personnel;
- Children who go missing or run away from home or care;
- Children supervised by the Youth Justice System;
- Children from refugee and asylum-seeking families

Children who remain disengaged from education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk such as anti-social behaviour and/or sexual exploitation.

Families moving between local authority areas can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education. When a child has moved, local authorities should check with other local authorities, either regionally or nationally, and share information to ascertain where the child is living. Once the location of the child is established, the relevant local authority must ensure that the child is receiving an education either by attending a school or otherwise.

## **Recognition**

As a result of daily registration, schools are particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. Parents/carers are required to inform the school if their child is unwell or unable to attend school, however, if this is not done, the school secretary will contact the parents/carers and mark the register accordingly.

Enquiries into the circumstances surrounding a child who is missing from school can be effectively supported by schools adopting an admissions procedure which require a parent/carer to provide documentary evidence of the child's identity, and the address at which they are residing. Our admissions procedure requires both. We ensure that a family's contact details are regularly updated, and there are at least three emergency contact details on our school information system.

## **Response**

Staff are trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of

potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being missing, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM

and forced marriage. If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger.

We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who go missing from

education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future.

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

- A staff member will contact the parents/carers (person with parental responsibility for the child) to seek assurance 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead (Katie Vivyan) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Nicola Collett - White) will 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 section 47 (child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm) 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;

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

- In what 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 a 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?
- Does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to their unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? E.g. rites of passage, FGM or forced marriage planned for the child?
- Has the child 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. any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family, domestic violence, extremist views?

### **Transfer of information when a pupil changes school**

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2022) and Children Missing Education (DfE 2016), Southwark Council will be informed of the addition or deletion of a pupil's name from the School Admissions Register (SAR) for any reason. This applies to all children with the exception of those starting or leaving school at standard transition points, i.e. at the start of the Early Reception/Reception and completion of Year 6. Southwark Council will be informed of any additions or deletions from the SAR via the electronic 'Change to School Admissions Register Notification Form'. In the case of an addition to the SAR, Southwark Council will be informed within five days. In the case of a deletion from the SAR, Southwark Council will be informed as soon as the ground for deletion is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the SAR.

If a pupil is withdrawn from the school having not reached the normal date of transfer; due to a family move or

any other reason, all efforts will be made to identify any new address and the school to which they are being

admitted and to ensure that their educational records are sent without delay to the child's new school. This information will be gathered by Faye Martin, in charge of admissions (or any other member of the office staff in Faye's absence). If the parent/carer fails to provide this information, an urgent referral will be made to the Family Early Help Service either through the School's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) or the Family EHS Duty Manager in order that they might make further enquiries. If this school receives educational records concerning a child who is not registered with us, the records will be returned promptly to the sending school with a note, advising them to refer to their LA's Children's Services Department. A child's name will only be removed from the School's Admissions Register in accordance with the Pupil Registration Regulations or with the authorisation of a Team Manager in the Family Early Help Service.

All additions to or deletions from the SAR will be accompanied by a phone call or email to the forwarding school, if possible. Records will be sent to the new school as appropriate, with any confidential and Child Protection files

being sent to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead under a confidential cover.

If a child fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without authorisation for a continuous period of 10 days or more, and contact cannot be made with them or their family, an urgent consultation will be

made with the Duty Desk and the Early Help Service. If requested and deemed appropriate, a [Child Missing Education referral form](#) will be completed.

We will inform the Local Authority when we are about to add or delete a pupil's name from the school admission register for any reason in line with Southwark's Children Missing Education (CME) Protocol. When a pupil ceases to be registered at this school and becomes a registered pupil at another school in England or Wales, we will send a Common Transfer File (CTF) to the new school via DfE's secure internet system called school2school.

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