

# **Children Missing Education (CME) Policy**

(Missing and whereabouts not known,  
destination school not known or  
missing out on education)

**September 2023**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Purpose of the CME Policy

The purpose of the CME Policy is to establish a set of principles which all schools, services and partner organisations adhere to in order to ensure that children living in Slough are safely on roll at a school, placed in alternative educational provision or adequately electively home educated at the parent's request.

This policy also intends to ensure that the council meet its statutory duties in relation to the provision and the safeguarding and the welfare of children. It does not replace any of the current child protection procedures or existing safeguarding procedures and therefore this policy should be read in conjunction with existing safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures.

### 1.2. Slough Borough Council's Strategic Direction

Slough Borough Council is committed to delivering high quality local services and supporting Slough residents as early as possible. By growing a place of ambition and opportunity, our vision is that Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful.

SBC recognises the fundamental adverse repercussions of a 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. These children are regarded as a shared responsibility across the children's workforce in Slough in the same way that safeguarding is everyone's business. Children missing education features in Slough's Safeguarding Children's Board key priorities.

### 1.3. Legislative Framework

Legislative Framework informing this policy include:

- [Education and Inspections Act 2006 \(section 4 and 38\) \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Education Act 1996 \(section 7, 8, 14 and 19\) \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Working together to improve school attendance 2022 \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(Amendment\) \(England\) Regulations 2016 \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education 2022 \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Children Missing Education - DfE Statutory Guidance 2016](#)

## 2. Who are Children Missing Education (CME)?

### 2.1 'CME' by Definition

Children Missing Education CME are children of compulsory school age (5-16) The DfE defines CME as: 'Children of compulsory school age who

- are not registered pupils at a school and
- are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school
- who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually four weeks or more).'

Children Missing Education should not be confused with:

- children who are on roll at a school but are not in regular attendance.
- children who are being home-schooled (known as Elective Home Education or EHE)

- children whose parents have applied for a school place, and the referrer has confirmation that the application is in process via SBC's Admissions Service

**Compulsory School Age** – A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1st January and 31st March, they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1st April and 31st August they are of compulsory school age on 31st August; if they turn 5 between 1st September and 31st December they are compulsory school age on 31st December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year they reach sixteen.

**'Suitable Education'** is defined as efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any additional educational needs.

## **2.2. Impact of Poor School Attendance or Missed Education**

Statistics show that children who suffer from a history of poor attendance, or have periods of missed education, are more likely to face future issues in relation to:

- Homelessness
- NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training)
- Anti-social/ Criminal behaviour /Child Criminal Exploitation
- Social disengagement
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse
- Neglect and emotional abuse
- Sexual exploitation/ involvement in the sex trade /Child Trafficking
- Teenage parenthood
- Physical health issues
- Forced marriage
- Poverty
- Radicalisation

## **2.3. Children at particular risk of missing education**

There are certain vulnerable groups who are more likely than others to become children missing education. They are as follows:

- young people who have committed offences
- children living in domestic abuse refuges
- children of homeless families perhaps living in temporary accommodation
- young runaways
- children with long-term medical or emotional problems
- looked after children
- children with a Gypsy/Roma/Traveller background
- young carers
- children from transient families
- teenage mothers
- children who are permanently excluded from school

- migrant children whether in families seeking asylum or economic migrants
- children moving out of independent schools/academies/free schools
- children whose parent(s) are in the Armed Forces

### 3. Children Absent from Education

In **KCSIE 2023** the guidance about 'Children missing from education' has been replaced with 'Children who are absent from education for prolonged periods and/or repeated occasions.

#### 3.1. Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2022)

The DfE's recent publication places a huge emphasis on a multi-agency approach to supporting children who are on roll at a school but are not in regular attendance. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and is the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools, the LA and partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

#### **Expect**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to be, in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across



#### **Monitor**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become



#### **Listen and understand**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



**Facilitate support**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



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**Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to education.

[Working together to improve school attendance 2022 \(GOV.UK\)](#)

### 3.2. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)

In line with the above, school governing bodies, academy trusts, and other school proprietors must have regard to the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Schools should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions. Where reasonably practicable, for every pupil, schools should hold an emergency contact number for more than one person. Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. This goes beyond the legal requirement but is good practice. Doing so provides schools with additional options for contacting a responsible adult when a child is missing from school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.

**If at any point there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a MARF (multi-agency referral form) should be completed and returned via the Slough Children First Front Door". Also, where appropriate, schools can contact the police directly in accordance with the School's Safeguarding Procedures.**

## 4. Safeguarding

This policy and the multi-agency protocols stipulated within this document, does not replace any of the local safeguarding board (LSCB) multi-agency procedures and is to be used in conjunction with them.

Existing safeguarding procedures and mechanisms for reporting and recording any safeguarding and child protection concerns are to be followed at all times whilst understanding the increased risks to children who are missing from education.

If at any point there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a MARF (multi-agency referral form) should be completed and returned via the **Slough Children First “Front Door”** which is the single point of contact for all safeguarding and wellbeing concerns regarding children and young people in Slough. Also, where appropriate, agencies can contact the police directly in accordance with their internal Safeguarding Procedures.

## 5. 5. A Multi-agency Approach

### 5.1 Responsibilities of Partner Agencies

- The **Department for Children, Schools and Families** (now the **Department for Education**) document “**Working Together to Safeguard Children**” published in March 2010 (updated 2018) states: 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.
- The **Children Act 2004** places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the safeguarding and welfare of children and to share information so that children and young people do not ‘slip through the net’ and become missing. There is a fundamental principle that all SBC professionals and partners have some level of responsibility around the issue of children missing education in terms of ensuring that children are identified and tracked, referred appropriately, with needs assessed and coordinated interventions put in place. Therefore, as notification can be received from within the local authority, external agencies, the public, schools, children and young people and other local authorities, it is vital that all agencies understand and use the referral route appropriately and consistently.
- The vulnerability of many children missing education requires that practitioners across all agencies and services use multi-agency approaches to identify and re-engage these children and their parents to return to appropriate education quickly and to develop action plans and make relevant referrals to ensure successful reintegration. The responsibility for reducing the risks of children missing education is carried out through a strategic and multi-agency framework where all agencies share information on the identification of children and young people missing education

To access the **CME Referral Form** and the **PA/SA Referral Form** refer to the [School attendance school responsibilities webpage \(Slough Borough Council\)](#)

### 5.2 Responsibilities of the Local Authority

- The LA has a duty under Section 436 A of the Education Act 1996 to establish (in so far as is possible to do so), the identities of children in its area who are of compulsory school age but are not registered pupils at a school or receiving some other form of suitable education otherwise than at a school, for example at home, privately or in alternative provision.
- The obligation under Section 436A of the Education Act 1996, as outlined above, includes a duty under s437 of the Education Act to intervene if it appears that a child is not receiving a suitable education.

Slough Borough Council is committed to supporting children missing from and in education by ensuring:



- All pupils who may be missing from Slough schools, including independent schools, academies and free schools, are located without delay
- Support is given to other Local Authorities to locate missing children who may have moved into Slough
- Joint reasonable enquiries are made with schools and designated Local Authority (LA) staff to locate children who are missing from school as soon as possible
- All children living in Slough are in receipt of a suitable education in accordance with their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have
- All children living in Slough are safeguarded and their welfare promoted

The SBC Attendance Service are responsible for managing local procedures in line with this statutory guidance. These procedures include:

- Producing a written CME Policy & Procedural Guidance for Schools and Partner Services
  - Maintaining a database of CME and EHE children in Slough
  - Rigorous tracking of pupil attendance and regular data sharing with schools and relative partners i.e. SEND, Early Help, Social Care etc.
  - Lead on core functions to schools including ongoing communication and advice, targeted support meetings, multi-disciplinary support for families and enforcement/legal intervention (enforcement/legal intervention includes warning periods, penalty notices, prosecution and school attendance orders)
  - Monitoring and improving the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School
  - Establishing collaborative intervention through multi-agency forums
  - Providing clear referral pathways and processes for key stakeholders (Appendix A)
  - Undertaking appropriate investigations, tracking and monitoring of referrals made by schools and partner agencies (case management) Appendix A
  - Delivery of training/briefings to schools/partner agencies to ensure compliance of LA CME/Attendance protocols
  - Monitor and review effectiveness of CME processes
  - Representation at regional meetings and strategic boards
  - Providing data set reporting to senior management and the Local Safeguarding Childrens Board
- **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.
  - **Section 175 of the Education Act 2002**, places a duty on local authorities to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children



### 5.3 Responsibilities of Schools

- Schools also have safeguarding duties under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and in consequence should investigate any unexplained absences. Academies and independent schools have a similar safeguarding duty for their pupils. Schools have a key role in ensuring that children do not become CME.
- All schools are required to have an admission register and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, an attendance register. All pupils must be placed on both registers.
- To contact Admissions and notify them of non-attendance when a child has been placed on roll but does not arrive and the school are unable to make contact with the parents to determine why they have arrived or they state their child will not be attending.

Amendments to the [DfE Guidance regarding Children Missing Education \(CME\)](#) were made in July 2016

The main changes to legislation from September 2016 are as follows:

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#). From 1 September 2016, under **The Education (Pupil Registration (England) (Amendment)) Regulation 8 of the Education (pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**, all schools, including independents, are required to:

- Notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the fifteen grounds listed in the regulation cited in Appendix C. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made
- Record details of the pupil's residence, the name of the person with whom they will reside, the date from which they will reside there, and the name of the destination school (where they can reasonably obtain this information)
- Inform their LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school
- Provide information to their LA when registering new pupils within five days, including the pupil's address and previous school (where they can reasonably obtain this information).

### 5.4 Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

- Under **Section 7 Education Act 1996**, parent/carers of every child of compulsory school age shall 'cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any specific educational needs (s) he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

Where parents wish to remove their child or children to be electively home educated (EHE) they must give written notification to the school and the school must take the child's name off the school roll and notify the Local Authority. Please refer to [SBC EHE Policy - September 2022 \(Slough Borough Council\)](#).

- EHE children are not considered to be missing education. The Slough Attendance team hold a register of children with an EHE status.
- If the LA receives no information on the education being provided for a child i.e. a parent that is home educating their child is refusing to provide a report, the LA can assume that the child is NOT receiving a suitable education and look to proceed with a SAO.

## **6. 6. SBC Procedures and Processes**

### **6.1 SBC's School Attendance Procedural Guidance**

Guidance was introduced by the DfE, as of September 2016, to ensure Local Authorities and schools make procedures even more robust to prevent children becoming 'missing'. Please refer to [SBC's Attendance Service Procedural Guidance \(Slough Borough Council\)](#) document which explains the procedures and referral processes/pathways for:

- **Children Missing Education Referral (CME)**
- **Pupil Tracking Referral (PT)**
- **Elective Home Education Referral (EHE)**
- **New Starter Referral**
- **Part-time Arrangements Notification**
- **Flexi-Schooling Arrangements Notification**
- **Deletion from the Admissions Register**
- **Persistent Absence (PA) & Severe Absence Referral**
- **Warning Periods and Penalty Notices (WP/PN)**

### **6.2 Enquiry Systems**

To assist with the tracing of a pupil attendance and CME, the Attendance team have access to the following functions:

- Studybugs
- ICS Protocol Liquid Logic
- S2S (School to School)
- DWP LMS
- Key to Success
- MASH (on written request)
- Housing information (on written request)
- Council Tax information
- Youth Offending Service (YOS) (on written request)
- Health/NHS Spine Database (on written request)
- DfE Get Information about Pupils (GIAP) database
- DfE S2S Database/ Lost Pupil Database

## **7. Key Stakeholders and Agencies**

The SBC Attendance Service works in partnership with key stakeholders and agencies (both statutory and non-statutory), that contribute to the identification, location, information sharing and interventions for children missing education These include:

- Early Help Hub
- Social Care
- SEND Team
- EHE Teachers
- Admissions/Exclusions & Fair Access
- Detached Community and Youth Work Team
- Alternative Education Providers
- NEET Service
- Youth Offending Team
- Virtual School
- Health Nurse
- Local Authorities
- Schools
- Parents/Carers
- General Practitioners/Medical professionals
- UK Border Force Agency
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Police

## **8. 8. Review and Publication for the Policy**

- A review of the policy will take place annually or more frequently in light of future legislative changes.
- The policy will be shared with all Slough schools and partner agencies and is available on the Slough Borough Council Website

## **9. 9. Management of the CME Policy**

- Strategic oversight of this Policy sits with the SBC's Associate Director of Education & Inclusion.
- Operational delivery of this Policy sits with the SBC's Attendance Manager.
- This Policy is shared with SBC's Children's Safeguarding Board.

## **10. SBC - Attendance Service Contact Details**

### **Attendance Manager:**

Anjli Sidhu                      Tel: 07395 258177  
[Anjli.Sidhu@slough.gov.uk](mailto:Anjli.Sidhu@slough.gov.uk)

### **Attendance/CME Officers**

Iram Basharat	Tel: 07540 163520
Sharon James	Tel: 07871 982884
Thandiwe Manjelo	Tel:
Samantha Da Costa	Tel: 07523 936059
Diba Hussain	Tel: 07749 708439

**Referrals for School Attendance Queries:**

Attendance Service Main Line: 01753 787670  
Attendance Service Email: [attendance@slough.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@slough.gov.uk)

**Referrals for CME & EHE Queries:**

Pupil Tracking Main Line: 01753 787670  
Pupil Tracking Email: [pupiltracking@slough.gov.uk](mailto:pupiltracking@slough.gov.uk)

**11. Other Useful Contacts**

<b>Slough School Admissions</b>	01753 875728 <a href="mailto:admissionshelpline@slough.gov.uk">admissionshelpline@slough.gov.uk</a> <a href="#">School admissions (Slough Borough Council)</a>
<b>SEND Team</b>	01753 787676 <a href="mailto:sendteam@slough.gov.uk">sendteam@slough.gov.uk</a>
<b>Slough SENDIASS Service</b>	01753 787693 <a href="mailto:Sendiass@slough.gov.uk">Sendiass@slough.gov.uk</a> <a href="#">Slough SENDIASS website</a>
<b>Family Information Service</b>	01753 476589 <a href="mailto:fis@slough.gov.uk">fis@slough.gov.uk</a> <a href="#">Slough Family Information Service website</a>
<b>Slough Children First</b>	<b>01753 476562 - For General Enquiries</b>
<b>Early Help Hub</b>	<b>01753 875362 – For immediate referral</b> <a href="mailto:Sloughchildren.referrals@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk">Sloughchildren.referrals@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk</a> <b>01344 786543 –Emergency Duty Team (out of hours)</b> <a href="mailto:EDT@bracknell-forest.gov.uk">EDT@bracknell-forest.gov.uk</a> <a href="#">Early Help Hub webpage (Slough Family Information Services)</a>
<b>Police</b>	<b>999 – to report immediate risk</b> <b>101 – for non-emergency queries</b>

## Appendix A - SBC - CME Referral

### CME by Definition

Children Missing Education CME are children of compulsory school age (5-16) The DfE defines CME as: 'Children of compulsory school age who

- are not registered pupils at a school and
- are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school
- who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually four weeks or more).'

Children Missing Education should not be confused with:

- children who are on roll at a school but are not in regular attendance.
- children who are being home-schooled (known as Elective Home Education or EHE)
- children whose parents have applied for a school place, and the referrer has confirmation that the application is in process via SBC's Admissions Service

### Process

- School refers to pupiltracking@slough.gov.uk following schools interventions and attempts to locate pupil
- Automated email sent to school confirming receipt of referral
- SBC checks referral details

#### ***Referral accepted***

- Referral accepted and logged onto Capita and it is allocated to an officer
- SBC completes statutory tracking checks
  - **CYP in Slough**
    - Family supported to ensure they make school application, ICS checked and engaged with
  - **CYP no longer in Borough**
    - LA continues with tracking
    - *Out of Borough*
      - SBC to refer pupil to new LA
      - Communication with parent to verify address and education provision
      - School deletes pupil from roll when confirmed by SBC
    - *Pupil left country*
      - All enquiry systems undertaken including home visit if required completed
      - Communication with parent to verify address and education provision
      - If cannot locate LA to upload onto S2S missing pupil database
      - School deletes pupil from roll when confirmed by SBC
  - **CYP whereabouts unknown**
    - All enquiry systems undertaken including home visit
    - Potential local authorities contacted
    - If cannot locate LA to upload onto S2S missing pupil database

***Referral not accepted***

- If referral is for a pupil with a school application in progress this will be referred to admissions and referrer will be notified of this
- Referral is for a pupil on roll at a Slough school – this will become a PA referral and school will work with officer on this as a separate case
- Referral contains errors or missing information – referred back to school
- School to correct referral and re- submit to LA
- Process begins again

## Appendix B

### **Grounds for deleting a pupil of compulsory school age from the school admission register set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended**

1 8(1)(a) - where the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a school attendance order, that another school is substituted by the local authority for that named in the order or the order is revoked by the local authority on the ground that arrangements have been made for the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude otherwise than at school.

2 8(1)(b) - except where it has been agreed by the proprietor that the pupil should be registered at more than one school, in a case not falling within subparagraph (a) or regulation 9, that he has been registered as a pupil at another school.

3 8(1)(c) - where a pupil is registered at more than one school, and in a case not falling within subparagraph (j) or (m) or regulation 9, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor of any other school at which he is registered has given consent to the deletion.

4 8(1)(d) - in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor has received written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school.

5 8(1)(e) - except in the case of a boarder, that he has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which he is registered.

6 8(1)(f) - in the case of a pupil granted leave of absence in accordance with regulation 7(1A), that:

- (i) the pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted;
- (ii) (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and
- (iii) (iii) the proprietor and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.

7 8(1)(g) - that he is certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he nor his parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.

8 8(1)(h) - that he has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and —

- (i) at no time was his absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6(2);
- (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and



(iii) the proprietor of the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.

9 8(1)(i) - that he is detained in pursuance of a final order made by a court or of an order of recall made by a court or the Secretary of State, that order being for a period of not less than four months, and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return to the school at the end of that period.

10 8(1)(j) - that the pupil has died.

11 8(1)(k) - that the pupil will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets and—

- (i) the relevant person has indicated that the pupil will cease to attend the school;
- (ii) (ii) the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements for admission to the school's sixth form.

12 8(1)(l) - in the case of a pupil at a school other than a maintained school, an Academy, a city technology college or a city college for the technology of the arts, that he has ceased to be a pupil of the school.

13 8(1)(m) - that he has been permanently excluded from the school.

14 8(1)(n) - where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, that he has not on completing such education transferred to a reception, or higher, class at the school.

15 (1)(o) where:

- (i) the pupil is a boarder at a maintained school or an Academy;
- (ii) (ii) charges for board and lodging are payable by the parent of the pupil;
- (iii) (iii) those charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to which they relate.