

Children Missing Education (CME) Policy

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

September 2024

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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

The Legislative Framework informing this policy includes:

- [Education and Inspections Act 2006 \(section 4 and 38 \)](#)
- [Section 436A of the Education Act 1996](#)
- [Education Act 1996 \(section 7, 8, 14 and 19\)](#)
- [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education 2024 \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Children Missing Education - DfE Statutory Guidance 2016](#)
[Children Missing Education – Statutory Guidance for Local authorities August 2024 \(GOV.UK\)](#)

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
- 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**)

Compulsory School Age – A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their 5th 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

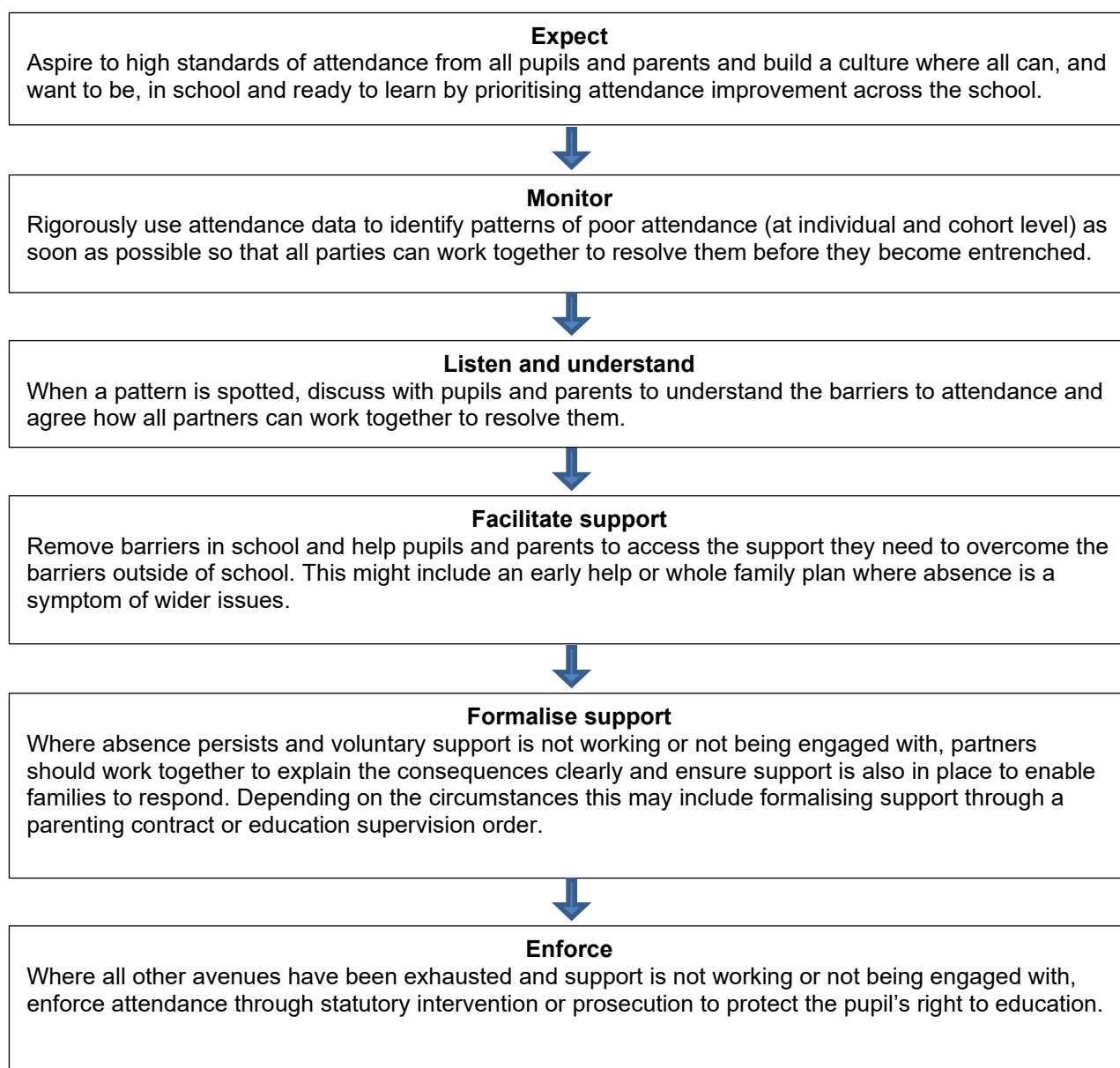
3.1. Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)

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.

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:



[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(GOV.UK\)](#)

3.2. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)

In keeping with the above aims, 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.

The new guidance places a greater emphasis on providing early help to children facing a broader range of vulnerabilities. This includes a more detailed framework for identifying and supporting children who may need additional assistance early on, before issues escalate. The aim is to build family resilience and improve outcomes by addressing problems as soon as they arise.

In cases 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 Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) should be completed and returned via **the Slough Children First (SCF) 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, 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. 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 **Section 437 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 is 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
- Undertaking appropriate investigations, tracking and monitoring of referrals made by schools and partner agencies (case management)
- 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.
- Changes above to the DfE Guidance regarding Children Missing Education have been made in August 2024.

[Children Missing Education - Guidance for Local authorities \(GOV.UK\)](#)

The main changes to legislation from **19th August 2024** are as follows:

- **The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024** can be found at: [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 \(GOV.UK\)](#)

From the **19th August 2024**, schools must:

- Notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the 15 grounds listed in The School Attendance Regulations 2024 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](#) on [the website](#).

- 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. 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** document on the website which explains the procedures and referral processes/pathways for:

- **Children Missing Education Referral (CME)**
- **Pupil Tracking Referral (PT) (Deletion return)**
- **Elective Home Education Referral (EHE)**
- **New Starter Referral (New pupil return)**
- **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
- Borderforce Checks
- 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. 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. 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 & CME 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

Attendance/CME Officers

Iram Basharat

Tel: **07540 163520**

Sharon James

Tel: **07871 982884**

Ghazala Khan

Tel: **07562 184226**

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

Referrals for CME & EHE Queries:

Pupil Tracking Main Line:

01753 787670

Pupil Tracking Email:

pupiltracking@slough.gov.uk

11.0 Other Useful Contacts

Slough School Admissions

01753 875728

admissionshelpline@slough.gov.uk

[School Admissions \(Slough Borough Council website\)](#)

SEND Team

01753 787676

sendteam@slough.gov.uk

Slough SENDIASS Service

01753 787693

Sendiass@slough.gov.uk

[Slough SENDIASS website](#)

Family Information Service

01753 476589

fis@slough.gov.uk

[Slough Family Information Service website](#)

Slough Children First –

01753 476562 - For General Enquiries

Early Help Hub

01753 875362 – For immediate referral

Sloughchildren.referrals@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk

01344 786543 –Emergency Duty Team (out of hours)

EDT@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

[Early Help Hub webpage \(Slough Family Information Services\).](#)

Police

999 – to report immediate risk

101 – for non-emergency queries