



John Blandy Primary School

Belong. Believe. Brilliant.

**Missing Child In Education
September 2024**

At John Blandy, we have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to ensure children within our care are receiving suitable education. This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age. Where a child is deemed as missing, it is our duty to ensure that we monitor and notify the relevant authorities where a child is missing from education.

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, they are at risk of exploitation, going missing and significant harm.

Legislative framework informing this policy:

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (added by section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006)

Education Act 1996 (section 7, 8, 14 and 19)

Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 4 and 38)

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2016

Working Together to Safeguard Children December 2023

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024

Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance 2016

Risks

It is important to recognise that '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:

Young people who have committed offences

- Children living in refuges
- Children of homeless families including those living in temporary and emergency accommodation
- Missing children and runaways
- Children with long term medical or emotional issues
- Children We Care For
- Newly migrant children
- Young Carers
- Children from Gypsy/Traveller heritages
- Teenage mothers
- Children who are permanently excluded from school
- Children who are electively home educated due to dissatisfaction with their original school
- Children and young people who abuse drugs and alcohol
- Children of Military personnel

- Trafficked children
- Privately Fostered Children
- Children at risk of radicalisation
- Children at risk of harm/neglect
- Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice & Exploitation Service
- Children who cease to attend school
- Children being forced into marriage
- Children involved in 'honour' based violence
- Children involved with female genital mutilation
- Children leaving independent schools due to permanent exclusion or non-payment of fees

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

Schools

As a result of daily registration, our school is particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If a member of staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, the DSL (Mrs Elliott) or DDSs (in Headteacher's absence) 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.

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, their status in the UK, and the address at which they are residing. Schools should ensure that a family's contact details are regularly updated. These checks, however, should not become delaying factors in the admissions process.

In the circumstances of a child going missing who is not known to any other agencies, the Headteacher should inform the Children Missing Education (CME) Officer (Alan Blackmore at OCC) of any child who has not attended for 10 consecutive school days without provision of reasonable explanation. Prior to doing so, the school should have made enquiries to ascertain whether the child is still residing at the home address and is not attending or whether the child is missing.

Other Agencies

Oxfordshire has identified key stakeholders both statutory and non-statutory to provide information about children through Oxfordshire's Safeguarding Children Board. Oxfordshire has publicised notification routes for all stakeholders nationally through Department for Education CME network.

CME may become known to partner agencies that then have a duty to share this intelligence with the Oxfordshire County Council Learner Engagement services to act upon this. This is particularly

likely from all schools and academies, independent schools, Police, CAMHS, Young Carers services, YJES, Youth service providers, Housing, Admissions, Border Agency, other boroughs and counties, Health A&E, Health Visitors and G.P.s, residents.

Oxfordshire County Council has a data sharing protocol with His Majesty's Revenue and Customs agency to track children missing education through benefits payments. Oxfordshire County Council has a data sharing protocol to identify children who are not enrolled at school or electively home educated from the term following their 5th birthday.

Response

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 staff member will contact 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead 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 section 47 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 could assist a judgement whether or not to inform 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 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? e.g.: 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, female genital mutilation 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.:
 - 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?
 - Is there any concern about extremist views?

Children missing from education but not missing from home

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. A judgement as to timeliness is required in respect of the referral to the local authority. This timeliness should be on a case by case basis.

In exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence can be authorised by the headteacher, at which point a return date is set. In these cases, the timeline for enquiries starts from when the child does not attend school on the expected return date, not from the day the authorised leave started.

Notifications and Actions for Children Missing from Education where there are Safeguarding Concerns

If the answers to any of the points set out in the previous section indicate that there are concerns about the child's safety then a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and the Police on day one.

Children's social care, who must be contacted as soon as possible in these circumstances, will also liaise with Oxfordshire Police in order to identify, and act upon, any suspicion of child abuse or child related crime.

The school should work in collaboration with children's social care and the police and the Designated Safeguarding Lead should participate in any strategy discussions, section 47 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 should delay making a referral to allow them to make further reasonable enquiries. Reasonable enquiries include staff checking with all members of staff with whom the child may have had contact, with the pupil's friends and their parents/carers, siblings and known relatives at school, and others. The speed at which these reasonable enquiries are made will depend upon any known or concerning factors that may arise through the enquiry process. School staff should also make telephone calls to any numbers held on record or identified and send a letter to the last known address. Home visits can be made by school based staff in consultation with local authority staff.

Further Actions

If the above response is unsuccessful, the school should contact the relevant CME Officer, referring the child as missing in education and providing the details of the completed enquiries made by the school. 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 - a risk assessment of this activity will be needed along with a decision about whether this is appropriate.

The CME Officer should also check databases within the local authority, use agreed protocols to check local databases, e.g. housing, health and the police; check with agencies known to be involved with the family, with any local authority the child may have 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 and jointly by the CME Officer in consultation with children's social care and the police, as

appropriate. Children missing education are vulnerable and, when reviewed, plans should be put in place to proactively find children.

As time progresses, missing education will become a more significant factor as well as needing to be considered alongside any other known factors that were already present.

In addition to the intelligence sources detailed above, Oxfordshire has adopted a daily data feed from all schools through the WONDE system (DfE system).

Pupils on reintegration timetables are routinely reviewed every 6 weeks by the County Attendance Team and individual schools, when notified, to ensure they are consented to by parents/carers and very short term with reintegration planning explicit.

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, unless located in an alternative educational provision. 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 CME Officer will inform the school when they can remove from roll.

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 headteacher 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 headteacher 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 Officer 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.

Changes to the Children Missing Education statutory regulations in September 2016 require that all schools must now report all starters and leavers to the local authority. This includes starters, no shows, and leavers that are outside of normal transition rounds, following the local authority's processes.

Monitoring and Tracking:

Each local authority is required to have a named person responsible for CME in their area. For Oxfordshire County Council as of January 2023 to date, that person is Kim James kim.james@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Oxfordshire will track, locate and ensure access to education for children who: -

- Have never accessed education (through enrolment at a school or otherwise since reaching the age of 5).
- Leave educational provision without a confirmed education destination and/or fail to access education when moving to a new area.

- Fail to transfer between key stages.
- Have been withdrawn by parent/carer from the education system without stating their intention to provide for future education.
- All inquiries pertaining to children missing education will be addressed daily through childrenmissingeducation@oxfordshire.gov.uk, managed by the County Attendance Team.

Oxfordshire will consider all CME matters closed when:

- The child is confirmed on roll at a school either within Oxfordshire or within the United Kingdom or overseas.
- The child is confirmed by parent as electively home educated, with assurance that parents are able to provide a suitable and sufficient education which prepares their child/children for a fulfilled adult life.
- All reasonable checks have been conducted, and the child cannot be located in Oxfordshire or elsewhere (including overseas when relevant), including with partner agencies through the Oxfordshire CME multi-agency panel (held once per term, terms of reference available) and the child's details are uploaded to S2S.

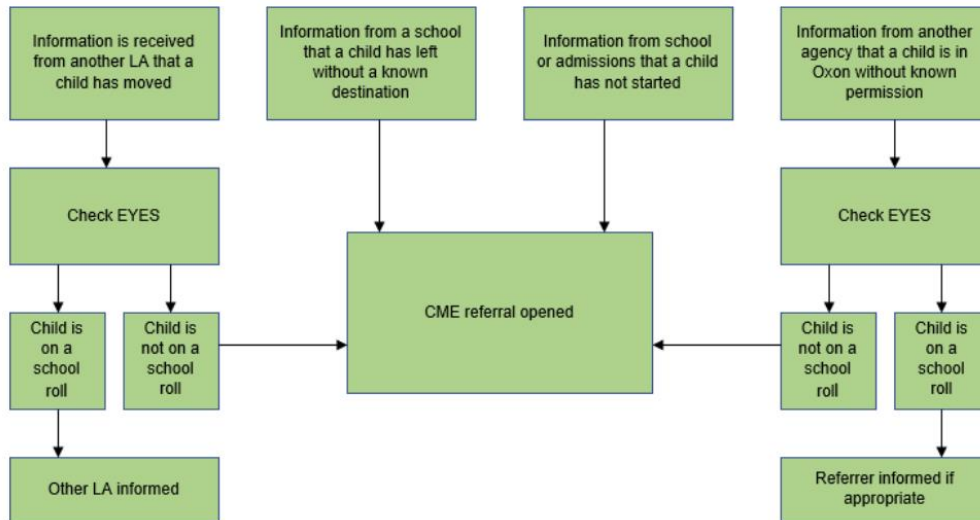
Data on looked after children who go missing or are away from placement without authorisation

The Department of Education Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (January 2014) states the following:

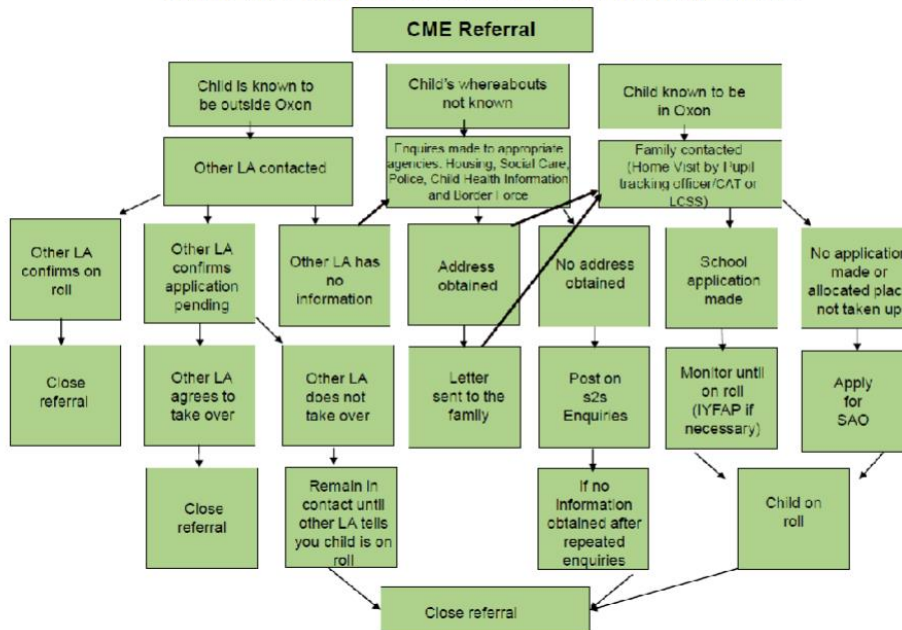
Local authorities should collect data on children reported missing from care including repeat episodes of missing from care, unauthorised absences from care placements, and other relevant data and should regularly analyse this in order to map problems and patterns. Looked after children who go missing, or who are away from placement without authorisation, can be at increased risk of sexual or other forms of exploitation or of involvement in drugs, gangs, criminal activity or trafficking. Attention should be paid to repeat episodes. This should include identifying patterns of sexual and other exploitation. Regular reports on this data should be provided to council members (including the Corporate Parenting Board for the responsible local authority).

Data for children missing or away from placement without authorisation is reported to the Department for Education by the responsible authority (through their annual data returns on looked after children as part of the annual data collection). Early and effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for the identification of patterns of risky behaviour. This may be used to identify areas of concern for an individual child, or to identify 'hotspots' of activity in a local area.

Oxfordshire Children Missing Education Tracking Process



Oxfordshire Children Missing Education Tracking Process



Electively home educated children are not considered to be missing education. A list of electively home educated children (when reported or identified) is held by the Elective Home Education Team within OCC. When partners within the children's workforce in Oxfordshire or residents identify a child, who is nominally electively home educated but concerns arise around their safety, well-being or sufficiency and appropriateness of education, this is reported to the MASH and Elective Home Education Team. Investigation into the safety and well-being of the child is conducted with EHE Officers and Social Care colleagues. Concerns solely about the quality of education are noted and the Oxfordshire EHE policy is adhered to.