Bowmandale Primary School

Straight... True... Successful

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

Policy and Procedures

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1.0 Overview

This document provides an outline of Bowmandale Primary School's policy and procedures for identifying, registering and tracking Children Missing from Education (adapted from North Lincolnshire's CME policy). It also identifies the statutory responsibility that schools and the Local Authority have and the action required of schools and the Local Authority.

At Bowmandale Primary School, we believe that all of our children should:

- Feel safe
- Be safe
- Enjoy good health and emotional wellbeing
- Recognise and achieve their potential

This policy has been produced to effectively support the implementation of the duty that local authorities have to identify children who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at a school. This policy also identifies the actions to be taken in the event of a child going missing from school during the school day. This policy implements the revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England and its subsequent amendments which reflects emerging priorities.

North Lincolnshire Council adheres to the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance 2026.

The duty applies to all children and young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at school. This includes children who are educated at home, in private education or in alternative education provision. It does **not** apply to children and young people who are registered at a school but failing to attend. The duty to identify children missing from education reinforces existing duties placed upon schools to monitor attendance for pupils registered at their school.

'If a child or young person is receiving an education, not only do they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, but they are also in an environment that enables local agencies to safeguard and promote their welfare. If a child goes missing from education they could be at risk of significant harm.'

The purpose of the section 436A of the Education Act 1996/ 2002 is to ensure that local authorities' arrangements enable them to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school, and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (e.g. privately or in alternative provision). Those children identified as not receiving suitable education should be returned to full time education either at a school or in alternative provision. **This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age.**

Children not receiving a suitable education are at increased risk of a range of negative outcomes that could have long term damaging consequences for their life chances. For example they are at risk of not attaining the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life, and are at significant risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) once they have reached the compulsory school leaving age.

They could also be more vulnerable, and may be from disadvantaged families (experiencing multiple risks such as poverty, substance misuse, mental ill-health and poor housing), travelling communities, subject to forced marriages, immigrant families, be unaccompanied asylum seeking or trafficked children, and any child may be at risk of neglect, abuse, child sexual or criminal exploitation or may be disengaged from education.

Children at risk of harm/neglect, children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families, families of Armed Forces, missing children/runaways, children at risk of child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and children supervised by the Youth Justice System are highlighted as particularly at risk of missing education. However, this list is not exhaustive.

The procedures in this policy support;

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, which places a duty on local authorities to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, which requires the local authority to make arrangements to promote co-operation between the local authority, each of their relevant partners and such other persons or bodies, working with children in the local authority's area, as the authority consider appropriate. The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area – which includes protection from harm or neglect alongside other outcomes.
- Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, which requires a range of organisations to make arrangements for ensuring that their functions, and services provided on their behalf, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- Section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires all local authorities to make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a suitable education.
- The requirements of Statutory Instrument 2006 No 1751 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and the Education and Adoption Act 2016.
- The local authority Joint Missing Children Protocol
- Procedures for information sharing and the Early Help Assessment framework
- MARS (Children's Multi-Agency Resilience and Safeguarding) procedures to safeguard, protect from harm and promote the welfare of all children.

2.0 Definitions

The national definition of children who are not receiving a suitable education is:

"A compulsory school-age child who is not on the roll of a school, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority, and who is not receiving a suitable education at home".

Suitable education is defined as:

"Efficient full-time education suitable to a child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have".

Alternative provision is defined as:

"Educational provision arranged by local authorities or schools, and made off-site by a voluntary or private sector provider or by a Pupil Referral Unit/Short Stay School".

3.0 North Lincolnshire Council will embrace its statutory responsibilities by ensuring:

- That all pupils who go missing from schools in the North Lincolnshire area and move to other areas are speedily located and children are adequately safeguarded in the process;
- All departments, services and agencies will work together and share information regarding children who may be missing education;
- Support is given to other local authorities to locate their own missing pupils;
- The local authority encourages all independent, private, non-maintained and free schools to notify them when children of compulsory school age leave their roll, and of their destination wherever possible.

4.0 Reasons for Missing Education

Children can go missing when they do not enter, or fall out of the education system and there is no systematic process in place to identify those children; or to ensure that once identified they engage or re-engage with appropriate provision.

Examples of children who have never been on a school roll include:

- New to the country or area and not yet registered at a school
- Refusal to accept an offered school place
- Refusal to start school
- Elective home education that is unsuitable in accordance with Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act
- Children of transient families
- Lack of understanding/disregard of their parental responsibilities with regard to education
- Children caring for parents or siblings
- Children living in refuges
- Children who should be in alternative provision but are awaiting placements to be made.

Examples of children who have been on a school roll, but have then left, destination unknown include:

- Children sent abroad to be with other family
- Forced Marriage
- Children believed to have moved location within the UK but destination unknown
- Permanently excluded and not placed in other provision from the sixth day of exclusion
- Children working illegally, location unknown
- Runaways

- Children removed from school by parents/carers, alternative provision unknown
- Illegal or informal exclusion**
- Children at risk of radicalisation

There are also situations where personal circumstances of the child or of their family/carers may contribute to the withdrawal process and the failure to make a transition, for example, parents/carers escaping domestic violence, or families moved quickly under the police witness protection scheme. It is therefore essential that when any child goes missing from education, the case is approached in a sensitive and structured manner.

***Informal or unofficial exclusions, such as sending children home to 'cool off' are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents or carers.*

5.0 Identifying and Engaging Stakeholders

Agencies that regularly come into contact with families with children must ensure that in each new contact, basic information about the child is recorded. This must include the child's name, address, age, and the name of the child's primary carer, the child's GP and the name of the child's school if the child is of school age. Gaps in this information should be passed on to the relevant authority in accordance with local arrangements."

It is necessary to raise awareness amongst all stakeholders about how to inform the local authority about children missing from education, in order to ensure that all agencies apply this principle consistently. Often another agency becomes aware of the arrival or the existence of a child living in the area but not in education, before the local authority is aware.

In order to ensure all children and young people in North Lincolnshire are receiving education it will be necessary to regularly raise awareness with all stakeholders of the importance of missing children and remind agencies of the need to notify the local authority if they suspect a child is missing from education.

Relevant Partner Agencies may include:
☐ **Police**
☐ **UK Border Agency – Immigration Services**
☐ **Health – School Health, Accident and Emergency, GPs.**
☐ **Housing and Homeless Organisations**
☐ **Voluntary and Community Groups**
☐ **Children's Social Care**
☐ **Schools and other educational establishments**
☐ **Youth Justice Partnership**
☐ **Other Local Authority services including council tax and electoral roll**
☐ **External Local Authorities**
☐ **Members of the Public**

6.0 Assessing Vulnerability

Although the subject of this guidance is about children missing from education, there may be occasions when a child identified as missing from education may have been subject to a crime. Is there a good reason to believe that a crime may have been committed? If yes, then a referral to the police and social care should be made and local MARS procedures must be followed. The Children Missing Education Officer should also be informed.

7.0 The cost of missing education

The costs of missing out on education are very high both to the young people and their families and to society as a whole. Lack of or no qualifications, a fractured educational history and low levels of literacy and numeracy can be a likely outcome.

The most striking link is crime. According to the Audit Commission, nearly half of all school age offenders have been excluded from school and a quarter truanted significantly.

8.0 Parental Responsibilities

Parents/ Carers have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw them from school at any time to do so, unless they are subject to a School Attendance Order. Where a parent notifies the school in writing of their intention to home educate, the school **must** delete the child from its admission register and then inform the local authority.

Children who have special educational needs and have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) can be home educated. Where the EHCP sets out special educational provision that the child should receive at home, the local authority is under a duty to arrange that provision. Where the EHCP names a school as the place where the child should receive his or her education but the parent chooses to electively home educate their child, the local authority must assure itself that the provision being made by the parent is suitable to the child's special educational needs. In such cases, the local authority must review the EHCP annually.

9.0 School's Duties

Schools must monitor pupils' attendance through its daily register. The school should agree with the local authority the intervals in which they will inform the local authority of the details of pupils who are regularly absent from school or who have missed 10 school sessions or more without permission. The school must also notify the authority if a pupil is to be deleted from the admission register.

Pupils who remain on a school roll are not necessarily missing education but schools should monitor attendance and address it when it is poor. It is important that schools recognise the expectation to identify patterns of absence and concerns as early as possible to reduce the impact on attainment and on young people missing from education. It is expected that schools will address this with appropriate support packages through Early Help Assessment and the 'One Family Approach' in order to respond to the needs of children and their families where needed.

Schools also have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. Academies and independent schools have a similar safeguarding duty for their pupils *(Part 3 of Schedule 1 to the Independent Schools Standards (England) Regulations 2010 (SI 2010/1997).* It is expected that schools ask parents or carers for contact details, including names and addresses, of **all parents** when they register a pupil and ensure that they note details of court orders in a pupil's record.

Schools must also arrange full-time education for suspended pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed period of suspension and the first five days of a permanent exclusion. This information can be found in the school attendance and exclusions advice.

In cases of general school absence, schools should follow their attendance management procedures (i.e. telephone calls, letters, invitations to meetings at the school etc., Early Help to address emerging needs and referrals to the Education Inclusion Service of the local authority.

Any unexplained absence of a child who is subject to a Child Protection plan, must be treated as the highest priority and the Children's Social Care Team must be advised.

Schools have a duty to monitor attendance through registration and to inform the Local Authority where the attendance of an individual is causing concern; this involves a referral to the CME officer when:

☐ The child fails to attend without explanation and the school's processes for tracking have failed to identify the whereabouts of the child and family
☐ The child is expected to start at school but does not arrive, following the school's own enquiries
☐ The child does not return from a planned holiday (authorised or unauthorised)
☐ The child leaves the authority without a destination and attempts to locate have provided no forwarding address and school.

If the school has been unable to contact the parent where the child is missing or at risk of becoming CME, the process of notification and referral should begin at the earliest opportunity. Referrals to the CME Officer will be accepted following the completion of the CME Referral and school must have made adequate attempts at trying to locate the child and family, such as through home visits and calling the family members/liaising with other relevant schools etc.

Children referred as Missing from Education should only be removed from the school roll on the advice of and following consultation with the Children Missing Education Officer and authorisation from the service.

The Process of Referral and Removal from Roll of Children Missing Education

1. School will carry out initial checks and complete the Referral to CME as appropriate. Care should be taken to include all information held relating to contact, what checks and enquiries have been made, emergency telephone numbers and the last date the child attended school.

2. This form once completed should be emailed by school to the Education Inclusion Service at educationinclusioncandc@northlincs.gov.uk. It is advisable to request a 'read receipt' when sending the email referral.

3. Pupils will be tracked and traced by the CME Officer once the pupil has been referred to the service and after confirmed removal from the roll of the school if not located within 20 days.

The Education Inclusion Service will acknowledge via return email the receipt of the CME referral from the school.

Action for school staff if the child/family is not located. The school will remove the child from roll and upload the Common Transfer File to the lost pupil section of the s2s (school2school) website, using the following procedure:

Guidance for children on school roll but absent and at risk of missing in education
• upload the Common Transfer File (CTF) via the Schools Information Management System (SIMS), as usual
• use the destination code: XXXXXXX (seven Xs) – this seven Xs code will ensure the CTF is uploaded to the lost pupil section of the s2s website.

The child is officially missing in education and the local authority follows the internal child known to be missing in education procedures

10.0 Local Authorities' related duties and powers

Local authorities can use other duties and powers to support their work on CME. These include:

- Providing suitable full-time education to permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion;
- Safeguarding children's welfare, and their duty to co-operate with other agencies in ensuring children's safety;
- Serving notice on parents requiring them to satisfy the local authority that their child is receiving suitable education when it comes to the local authority's attention that a child might not be receiving such education
- Issuing a School Attendance Order (SAO) on parents who fail to satisfy the local authority that their child is receiving a suitable education, and in the opinion of the authority it is appropriate that the child should attend school;
- Prosecuting parents who do not comply with an SAO;
- Prosecuting or fining parents who fail to ensure their school-registered child attends school regularly;
- Applying to the court for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) for a child.

11.0 Regulations about deleting a pupil's name from its Admissions Register

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006, Regulation 8 (amended 2016) governs when a pupil can be removed from the admission and attendance register.

The regulations enable schools to delete compulsory school age children in the following circumstances:
• 8(1) (a) Where a pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a school attendance order, that another school is substituted by the LA for that named in the order or the order is revoked by the LA on the ground that the arrangements have been made for the child to receive s suitable education other than at school
• 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 sub-paragraph (a) or regulation 9, that he has been registered as a pupil at another school
• 8(1) (c) Where a pupil is registered at more than one school, and in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (j) or (m) or regulation 9, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor of any other school at which he/she is registered has given consent to the deletion
• 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
• 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/she is registered
• 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) 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 the proprietor and the LA have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.
• 8(1) (g) That he/she 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/she nor his/her parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age

• 8(1) (h) That he/she has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and;
(i) at no time was his/her absence during that period authorized 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 LA have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is
• 8(1) (i) That he/she 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
• 8(1) (j) The pupil has died
• 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; or
(ii) the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements for admission to the school's sixth form

• 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/she has ceased to be a pupil of the school
• 8(1) (m) That the pupil has been permanently excluded from the school (pending appeal)
• 8(1) (n) Where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, that he/she has not on completing such education transferred to a reception, or higher, class at the school
• 8(1) (o) Where;
(i) the pupil is a boarder at a maintained school or an Academy;
(ii) charges for board and lodging are payable by the parent of the pupil; and
(iii) those charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to which they relate

All other deletions are illegal and could result in court proceedings against the person responsible. With the exception of pupils who are subject to a school attendance order and pupils with special educational needs for whom the LA has made arrangements, there is currently no requirement for LA approval of deletions from registers.

12.0 Information Sharing

In order to effectively identify, track and engage children missing from education, it is necessary to share information with appropriate agencies. Information sharing is carried out securely, fairly and is compliant with legislation that protects data and personal/sensitive information.

Services offering support to vulnerable groups should be aware of the need to identify children missing from education and notify the Children Missing Education Officer accordingly.

13.0 Notification and Referral

It is important that schools and staff across organisations in North Lincolnshire are made aware of referral procedures to the Children Missing Education and the raising of awareness around this is a shared, multi-agency responsibility. **A referral form (CME 1) is attached to this policy (Appendix 1).**

14.0 Process following Children Missing Education Pathway notification:

- Referral logged on central database (Capita)
- Checks made on available authority and partner databases
- (Capita/Carefirst/Eclipse) including electoral roll, grants and benefits, School Admissions
- Enquiries made with other agencies and partners supported by information sharing protocols and agreements
- Checks made with agencies known to be involved with the family
- Checks made to specific prospective host Local Authorities where intelligence is available that a family may have moved there
- Daily checks and follow up of all CME referrals including last know whereabouts visit within authority and neighbouring properties/known relatives
- Request for a safe and well visit to be made to the address where appropriate to the receiving authority

• When a child is located the CME Officer will report the outcome to the referrer and request to take off roll of the school where appropriate

• Tracking will continue to take place until the child is placed on the roll of the school, in alternative educational provision, or located and if in another authority, responsibility for the child's education is taken by that authority

• NB Where concerns exist relating to the safety and welfare of any child missing from education, referral to other agencies such as Police and Social Care are made immediately

14.0 Children Going Missing During the School Day

There are other circumstances when a child could go missing for a short time and is found/ returns quickly. This includes children include going missing from the school site or whilst on a school visit during school hours. All such cases must be regarded with urgency and gravity, following the agreed protocol.

At any time, if a child goes missing from the school site or whilst on a school trip, the immediate procedure would be to call 999 to contact the police and then contact the family.

If a child is seen to abscond from the school site, staff should again notify the police and family. They should maintain visual contact of the child, but NEVER chase or run after a child who is running away as this may pose more danger from the risk a traffic accident.

Children Missing Education Referral Form

Please complete and return this form **by email** to childrenmissingeducation@northlincs.gov.uk with details of pupils who have unauthorised absence whose **whereabouts cannot be traced.**

This form should **not** be used for matters of persistent absence **(see guidance notes below).**

CHILD'S DETAILS					
SURNAME*					
FIRST NAME*					
GENDER*		**DOB***		**YEAR GROUP**	
ETHNICITY		**EAL**	**Y/N**	**IF YES PLEASE INDICATE FIRST LANGUAGE**	
UPN*:					
CURRENT ADDRESS* (include post code)					
PARENT'S NAME/PHONE NO*					
CURRENT/PREVIOUS SCHOOL*					
DATE LAST ATTENDED:					
PUPIL STATUS* (Please tick/delete as appropriate)	Looked After Child Formerly/Currently Known to Social Services Special Education Needs Traveller				

	YES	NO
Does the child have a history of non-attendance?		
Is there a pattern of unauthorised term time leave?		
Is this child subject to Private Fostering?		
Do you have any supporting documentation to support relocation out of North Lincolnshire? Please attach.		

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS	
NAME	
JOB TITLE	
TEAM NAME	
TEL NO	

EMAIL	
DATE	

ACTIONS TAKEN PRIOR TO REFERRAL				
OUTCOME OF HOME VISITS/PHONECALLS				
DATE	AM	PM	ADDRESS VISITED: (if different from above)	WHO DID YOU SPEAK TO? (State relationship to the pupil as well as forename and/or surname)

SAFEGUARDING RISK APPRAISAL (TO BE COMPLETED BY DSL)	
Risk Assessment* (are there any known concerns/safeguarding risks; is this child known to Children's Social Care/subject to a Child protection assessment/plan?)	
Date any concerns referred to SPOC:	
Outcome of referral to SPOC:	

OUTLINE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES

Please return completed form to:
childrenmissingeducation@northlincs.gov.uk

GUIDANCE NOTES

- This form **should be** used for reporting pupils of statutory school age who are absent from school for no longer than 5 consecutive days without authorisation and **whose whereabouts are unknown.**
- For general reference consult the Department for Education's statutory guidance on children missing education 2016.
- This form **should not** be used for reporting pupils who are absent from school without authorisation **who remain resident at their known address or have moved to another known address within the local authority.**
- Pupils who leave school and transfer to another school, or who leave school to another local authority and parents confirm their new address, should be reported to the School Admissions Service.
- Under the Education, Pupil Registration Regulations, schools and academies have a duty to carry out 'reasonable enquiries' into the whereabouts of pupils who meet the criteria for referral via this form. The enquiries schools and academies are expected to undertake are outlined in the checklist with their outcomes recorded on this form.

CHECKLIST

In most circumstances, the school's enquiries will commence **from the first day of unauthorised absence.** Have you:

- ✓ Called the CME team for background checks on the family e.g. schools attended by siblings?
- ✓ Has the DSL ensured that any safeguarding concerns have been promptly referred to SPOC (Single Point of Contact or Children's Services) on 01724 296500
- ✓ Tasked appropriate staff to check with all members of staff who the pupil may have had contact with?
- ✓ Checked with the pupil's friends, siblings and known relatives at this school or other schools?
- ✓ Tasked appropriate school staff to conduct telephone calls to ALL numbers held on the pupil file?
- ✓ Tasked appropriate staff to conduct home visit(s) to the last known address of the pupil?
- ✓ If possible, enquired of neighbours as to the location of the family?
- ✓ Sent a letter to the last known address and recorded the outcome?

ALSO:

- ✓ **If there is good reason to believe that a crime may have been committed, have you made a prompt referral to the Police? E.g. this is a very sudden, unexpected situation and/or there are cultural reasons to suspect that the pupil is at risk or there have been past suspicions concerning the pupil and family which, together with the sudden disappearance, are worrying?**
- ✓ **If the pupil is subject to a Child Protection plan or investigation, has the social worker been informed of the pupil's absence?**
- ✓ **Similarly as above if the pupil is 'looked after'?**

In the three instances above, SPOC should be informed immediately.