



# CME Policy

**September 2023**

Responsibility	Richard Rainbird-Hitchins
Date of last review	September 2023
Date of next review	September 2024

Signed:

**Head Teacher**

Date: 13.09.2023

Signed:

**Designated Safeguarding Lead**

Date: 13.09.2023

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Attendance Policy.

## Attendance Expectations:

1. All families are encouraged positively to make sure their children attend every day.
2. Attendance is monitored daily to identify any pupils not in school. On a daily basis, the parents of any absent pupils are contacted to find out the reason why.
3. After every holiday, including half term, the parents of any absent children are immediately contacted to ensure the children have not gone on unauthorised extended leave. Any requests for extended leave in school time are refused unless parents can provide evidence of an emergency, e.g. sickness, bereavement etc. In all cases parents are asked to provide a return date and if possible copies of flight details etc.
4. Any parents/carers requesting special leave complete a form which is submitted to the Headteacher. The school will be mindful of risks to children including FGM (See Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).
5. Regular Meetings are held with SLT and attendance is a standing agenda item, to ensure all pupils at risk are identified and prompt action taken.

## Introduction

The Aspire Academy is concerned about any 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.

The purpose of the CME Policy is to ensure that children and young people missing education are re-engaged in appropriate education provision in the shortest possible time, with lasting success and that 'no child slips through the net'.

## Legal Context

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a new duty on all local authorities in England and Wales for them to make arrangements to identify CME in their area. The duty applies to all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and are not receiving a suitable education.

## Purpose of the CME Policy

The purpose of the CME Policy is to establish a set of principles to ensure children and young people are safely on roll at a school.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and procedures.

## Aim of the Policy

- To assist the school, local authority and partner agencies in identifying CME
- Raise awareness of the notification process
- Explain how children will be tracked and monitored until they are re- engaged in education
- Explain the mechanism to access appropriate education provision
- Provide clarity to stakeholders on how children can be tracked across boundaries when a child moves to another local authority area.

## Definition of CME

For the purpose of this document a child missing education is defined as: *‘Any child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is not on a school roll being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately, or in alternative provision) and who had been out of any education provision for a substantial period of time (practice nationally is four weeks or more).’*

Department for Education

## Definition of Children at Risk of Missing Education

Children and young people with poor school attendance are often the most vulnerable and are more likely to become children missing from education.

The Aspire Academy School and the Local Authority recognise that the duty to identify children not receiving education does not apply in relation to children who are registered at school who are not attending regularly. The authority’s CME strategy does however, include the reinforcement of duties that already exist for schools and therefore supports the monitoring of children at risk of missing education in the future.

The monitoring of children at risk of missing education is carried out in partnership with schools where attendance of individual pupils gives cause for concern with the aim of reducing the risk in the future.

## Why children go missing from education

Children and young people can go missing from school or agreed education provision, for a wide variety of reasons. Their personal circumstances or those of their families may contribute to the withdrawal process. Children can go missing when there is no systematic process in place to identify them and ensure they re- engage with appropriate provision.

The most common reasons why children miss education include:

- Failing to register at school at age 5
- Failing to make successful transition from infant to junior and primary or middle to secondary
- Ease to attend due to exclusion (formal/illegal withdrawal)
- Mid-year transfer of school;
- Unable to find a school place after moving into local authority;
- Victims of bullying;
- Frequent moves of house including periods of homelessness or periods in a refuge
- Transience/family mobility;
- Family breakdown;
- Frequent absence leading to low attendance (especially Yr10 and Yr11);
- Disaffection resulting in parents withdrawing the pupil or 'being asked to leave';
- Involvement in youth offending.

Certain vulnerable groups are more likely to be affected by the factors; these are;

- Young people who have committed offences
- Children living in women's refuges
- Children of troubled families i.e. suffering bereavement, trauma, domestic violence and homelessness
- Young runaways
- Children with special educational needs
- Refugee and asylum-seeking children
- Travelling families
- Looked after children
- Teenage parenthood
- Children with mental health issues
- Young carers
- Children who are permanently excluded from school
- Young people being forced into marriage
- Children involved in substance misuse

## The Role of the Multi Agency Teams

To reduce the risk of children and young people falling out of the education system, the authority has developed teams and services that support the work needed in this area. These teams work closely together to ensure there is coherence and consistency within the system. These teams ensure that the process for identifying, investigating and finding CME is carried out.

The duties and responsibilities of these teams include:

- Tracking CME
- Ensuring all notifications of CME are correctly recorded on the relevant systems
- Investigating relevant systems
- Coordinating casework in relation to investigating CME including working closely with relevant services and agencies to determine appropriate provision for the child

- Ensuring admission into school through the admissions process and the Authority's Fair Access Protocol where required
- Reviewing and monitoring cases held until re-engagement in education is successfully secured through the CME/EWO team - Pupils missing out on education
- Providing relevant reports for relevant agencies/boards
- Hold regular CME meetings to review complex and urgent cases
- Raise awareness of the CME policy and practice including training/awareness raising events for school governors and partner organisations

## Key Stakeholders

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and share information. In order to fulfil the requirements of the CME policy the authority works in collaboration to ensure the early identification and intervention of children who are not receiving a suitable education. All stakeholders have a responsibility for CME.

The Aspire Academy works closely with stakeholders to ensure the safety of a child.

Key stakeholders include:

- Worcester Children's First
- Children with Disability Social Work Team
- Complex Needs Nursing Team
- Children's Services including Admissions, Out of School Team, Equality for Minorities (Ethnic Minority and Travellers), Parent Partnership, Education and Welfare Officers.
- Other schools and Academies including Support Centres;
- Health/PCT
- Voluntary Organisations;
- Police and PCSO
- CAMHS
- Referring schools (Home Schools) in cases of Dual registration

## Reducing the Risk of Children Missing Education

All schools, academies and the general public have a moral and corporate responsibility in relation to CME. Parents who do not ensure their children are accessing a 'suitable' education can be deemed as breaking the law. Anyone who becomes aware of a child or young person who does not appear to be accessing education should refer this child to Worcestershire's Education Welfare Service (EWS) or Child Missing Education Team: [cme@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:cme@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk)

The authority, in partnership with the other agencies listed above aims to ensure that all colleagues in all agencies who become aware of a child who is living in the authority but not in identified education provision, will notify the authority.

## The Role of Children's Services

Individual services within the authority play a role in preventing the risk of CME. These services will address issues related to non-attendance/poor attendance/persistence absence

at the same time as working in partnership with relevant agencies to monitor and investigate children who meet the criteria under the definition of CME and are at risk of missing education.

## The Role of the Aspire Academy

All schools have a duty under section 10 of the Children's Act 2004 in partnership with the local authority with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area. Section 175 of the Education Act puts a duty on all schools to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This includes identifying children who are not receiving education. It is expected that schools and academies will have carried out all reasonable enquiries within their capacity to ascertain the whereabouts of the young person and engaging them in education prior to informing the local authority that the child is missing education. The school will undertake reasonable actions to identify the whereabouts of the child. This includes telephoning all contact numbers, making enquiries with friends and family, making enquiries with schools attended by any siblings and wherever possible undertaking a visit to the home address. A written record will be made.

Concerns will be referred to Worcestershire's Children Missing Education Team:  
**edwelfareCME@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk** or 01905 844666

## Safeguarding of CME

A significant number of children referred as missing education are either found in education following initial investigations or found but not in education and subsequently supported to return. There are a number of children who are not found in education, as the family cannot be located following the normal investigations.

A child who is not found in education following CME investigations does not infer that the child is at risk. However, it is appropriate to escalate the concerns to consider potential risks to the child. A process is in place to facilitate this and the DSL and Headteacher should be notified straight away.

## Monitoring the policy and procedures

At the Aspire Academy it is the responsibility of the DSL/Attendance Officer/Headteacher and Governors to work closely with Worcestershire Children Missing from Education team, to ensure systems and procedures in school are robust, monitored and followed.

## Procedures for The Aspire Academy School

Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (2013) used by the Police uses the following definitions:

**Missing:**

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

**Absent:**

‘A person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be’.

Please Note – West Mercia Police will not categorise the following as absent -they will always be subject of a missing person investigation:

- All children 14 and under;
- All registered sex offenders;
- All children 15 and over who have a CSE warning marker, CSE intelligence or are named in a child abduction warning notice.

Statutory Guidance On Children Who Run Away Or Go Missing From Home Or Care (January 2014) uses the following definitions:

**Child:**

For the purposes of this document a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. ‘Children’ therefore means ‘children and young people’ throughout the Guidance.

**Away from Placement without Authorisation:**

A Looked After child whose whereabouts are known but who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

**Young Runaway:**

A child who has run away from their home or care placement or feels they have been forced or lured to leave.

**Missing Child:**

A child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers.

**Missing from Care:**

A Looked After child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g. school) and their whereabouts are not known.

**Responsible local authority:**

The local authority that is responsible for a Looked After child's care and care planning.

**Host local authority:**

The local authority in which a Looked After child is placed when placed out of the responsible local authority's area.

The police classification of a person as 'Missing' or 'Absent' will be based on on-going risk assessment;

Absent within the police definition would not include those defined as Away from Placement Without Authorisation above: a child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'Missing' or 'Absent' under the police definitions.

**Procedure for absence, without contact from parents/carers:**

1. 1<sup>st</sup> day of absence, if no contact is received from parents/carers, SMS sent to notify the parents/carers of absence and request for them to make contact regarding absence. If still no contact is made follow up calls are carried out to guardians and all contact. If the pupil has a social worker they will be informed of their absence.
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> day of absence with no contact – step 1 is repeated and if still no contact a safe and well home visit is carried by a member of staff. If there is a particular safeguarding concern for the absent pupil or the pupil is LAC, this step will be taken on their 1<sup>st</sup> day of absence – home visit logged on CPOMS – the referring school are notified
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> day of absence with no contact and unsuccessful safe and well home visit, steps 1 and 2 are repeated, with a second safe and well visit being carried out – the referring schools are notified
4. If on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of absence we have still had no contact and unsuccessful home visits the pupil will be reported missing to the police. This step may be taken sooner and will be based on each individual pupils' circumstances. The referring schools are kept informed.

**Procedure for absence, with contact from parents/carers:**

If a pupil is absent from school parents/carers have informed us of the reasons why, they are expected to keep in contact daily. If we do not have contact from the parents we attempt to make contact and follow the steps above.

Where a pupil has been absent for 5 consecutive days from school on 5<sup>th</sup> day a home visit will be arranged and if the absence is due to illness evidence to support the illness reasons will be requested. A home visit or outreach session may be arranged sooner than the 5<sup>th</sup> day of absence and will be based on each individual pupil circumstances.

**Notifying the local authority of pupil absence:**

We notify the Local Authority of the following authorised or unauthorised absence.

10 days continuous absence (including if the child is likely to be absent for more than 15 days due to illness/injury)



Irregular attendance or regular absence where attendance is not improving despite ongoing school intervention.

Update to any previous notification - this should be done at regular intervals (suitable to that case), or if new information has been received.

*This notification is via Worcestershire Children's Portal 'Absence and Irregular Attendance Form'.*

### **Did You Know?**

Around 400 children and young people go missing each year in any one county - of these some go missing repeatedly..

Females are more likely to run away than males.

The peak age range for running away is 14- to 15-years old.

Certain young people are more likely to runaway including those who define themselves as being gay, lesbian, disabled or having a learning disability as well as those living in stepfamilies and lone parent families.

There are strong links between running away and problems in other areas of young people's lives - such as school, drug and alcohol use, child sexual exploitation and offending.

Research shows that a quarter of young runaways felt that they were forced to leave home. One in six young runaways slept rough on the most recent occasion they were away. Half stayed with friends.

One in eight runaways said that they had to resort to survival strategies such as stealing and begging whilst away from home.

Around one in 12 of runaways said that they had been hurt or harmed on the most recent occasion that they ran away.

Over two-thirds of runaways said that their parents or carers did not report them missing to the Police on the most recent occasion that they were away. A further 13% were not sure, and only a fifth (19%) said that they had been reported.

*All statistics were taken from Still Running II: findings from the second national survey of young runaways, The Children's Society 2005*

### **Remember**

There is a distinction between young people who runaway and those who are forced to leave by their parents or carers.

Children and young people who are forced to leave will often not be reported missing.

If a child is taken overseas it may be appropriate to contact the Consular Directorate at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office which offers assistance to British nationals in distress (Tel: 020 7008 1500)

### **Circumstances for Implementation of Procedure**

This procedure applies if any child goes missing or cannot be traced and they are:

- Looked After by the local authority (including placed with Foster Carers)
- Missing from home or have run away and there is cause for concern
- Missing from a private fostering arrangement
- Missing from a residential school

### **Circumstances for The Aspire Academy**

- The Aspire Academy School will also implement the procedure of reporting a child missing from education if they are not at school and either parents cannot be contacted or parents do not know where they are. This is due to the increased vulnerability of our children.
- We acknowledge that a child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and that such children are at risk of being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation. The Aspire Academy School has robust attendance procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. All staff should be alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

### **Professionals should make this contact with other agencies:**

- The West Mercia Police Enquiry Centre on 101
- The Social Worker for the child (or duty officer out of hours) if a child is actively open to social care, and specifically if a child subject of a child protection referral or a Section 47 Enquiry
- A child with a Child Protection Plan goes missing or is removed from her/his address outside the terms of the Child Protection Plan
- A Child in Care who leaves or is removed from his or her placement, without this being part of the Care Plan  
A child about whom there are concerns e.g. one who is subject to a Child and Family Single Assessment
- A child where there are developing concerns about their safety

### **Children's Social Care should then Inform:**

- The designated safeguarding manager if the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan
- The Independent Reviewing Officer if the child is Looked After;
- Any individuals known to hold Parental Responsibility for the child (not if Honour Based Violence is known or suspected);
- All other local agencies who know the child.

Existing records in these agencies must be checked to obtain any information which might help trace the missing child, e.g. details of friends and relatives, and this information should be passed to the police officer undertaking the missing person enquiry.

The Designated Nurse for Safeguarding must be notified about a missing child, family or a pregnant woman. S/he will co-ordinate the circulation of appropriate local or national notifications.

Schools should refer to the Children Missing Education Guidance [CME Guidance 2022](#) and refer the case to the Education Welfare Service 01905 846 760.

The social worker should discuss with her/his manager whether to notify members of the extended family and if so, how.

### **Strategy Meeting**

If the child has not been traced within 5 working days a Strategy Meeting should be convened.

Members of the meeting will need to consider whether to circulate details of the missing child to other local authorities and other agencies in the area.

Consideration should be given to national notification of authorities and agencies including social security, the benefits agency and child benefit agency.

A senior member of Children's Social Care should seek assistance from the Department for Work and Pensions/Inland Revenue if the police have not already contacted them.

If there is any suspicion that the child may be removed from UK jurisdiction, appropriate legal interventions should be considered and legal services consulted about options.

It should also be agreed by all agencies at this stage what action will be taken when the child is found. Actions set should be relevant to the individual case.

If the Strategy Meeting agrees details of the child/family are to be circulated to other local authorities, the Lead Social Worker should draft a short letter giving details of:

- The children in the family;
- Other family members or significant adults;
- (Where relevant) the category of Significant Harm leading to the Child Protection Plan
- The circumstances causing concern
- Action required if a child is found
- Contact arrangements for the Lead Social Worker/social worker - including out of office hours;
- Physical descriptions of key people (and photographs, if available).

The letter should be sent to the designated safeguarding manager who in turn must:

- Inform her/his director and the council's press office;
- Distribute it to her/his peers nationally with the request that they circulate the information to relevant parts of Children's Social Care and other local agencies

### **When a Child is Found**

Within 24 hours of the child's return, the police will inform all relevant agencies of the child's return and undertake a "safe and well" check. This will ensure as far as possible that it is safe to return to the home or care institution or placement that they have been absent from, and explore steps to minimise the likelihood of the child going missing again.

If the child is not known to Children's Services but has been missing 3 or more times within a 90 day period, Children's Services will undertake a Child and Family Single Assessment of the child's individual and family circumstances.

A joint interview by the Police and Children's Social Care will be arranged if there are already concerns in existence relating to either:

- The missing individual, the circumstances under which they went missing, their activity whilst missing or potential exposure to danger/risk whilst missing; or
- The care establishment that the child or young person has been absent from; or
- Their home circumstances

### **Looked After Children**

- An Independent return interview should be offered whenever a missing Looked After Child is found. The person conducting the interview should usually be independent of the child's placement and of the responsible local authority. Where possible, the child should be given the opportunity to talk before they return to their placement.
- This interview should provide a safe opportunity for the child to discuss any concerns regarding her/his care including if s/he chose to run away from an abusive situation. It must take place without parents, foster carers or residential staff either present or in close proximity.
- If the child indicates a wish to be interviewed by an alternative professional, all reasonable efforts must be made to accommodate her/his wishes

If the child has been found outside of the local authority and is not likely to return, representatives of the 'receiving' authority must be involved in this strategy discussion and the transfer of the case must be discussed.

### **Decision-making for All Cases**

If the child is Looked After, the Independent Reviewing Officer would need to decide if an early Looked After Review is required. If the child is subject of a Child Protection Plan, the

designated safeguarding officer must decide and record whether to bring forward the next review conference.

The social worker and team manager must consider any need for legal action and record the reasons for their decision.

### **Child Indicated by Other Local Authorities to be Missing**

Each designated safeguarding officer must ensure that duty systems incorporate a method for keeping and referring to the notifications of children and/or families who are missing.

If, after two years there is no communication from the authority where the child and/or family went missing, the child and/or family's details may be removed from the list.

### **Children Missing Education**

The Aspire Academy informs the local authority of any student who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of The Aspire Academy by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. elective home education.
- Have ceased to attend The Aspire Academy and no longer live within reasonable distance of The Aspire Academy at which they are registered.
- Have ceased to attend The Aspire Academy School before compulsory school leaving age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend The Aspire Academy after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and The Aspire Academy does not reasonably believe they will be returning to The Aspire at the end of that period have been permanently excluded.

As a result of daily registration the school is particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If the missing child is subject to a Child Protection Plan, the DSL must inform the allocated social worker immediately. If they are unavailable, then the DSL must contact the team where s/he is based.

Having made initial enquiries about the child's whereabouts the school should refer to the Children Missing Education Guidance unless they have concerns as outlined above and then they must follow the guidance previously detailed.

Worcestershire has a Child Missing Education point of contact within the Education Welfare Service and every practitioner working with a child has a responsibility to inform them if they know or suspect that a child is not receiving an education: **edwelfareCME@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk**

The Education Welfare Service will then make the relevant enquiries.

See also Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (Department for Education (2015)

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Safeguarding (Including Child Protection) Online Safety Policy  
Behaviour Policy

Conduct for Staff Policy  
Attendance Policy