



DOWNSVIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Children Missing from Education (CME) Policy

Originator: M Pugh

Approved by the Governing Board of Downsview Primary and Nursery

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Downsview Primary School
Biggin Way
Upper Norwood
London
SE19 3XE

Telephone: 020 8764 4611
Email: sec1@downsview.croydon.sch.uk
Website: www.downsview.croydon.sch.uk

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION (CME)

Definition:

A Child Missing from Education is defined by the DfE as “a child of compulsory school age who is not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who has been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually four weeks or more).”

In Croydon, referrals for CME are accepted after 10 working days of reasonable checks being carried out by the educational provider and their Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Legislation:

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (amended – 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.” We stand a better chance of ensuring a child’s safety if we know how and where they are receiving their education.

By “suitable education” we mean efficient full-time education suitable to the child’s age. Children Missing from Education should not be confused with:

- Children who are on roll at a school but are not in regular attendance. In this case, referrals should be made to the Education Welfare Service, or the school’s Attendance and Welfare Officer;
- Children who are receiving Home Education (known as Elective Home Education);
- Children whose parents have applied for a school place, and the application is being dealt with via the Admissions procedures.

Working with other agencies:

It is important that all agencies work closely together to ensure that the dangers of children becoming missing from education are reduced, as these children are at much greater risk of significant harm and are particularly vulnerable.

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information appropriately. All information is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Under Paragraph 5(c) of Schedule 2 of the Act, personal information can be disclosed where necessary for the exercise of any function given to any person under enactment. As noted above, Croydon Council has a duty to ensure that children within its boundaries are being appropriately educated, and it is necessary for this function that we obtain this information.

Reasons behind CME

In Croydon, the main reasons behind Children Missing from Education are those who fail to start at an appropriate education provision either at the start of the new academic year or following a mid-year transfer, becoming lost from school rolls, or failure to register at a new school when moving in or out of the Borough. Unfortunately there are also many other explanations behind CME, meaning that there are a lot of possible variants.

As well as the main reasons already stated, please see below for a list of potential alternative triggers of CME and circumstances, which may make a child more likely to be affected by these factors:

- Moving in and out of boroughs and beginning the school application process;
- Failure of schools to notify the Local Authority of a child being off-rolled, or being excluded;
- Withdrawal of a child from school by the parent/ carer;
- Failure to transition between schools;
- Disengagement;
- Frequent house moves, periods of homelessness or time spent in refuge/ temporary accommodation;
- Youth Offending Service involvement;
- Generational disengagement;
- Children of Gypsy, Roma and Travelling families;
- Children of immigrant families; Asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors (Looked After Children);
- Young carers;
- Children with Special Educational Needs;
- Children who are Privately Fostered or are known to Children’s Social Care (e.g. CP Plan, Child In Need)

- Trafficked children;
- Children who have experienced domestic violence and other adverse family circumstances.

By identifying and working with these families, we aim to reduce the number of children and young people who are missing from education. Statistics shows 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
- Social disengagement
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse
- Neglect and emotional abuse
- Sexual exploitation/ involvement in the sex trade
- Teenage parenthood
- Physical health issues
- Forced marriage
- Poverty

Who does the school contact?

If we know or suspect that a child is missing from education, the school contacts Croydon straightaway. The DfE states in “Working Together to Safeguard Children” (updated February 2019) that “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. To help local agencies and professionals find children who are missing from education and identify those that are at risk of going missing from education, guidance was issued in July 2004, identifying and maintaining contact with children missing, or at risk of going missing from education.”

If a child has been permanently excluded and parents are in need of some advice, the school will contact Croydon’s Reintegration and Exclusions Officer on 0208 726 7438 or by email to: Exclusions@croydon.gov.uk.

OFF-ROLL NOTIFICATIONS – when can a child be taken off the school register?

The following are prescribed as the grounds on which the name of a pupil of compulsory school age shall be deleted from the admission register—

Failure to engage

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

A School Attendance Order (SAO) is an order issued by the Local Authority to the parent of a pupil in circumstances where the parent has failed to provide their child with a full time education, either by the child being on roll at a school, or by providing a “suitable, efficient” education other than at school.

- Should a parent refuse or fail to engage with Learning Access services, and not actively seek a school place, it may be necessary for the relevant Officer to make a referral to the EWS in order for a SAO, and subsequent proceedings, to be pursued.

- The parent/ carer should be made aware of their legal obligation to ensure that their child(ren) is receiving suitable education and failing to take responsibility for this can result in the local authority taking legal action.

- If a child’s attendance starts to fall, Downsview will take appropriate action such as parent meetings and warning letters. A SAO cannot be pursued by the Local Authority whilst a child is on the roll of a school.

- Downsview will endeavour to use interventions to attempt to reengage the family and if it is seen as necessary, legal action can be taken. This may be in the form of a Penalty Notice Request or a request for Stage 3 Criminal Investigation should they feel that an offence has been committed.

School transfers and managed moves

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; Once the new school has confirmed that the pupil is on roll with them, the pupil can be removed from roll. There should not be a gap in the child's education provision.

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 is registered has given consent to the deletion;

This applies in instances such as managed moves where an agreement has been given by the trial school to make the move permanent.

- The original school should not remove the pupil from roll until after the trial period has been completed and the new school has confirmed that the pupil may remain on roll.
- During a managed move, the previous school should code the pupil's attendance at the trial school as "D" as s/he is "dual-registered" and attending a separate provision.
- The trial school should code attendance/absence as normal.
- fairaccess@croydon.gov.uk should also be notified of any managed moves of pupils between schools.

Elective Home Education

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; Section 3.12 of the DfE's Elective home education: Guidelines for local authorities clearly states: "Schools must not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding an exclusion or because the child has a poor attendance record. In the case of exclusion, they must follow the statutory guidance. If the pupil has a poor attendance record, the school and local authority must address the issues behind the absenteeism and use the other remedies available to them."

- Downsview will not remove a pupil from roll until they have received in writing a request from a parent to home educate.
- We will also notify the Local Authority that the parent has decided to home educate their child(ren).
- Downsview will therefore complete the CME/Off Role Notification form and also provide copies of any written notification from the parent.
- We will not remove a pupil from roll if a parent requests to remove their child from roll but no subsequent education provision is identified.

Reasonable travelling distances

e) except in the case of a boarder, that he has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which he is registered; A "reasonable distance" is defined by the DfE as being 45 minutes away by public transport if the child is of a primary school age, or 1 hour 15 minutes if the pupil is of a secondary school age.

- The school can off roll once confirmation has been received from the Local Authority that the child is no longer living within a reasonable distance of the school.
- Off-roll notification must be sent to the local authority.

Long term absence

f) in the case of a pupil granted leave of absence exceeding ten school days for the purpose of a holiday in accordance with regulation 7(3), 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
 - III. both the proprietor and the local authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is;
- It is important that a parent provides the school with a date at which the pupil will return to school. If the pupil does not return to the school, the school should;

- Write to the parent reminding them of the return date, and warning them that if the pupil does not return to school within 10 days they may be removed from the school roll.

- If the pupil subsequently fails to return to school and the school takes the decision to remove the pupil from roll, the school should refer to their Education Welfare Officer who will investigate.
- Once the EWO confirms that they are unable to locate the family, the school may remove the pupil from roll and notify the parent, along with the local authority's CME Officer.

Medical reasons

g) that they are 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 them nor their parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;

The School can liaise with the EWS in cases such as this who will be able to provide with advice on how to make contact with an appropriate medical officer.

Non-attendance for 20 days

- h) that the child has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and —
- at no time was their absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6(2);
 - 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
 - both the proprietor of the school and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is;

An investigation led by the school should take place whenever a pupil is absent from school for a continuous period without any contact from parents and/or when child protection concerns exist.

- Schools also have a statutory duty under Section 12 of these regulations to notify the local authority where a child has been absent from school for 10 consecutive days due to a period of unauthorised absence. A school can do this by completing the CME/Off Roll Notification Form once all reasonable enquires have been undertaken.
- The school must await confirmation from the local authority before removing a child from roll.

Death of a pupil

- j) that the pupil has died;
- The Local Authority should be notified as per usual reporting procedures.

Exclusions

- m) that the child has been permanently excluded from the school;
- The school should send notification to the local authority, to be received directly by the Exclusions and Reintegration Officer; Paul Brightly-Jones.
 - An off-roll notification should be sent to Exclusions@croydon.gov.uk, and documents relating to the exclusion should be attached e.g. exclusion letter sent to the parents of the child.

Reception aged children

- n) where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, that he has not on completing such education transferred to a reception, or higher, class at the school.
- In instances where a child has left a Nursery Provision and the child's destination is not known, a CME referral should be completed and sent to the CME Officer via ChildrenMissingfromEducation@croydon.gov.uk.
 - The school may off-roll the child once advised to by the LA.

Croydon's Contacts for CME Team

Email: ChildrenMissingfromEducation@croydon.gov.uk

Telephone: 0208 726 6000

Children, Families and Learning

Croydon Council

4th Floor, Zone A

Bernard Weatherill House

8 Mint Walk

Croydon, CR0 1EA

Lead – Strategic Lead for Safeguarding, Behaviour and Inclusion– Val Burrell-Walker
Valerie.Burrell-Walker@croydon.gov.uk

Children Missing in Education Lead – Nabeela Boodoo-Uddin
Nabeela.Boodoo-Uddin@croydon.gov.uk

CME inbox
ChildrenMissingfromEducation@croydon.gov.uk

Safeguarding

If any professional working with children has immediate concerns for a child's safety, a timely referral should be made to the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 0208 726 6400 or by completing the relevant referral form which can be found here; www.croydon.gov.uk/childreferral

If any member of the public has concerns, these should be raised with the Croydon MASH team on 0208 726 6400.

CME checks

Once a referral has been made by the CME, the CME Officer will carry out checks to gather information in relation to the child and their family which may help to locate the child. These checks may include:

- Information to be gathered from the previous school, e.g. attendance, behaviour, any risk factors;
- Does the child have any siblings of school age;
- Is any information available in relation to the siblings' current educational status;
- Are the family known to Children's Social Care;
- Are the family known to the Youth Offending Service;
- Have any members of the family come to attention on the PNC (Police National Database)
- Are any of the family members known to any internal agencies, e.g. Family Resilience Service,

CYPRS, SEN

- Is any helpful information available on the Council Tax Register?
- Croydon Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub Intelligence Request

Case closure

CME cases should be closed when:

- The child has a destination which has been verified;
- All education databases have been updated to reflect the above;
- A child is missing despite all reasonable efforts to locate them. In this case, the child's details will be uploaded onto the National Missing Children's Database.

Following closure of a CME, notification will be sent to the referrer with the outcome, and the details should be uploaded onto the relevant databases.

CME Guidance

DfE, Children Missing Education (Statutory guidance for local authorities) September 2016
London Child Protection Procedures, Children Missing from Care, Home and School Procedure.
Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (amended – Education and Inspections Act 2006)