



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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CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION (CME)

At Downsview Primary and Nursery School, we believe that every child has the right to a full-time, suitable education in a safe and supportive environment. Regular attendance at school is fundamental to children's educational achievement, wellbeing and future life chances.

Children who are missing from education are recognised as one of the most vulnerable groups of children. They are at significantly increased risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, trafficking, radicalisation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, mental health difficulties and poor educational outcomes.

For this reason, identifying children who may be missing from education is a safeguarding responsibility shared by all staff.

Downsview recognises that preventing children from becoming missing from education begins with excellent attendance, strong relationships with families and early identification of vulnerability.

We are committed to working proactively with parents, carers, Croydon Council and partner agencies to ensure that every child receives a suitable education and that any child whose whereabouts or educational provision becomes unknown is identified quickly and appropriate action is taken without delay.

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Elective Home Education Procedures
- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- every child of compulsory school age receives a suitable full-time education;
- children at risk of becoming missing from education are identified as early as possible;
- robust procedures are followed whenever a child cannot be located;
- safeguarding concerns are identified and acted upon immediately;
- statutory duties relating to admissions, attendance and removing pupils from roll are fully met;
- effective partnership working takes place between the school, Croydon Council and other agencies.

Downsview recognises that preventing children from becoming missing from education is far more effective than responding once they have disappeared from education. Early intervention and strong relationships with families are therefore central to our approach.

1. Legislative Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition)
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance
- Children Missing Education – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE, August 2024)
- Croydon Council Children Missing from Education Procedures

2. Definition

The Department for Education defines a Child Missing from Education (CME) as:

"A child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school."

Children missing education should not be confused with children whose attendance is poor but who remain on roll at a school.

A child who is persistently absent continues to receive an education through their school, whereas a child missing from education has no confirmed educational provision.

The school recognises that some children are at greater risk of becoming missing from education, including those who:

- have experienced abuse or neglect;
- are subject to Child Protection Plans or Child in Need Plans;
- are Looked After or Previously Looked After;
- have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND);
- have significant medical or mental health needs;
- are young carers;
- experience domestic abuse within the family;
- frequently move home;
- are from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities;
- are refugees, asylum seekers or newly arrived families;
- are at risk of exploitation or criminal activity;
- have a history of poor attendance or repeated school moves.

The school ensures that additional vigilance is given to children whose individual circumstances may place them at increased risk.

3. Aims

Downsview Primary and Nursery School aims to:

- safeguard all children from the risks associated with missing education;
- promote excellent attendance and engagement;
- identify concerns at the earliest opportunity;
- maintain accurate admission and attendance records;
- work positively with families to overcome barriers to attendance;
- ensure all statutory notifications are completed promptly;
- work collaboratively with Croydon Council and partner agencies;
- ensure no child is removed from roll unlawfully;
- ensure all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities relating to Children Missing from Education.

4. Guiding Principles

Our work is underpinned by the following principles:

Safeguarding First

Every unexplained absence has the potential to become a safeguarding concern. Staff will always consider whether a child's absence or disappearance may indicate that they are at risk of harm.

Early Intervention

The school believes that early communication with families prevents many cases of children becoming missing from education.

Shared Responsibility

Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. All members of staff have a duty to report concerns immediately.

Partnership Working

The school works closely with Croydon Council, Education Welfare, Children's Social Care, health professionals, police and other agencies where appropriate to locate children and safeguard their welfare.

Child-Centred Practice

All decisions made under this policy place the child's welfare and best interests at the centre of decision making.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Board

The Governing Board has overall responsibility for ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties relating to Children Missing from Education.

Governors will ensure that:

- appropriate policies and procedures are in place and reviewed annually;
- safeguarding arrangements are effective and comply with statutory guidance;
- attendance is prioritised across the school;
- leaders monitor attendance and children at risk of becoming missing from education;
- appropriate resources are available to support attendance and safeguarding.
- The Governing Board receives regular reports relating to attendance, persistent absence and safeguarding to enable effective oversight.

Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for implementing this policy and ensuring that statutory duties are fulfilled.

The Headteacher will:

- promote a culture where excellent attendance is everyone's responsibility;
- ensure robust systems exist for monitoring attendance and identifying children at risk;
- ensure staff understand their responsibilities under this policy;
- ensure appropriate safeguarding action is taken where concerns arise;

- ensure no pupil is removed from roll unlawfully;
- maintain effective working relationships with Croydon Council and partner agencies;
- ensure statutory notifications are completed within required timescales;
- report significant concerns to governors where appropriate.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead plays a central role in identifying and responding to children at risk of becoming missing from education.

The DSL will:

- consider all Children Missing from Education concerns as safeguarding concerns;
- work alongside the Attendance and Welfare Officer to identify children whose absence presents safeguarding risks;
- ensure timely referrals are made to Children's Social Care, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Police or other agencies where necessary;
- contribute to strategy meetings and multi-agency planning;
- ensure safeguarding records accurately reflect actions taken;
- support staff in assessing levels of risk;
- oversee referrals to Croydon's Children Missing from Education Team where appropriate.

Where a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan, Early Help Assessment or is Looked After, the DSL will ensure that all relevant professionals are informed immediately if concerns arise regarding the child's whereabouts.

Attendance and Welfare Team

The Attendance and Welfare Officer and Senior Attendance Champion are responsible for monitoring attendance and identifying emerging patterns that may indicate a child is at risk of becoming missing from education.

The team will:

- monitor daily attendance;
- identify unexplained absences promptly;
- work with families to remove barriers to attendance;
- undertake attendance investigations where appropriate;
- liaise with the Education Welfare Service;
- work closely with the DSL whenever safeguarding concerns are identified;
- ensure attendance records remain accurate and up to date.

The team will recognise that repeated absence, declining attendance or sudden changes in attendance may indicate wider safeguarding concerns.

Office Staff

Office staff play a vital role in ensuring attendance information is accurate.

Office staff will:

- record attendance accurately each day;
- contact parents promptly where children are absent without explanation;
- maintain accurate admission and contact records;
- immediately alert the Attendance and Welfare Officer or DSL where contact cannot be established;
- ensure all correspondence relating to attendance is retained appropriately;
- support the completion of statutory returns where required.

The school recognises that accurate administration is an essential safeguarding function.

Teaching Staff

Class teachers are often the first to notice changes in a child's attendance, presentation or behaviour.

Teachers will:

- complete attendance registers accurately and within statutory timescales;
- report unexplained absences immediately;
- raise concerns where attendance begins to decline;
- maintain positive relationships with families;
- share concerns with the Attendance and Welfare Officer or DSL promptly;
- contribute relevant information to attendance meetings and safeguarding discussions.

Teachers should remain professionally curious and consider whether changes in attendance may indicate wider welfare concerns.

All Staff

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Every member of staff will:

- understand the school's procedures relating to Children Missing from Education;
- report concerns immediately;
- never assume another colleague has taken action;
- remain professionally curious where explanations appear inconsistent;
- share concerns with the DSL without delay.

All staff receive regular safeguarding and attendance training, including their responsibilities in relation to Children Missing from Education.

6. Identifying Children at Risk of Becoming Missing from Education

Downsview Primary and Nursery School recognises that children rarely become missing from education without earlier indicators.

The school therefore actively monitors for risk factors including:

- repeated unexplained absences;
- declining attendance;
- persistent lateness;
- poor parental engagement;
- repeated requests for extended leave;
- families indicating they are moving without providing a new address or school;
- children failing to start after being offered a place;
- children who do not return following school holidays;
- children withdrawn from school without evidence of alternative educational provision;
- concerns raised by other professionals;
- safeguarding concerns involving neglect, domestic abuse, exploitation or family instability.

Where one or more of these indicators is identified, the school will undertake appropriate enquiries and consider whether additional safeguarding action is required.

7. Preventative Measures

The school believes that preventing children from becoming missing from education is significantly more effective than responding after concerns have escalated.

To reduce the likelihood of children becoming missing from education, Downsview Primary and Nursery School will:

- promote a culture of excellent attendance from Nursery onwards;
- maintain positive relationships with parents and carers;
- obtain and regularly update emergency contact details;
- encourage families to inform the school promptly of changes to addresses or telephone numbers;
- investigate unexplained absences on the first day wherever possible;
- work proactively with the Education Welfare Service where attendance concerns emerge;
- provide appropriate support to families experiencing difficulties;
- use Early Help where additional support is required;
- work collaboratively with safeguarding partners to reduce barriers to attendance;
- ensure robust admission and transition procedures are in place.

The school recognises that supportive intervention, alongside clear expectations, is the most effective way to ensure children remain engaged in education.

The school will act promptly whenever a child cannot be accounted for or there are concerns that they may no longer be receiving a suitable education.

8. Procedures Where a Child May be Missing from Education

Every unexplained absence will be treated seriously until the child's whereabouts and safety have been established. The school will follow its Attendance Policy and first-day calling procedures alongside the safeguarding processes outlined within this policy.

Timescales for Action

First Day of Absence

Where no reason has been provided for a child's absence:

- Parents and carers are expected to notify the school by 9.00am.
- If no reason has been received, the school office will initiate its first-day calling procedures.
- Initially, a text message will be sent to parents or carers.
- If no response has been received by 11.00am, the school will telephone parents and then emergency contacts where necessary.
- All attempts to contact the family will be recorded.
- Where contact cannot be established, the Attendance and Welfare Officer and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed immediately.

Day 2

- If contact has still not been established:
- further attempts will be made to contact parents and emergency contacts;
- the Attendance and Welfare Officer and DSL will review the circumstances;
- safeguarding risks will be reassessed;
- consideration will be given to whether a home visit is appropriate.

Day 3

Where there has been no contact after three school days:

- a home visit will normally be undertaken unless there are exceptional circumstances;
- all actions and outcomes will be recorded on CPOMS;
- the DSL will determine whether referrals to Children's Social Care, MASH or the Police are required.

Ten Consecutive School Days

Where a child has been absent for 10 consecutive school days without explanation and the school is unable to establish their whereabouts, a referral will be made to Croydon Council as a Child Missing from Education, in line with the school's Attendance Policy and local authority procedures.

Twenty Consecutive School Days

If the child remains unaccounted for after a further period of absence, the school will continue to work with Croydon Council and partner agencies. Removal from roll will only take place where the statutory grounds within the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 have been met and following consultation with the Local Authority where required.

Home Visits

Home visits will normally take place by Day 3 where there has been no contact from the family, unless exceptional circumstances have been agreed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher.

Home visits will:

- normally be authorised by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher;
- be undertaken by the Attendance and Welfare Officer alongside the Senior Attendance Champion, another senior leader or the Education Welfare Officer where appropriate;
- follow the school's safeguarding and lone-working procedures;
- be risk assessed before they take place;
- be recorded fully on CPOMS.

Where there is an identified safeguarding risk, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will determine whether it is appropriate to undertake a home visit or whether support should first be sought from Children's Social Care or the Police. Where there is reason to believe that a child may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, safeguarding procedures will take precedence over attendance procedures and immediate referrals will be made in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The school's detailed attendance procedures, including first-day calling, attendance monitoring, home visits and graduated attendance support, are set out within the Downsview Attendance Policy. This policy should be read alongside that document.

9. Children who Fail to Start School

The school recognises that children who fail to start following admission are at particular risk of becoming missing from education.

Where a child does not start on their agreed admission date, the school will:

- contact parents immediately;
- establish the reason for non-attendance;
- liaise with the Local Authority Admissions Team where appropriate;
- make reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts;
- involve the Designated Safeguarding Lead if concerns arise;
- refer to Croydon's Children Missing from Education Team where required.

The school will not assume that a child has enrolled elsewhere unless this has been confirmed.

10. Children Leaving Downsview

The school will make every reasonable effort to establish a child's destination before they leave the school roll.

Where parents advise that they are moving, the school will seek confirmation of:

- the family's new address;
- the date of the move;
- the name of the receiving school;
- confirmation that the child has been admitted and has either started at, or has an agreed start date with, the receiving school.

Where information cannot be verified, the school will continue to make reasonable enquiries and will consult Croydon's Children Missing from Education Team before removing the pupil from roll.

The school will complete all statutory notifications required by the Local Authority.

11. Removing Pupils from Roll

Downsview Primary and Nursery School recognises that removing a pupil from roll is a significant legal process.

No child will be removed from the admission register unless one of the prescribed grounds within the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies.

Before removing a pupil from the admission register, Downsview Primary and Nursery School will:

- complete all reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts;
- consult Croydon Council where required;
- ensure safeguarding concerns have been fully considered;
- notify the Local Authority in accordance with statutory requirements and local procedures;
- retain evidence of all enquiries undertaken.

No pupil will be removed from the admission register solely because of prolonged or unauthorised absence. The school will only remove a pupil from roll after all reasonable enquiries have been completed and the Local Authority has been consulted where required by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

The school will not remove a pupil from roll solely because:

- attendance is poor;
- parents have requested Elective Home Education verbally;
- the child has additional needs;
- the school believes another school may have offered a place;
- parents indicate they are moving but cannot provide evidence of a new educational placement.
- All decisions will be made in accordance with current statutory guidance.

Parents have the legal right to educate their child otherwise than at school.

12. Elective Home Education (EHE)

Where a parent indicates that they wish to Electively Home Educate their child, Downsview will:

- arrange a discussion with the family to ensure they understand the implications of Elective Home Education;
- provide impartial information regarding the process;
- ensure the decision has been made voluntarily;
- notify the Local Authority in accordance with statutory requirements.

Downsview will never encourage parents to Electively Home Educate as an alternative to:

- exclusion;
- attendance concerns;
- unmet special educational needs;
- behaviour difficulties.

Where safeguarding concerns exist, these will be shared with the Local Authority regardless of the parent's decision to home educate.

- Downsview will not remove a pupil from roll until they have received in writing a request from a parent to home educate.
- Downsview 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.

13. Safeguarding Considerations

Children Missing from Education are at significantly increased risk of harm.

The school recognises that children who are missing education may be vulnerable to:

- neglect;
- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- child sexual exploitation;
- child criminal exploitation;
- county lines activity;
- trafficking;
- radicalisation;
- forced marriage;
- female genital mutilation;
- domestic abuse;
- mental ill-health;
- homelessness;
- substance misuse.

Every case will therefore be considered through a safeguarding lens.

Where appropriate, referrals may be made to:

- Children's Social Care;

- the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH);
- the Police;
- Education Welfare;
- Health Services;
- Early Help;
- the Children Missing from Education Team.

The welfare of the child will always remain the school's primary consideration.

14. Record Keeping

Accurate records are essential in ensuring that children are safeguarded effectively.

The school will maintain clear records of:

- attendance;
- contact attempts;
- meetings with parents;
- home visits;
- safeguarding concerns;
- referrals made;
- discussions with partner agencies;
- decisions relating to removal from roll;
- notifications to the Local Authority.

Attendance concerns, contact attempts, home visits, safeguarding discussions, referrals and decisions relating to Children Missing from Education will be recorded on CPOMS and retained in accordance with the school's Records Management and Data Protection Policies. This ensures there is a clear chronology of actions taken and supports effective multi-agency working.

15. Information Sharing

Effective safeguarding depends upon appropriate information sharing.

Downsview Primary and Nursery School will share information with relevant agencies where it is lawful, necessary and proportionate to do so.

Information may be shared with:

- Croydon Council;
- Children's Social Care;
- the Police;
- Health professionals;
- Education Welfare Services;
- receiving schools;
- other safeguarding partners.

The school will comply with:

- the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR);
- the Data Protection Act 2018;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Information will always be shared where this is necessary to safeguard a child.

16. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Attendance and Welfare Officer will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy throughout the academic year.

Monitoring will include:

- attendance data and trends;
- persistent and severe absence;
- children identified as being at risk of becoming missing from education;
- referrals made to the Local Authority Children Missing from Education Team;
- safeguarding referrals linked to attendance;
- admissions and leavers;
- compliance with statutory notification requirements.

Monitoring information will be used to identify emerging trends, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and inform future improvements to attendance and safeguarding practice.

The Governing Board will receive regular updates through safeguarding and attendance reports and will monitor the effectiveness of the school's arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation or local authority guidance.

17. Training

All staff will receive safeguarding training which includes their responsibilities in relation to Children Missing from Education.

Training will include:

- recognising indicators that a child may be at risk of becoming missing from education;
- safeguarding responsibilities;
- attendance procedures;
- recording concerns appropriately;
- reporting concerns promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Attendance procedures will also form part of the induction programme for all new staff.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Attendance and Welfare Officer will ensure that relevant updates from the Department for Education and Croydon Council are shared with staff as appropriate.

18. Equality Statement

Downsview Primary and Nursery School is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that all children receive fair and equitable access to education.

When implementing this policy, the school will have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that no child is disadvantaged because of their protected characteristics.

The school recognises that some groups of children may face additional barriers to education and will work proactively with families and partner agencies to remove these barriers wherever possible.

Croydon Children Missing from Education Team

Children Missing from Education Team

Croydon Council

Telephone: 020 8726 6000

Email: ChildrenMissingfromEducation@croydon.gov.uk

Where there are immediate safeguarding concerns, referrals will be made to:

Croydon Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Telephone: 020 8726 6400

Staff should refer to the most up-to-date Croydon procedures and internal safeguarding guidance when making referrals.

Staff should seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead whenever they are uncertain about whether a child may be missing from education or whether safeguarding procedures should be initiated.