

# Children Missing Education Policy and Procedure

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# Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
1. Why Children Go Missing from Education	1
2. Safeguarding	1
3. Children Missing Education Fall into Three Main Groups	3
4. Reducing the Risk of Children Going Missing from Education	4
5. Notification Routes	4
6. Roles and Responsibilities	5
APPENDIX 1 Legislation and Guidance	7
APPENDIX 2 Bromley Children Missing Education and Off-Rolling: Procedure for Schools	8
APPENDIX 3 CME Checklist	9

# Bromley Children Missing Education Policy and Procedure

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## Introduction

This multi-agency Policy sets out the responsibilities of agencies for identifying children missing from education and outlines Bromley Local Authority's (LA) systems for identifying and maintaining contact with children missing education and current procedures for identifying those at risk of going missing from education.

Children missing from education in this document refers to all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more).

Children Missing from Education should not be confused with:

- Children who are on roll at a school but are not in regular attendance.
- 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.

This Policy has been produced to help the LA meet its statutory duties relating to the provision of education and the safeguarding and welfare of children. This policy has been developed in accordance with guidance as issued by the Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership and Department for Education Guidance. It should be used in conjunction with the London Child Protection Procedures and Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) Procedures including the BSCP Multi-Agency Protocol for *Children Missing from Home and Care* ([www.bromleysafeguarding.org](http://www.bromleysafeguarding.org)).

## 1. Why Children go missing from Education

1.1 Children are missing when they:

- (a) Fail to start appropriate provision and hence never enter the system;
- (b) Cease to attend, due to withdrawal where no future provision is identified, or following exclusion (e.g. illegal/unofficial exclusions);
- (c) Fail to complete a transition between providers (e.g. being unable to find a suitable school place after moving to a new LA);
- (d) Personal circumstances or those of their families may contribute to the withdrawal process and the failure to make a transition.

1.2 Children go missing when they fall out of the education system and there is no systematic process in place to:

- Identify those children; and
- Ensure that they re-engage with appropriate provision (which may include services outside of school) to meet their specific needs.

## 2. Safeguarding

There are other circumstances by which a young person could go missing, e.g. when they are reported as "missing from home". In most cases the young person returns home quickly. However, there are more serious cases, including where a child may become a victim of crime or is lured into criminality; has fallen foul of a trafficking organisation; has been taken into a forced marriage; has undergone female genital mutilation (FGM); is at risk of child sexual exploitation; has been abducted by his/her parent; or has been abducted by a stranger that later results in homicide. It is therefore

essential when a child goes missing from education, that these cases are approached in a sensitive but thorough manner.<sup>1</sup>

- 2.1 If a member of school/educational establishment/college staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents/ carers, what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should, together with the class teacher assess the child's vulnerability.
- 2.2 From the first day that a child does not attend school and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps should be taken.
- A trained staff member will make contact with the parents/carers ( person with parental responsibility for the child) to seek reassurance that the child is safe at home;
  - The outcome of the contact should be assessed and if there are any concerns a consultation with the school/establishment/colleges DSL should take place to consider the child's vulnerability.
- 2.3 In the following circumstances a referral to children's social care and / or police should always be made promptly:
- The child may be the victim of a crime;
  - The child is subject of a Child Protection plan;
  - The child is subject of S47 enquiries;
  - The child is looked after;
  - There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
  - There is a history of frequent family moves with gaps in education;
  - There are serious issues of attendance.
  - There are concerns of possible Female Genital Mutilation
  - There are concerns of Child Sexual Exploitation or other exploitation including forced marriage, association with terrorist organisations, individuals or activities

The answers to further questions could assist a judgement whether or not to inform LA children's social care and police:

- How old is the child?
- Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Has the child been a victim of bullying?
- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk e.g. does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? E.g. Rites of passage or forced marriage planned for the child?
- Has the child got a disability and/or special educational needs?

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<sup>1</sup> See BSCP Multi-agency Protocol for Children Missing from Home and Care

- Is the child missing part of the school day by absenting themselves?
- Is the child known to have gang affiliation?
- Is the child associating with extremist or terrorist organisations, individuals or activities?
- Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying? e.g.
  - Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?
  - Is there any known history of domestic violence?
  - Is there concern about the parent/ carer's ability to protect the child from harm?
  - Is there any known gang affiliation for the child?
  - Is there any known links with extremist or terrorist organisations, individuals or activities?

2.4 The length of time that a child remains out of school could, of itself, be an alerting factor of risk of harm to the child. Accordingly if no contact is established within 3 days, the Education Welfare Service should be contacted, then referrals should be made to the police and LA children's social care, as appropriate over the next two weeks.<sup>2</sup>

2.5 Extended leave of absence can be authorised by the head teacher, at which point a return date is set. In these cases the time line for enquiries starts from when the child does not attend school on the expected return date, not from the day the extended leave started.

If at any time you have a reasonable concern that a child or young person has suffered significant harm or may be at immediate or acute risk of suffering significant harm, an immediate referral should be made to Children's Social Care. For further information see The Child's Journey in Bromley([www.bromleysafeguarding.org](http://www.bromleysafeguarding.org)).

### 3. Children Missing Education Fall into Three Main Groups:

3.1 **Those known to be out of education** - children within this group will be those known to the LA to have no current provision. These children may fall into the following groups:

- Permanently excluded pupils (formal or unofficial).
- Children with medical needs.
- Pregnant school girls and teenage mothers.
- Those returning from detention (Youth Offending Team referrals).
- Those whose parents have opted to home educate but where the provision has been deemed unsuitable by the LA or where the parent wishes to return the child to mainstream education.
- Those where the parents/carers have approached the LA for a school place as in:
  - In-Year Admission (children who have moved into the Authority including those from overseas);
  - Homeless (transient families).

3.2 **Those who have been known to the LA but who go missing** - these children may fall into the following groups:

- young runaways and children of missing families;
- travellers;
- homeless;
- those where future provision has not been established at transition from primary to secondary. This group may include children who move to the independent sector;

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2

- children who reside in a neighbouring authority but are on the roll of a Bromley School/Academy;
- those removed from a school roll without providing a defined destination.

3.3 **Those who the LA has no knowledge of** - children residing within the Authority not known to the LA. These children may fall into the following groups:

- Children who have never been in the education system
- Children coming out of independent education
- Children who are being home educated where parents have not advised the LA
- Children who have moved into the Authority including those from overseas where no application for a school place has been made.

## 4. Reducing the Risk of Children Going Missing from Education

Bromley LA has identified the following systematic processes and procedures:

- a CME Officer / EWS within the LA who are responsible for receiving notifications of children from other agencies and for the monitoring of cases;
- A dedicated Single Point of Contact Education Welfare Officer for schools to seek advice and guidance;
- procedures to re-engage identified pupils via the Fair Access Protocol (FAP), Multi-Agency Core Panel, Education Top 10 Panel

## 5. Notification Routes

5.1 Bromley LA expects all stakeholders and partner agencies to refer any young people who appear to be missing education.

5.2 **Referral Routes:**

- CME Referral Form available on line
- [http://www.bromley.gov.uk/forms/35/school\\_attendance](http://www.bromley.gov.uk/forms/35/school_attendance)
- Telephone call to CME/EWS Officers
- Email CME/EWS Officers

5.3 **Contact for CME**

Email : [Education.EDUWelfare@bromley.gov.uk](mailto:Education.EDUWelfare@bromley.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0208 313 4170

All referral forms available on line at Bromley.gov.uk  
[http://www.bromley.gov.uk/forms/35/school\\_attendance](http://www.bromley.gov.uk/forms/35/school_attendance)

## 6. Roles & Responsibilities

All stakeholders have a statutory duty to identify and report children at risk or who are deemed missing education.

6.1 **Operational**

Bromley LA requires that **all** education providers notify the Education Welfare Service whether the reason is known or not within 10 days of a child ceasing to attend with that provider or the provider has cause to delete the student from the school roll.

Bromley's CME Officer/EWS has access to the centrally held databases against which a child's name can be checked to establish whether he/she is registered with an educational provider. These databases are:

- **CAPITA ONE EMS:** a database of children residing within the Bromley geographical area and those who reside in other LAs but attend Bromley schools.
- **Council Tax Database (*Academy*):** which allows checks to be made against council tax;
- **S2S** Lost Pupil Secure Messaging Area (LPD).

In addition data is gathered on young people who are identified as vulnerable:

- **Children Missing Education Electronic Reporting:** a data record which captures the current picture of children from the following groups who do not attend an education provision on a full time basis. This includes children who are not on the roll of any educational establishment, children who attend on a part-time basis or who are on a reduced timetable and those who have persistent absence. Within this data collection, children with Education Health Care Plans are identified as are Children who are Looked After so that those who are most vulnerable are prioritised to secure access to their entitlement. The attendance rolls of the Pupil referral Units are collected regularly and reviewed with the provision to quickly identify children with poor engagement and offer appropriate support. Data is cross referenced with data held within Children's Social Care.

## 6.2 Locating Missing Children

It is important to ensure that children missing from education are identified quickly and that effective and robust tracking systems are in place to re-engage them in to a suitable provision with as little delay as possible.

### Examples of actions carried out

If residency cannot be determined through database systems the CME Officer/EWS will initially carry out an assessment of the child's level of vulnerability based on the information available. This will include investigating:

- reason for leaving if known;
- Child Protection Status, e.g. Looked After Child, Private Fostering, Asylum Seeker, any involvement with the youth justice system;
- any interventions for poor attendance including prosecutions pending;
- SEN status;
- reason for believing child has come to Bromley;
- Staff will also undertake a visit to last known address and make relevant enquiries with neighbours and key stakeholders.

Where it is impossible to identify a child's or their family's whereabouts and where there is evidence to suggest that the child may be at risk the Inland Revenue has provided a contact telephone number through which LAs can gain access to confidential information via the Child Benefit database. This provision can **only** be accessed in cases of high-level concern.

Where information is suggesting that the family have gone overseas checks will be made with Border Agency for confirmation

Where there are concerns regarding the child's safety referral will be made to the Police and Social Care without further delay.

All cases of children missing from education where it has not been possible to determine a new address should be logged onto the S2S secure database area in order to notify all LA of the missing child's identity.

The CME officer works in close collaboration with Admissions in identifying available school places, this informs the work undertaken with the family ensuring informed appropriate applications are made. Balance and check systems are in place to ensure that those applications are made.

Complex cases are referred to the Fair Access Panel to identify suitable provision.

**All referrals will be acknowledged and outcomes fed back to appropriate Officers/agencies involved.**



## Legislation and Guidance

Policy and practise should be read in the context of the statutory duties upon local authorities and parents as set out in the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education act 2002
- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- Statutory guidance for local authorities: Children missing education ( January 2015)
- The Education ( Pupil Registration) ( England) regulations 2006, as amended (Education law regarding pupil registration where a child is on a school role): The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

**Section 436A Education and Inspections Act 2006:** provides that local authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance for LAs in England to identify children not receiving education issued by the Secretary of State February 2007.

**Section 14(1) of the 1996 Education Act:** provides that a local education authority must make sure there are sufficient schools for providing education in their area. For these purposes, the schools must be sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide all pupils with the opportunity of appropriate education (s.14 (2)). “Appropriate education” means, broadly education which is desirable in view of the pupils’ different ages, abilities and aptitudes and the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school (s.14(3)).

**Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act:** provides that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

**Section 437 (1) of the 1996 Education Act:** provides that if it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they must serve a notice in writing on the parent (“a school attendance order”) requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.

**Section 19 (1) of the 1996 Education Act** - requires every local education authority to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them. For these purposes, “suitable” education is defined as “efficient education suitable to the age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs the child (or young person) may have.” (s19(6)).

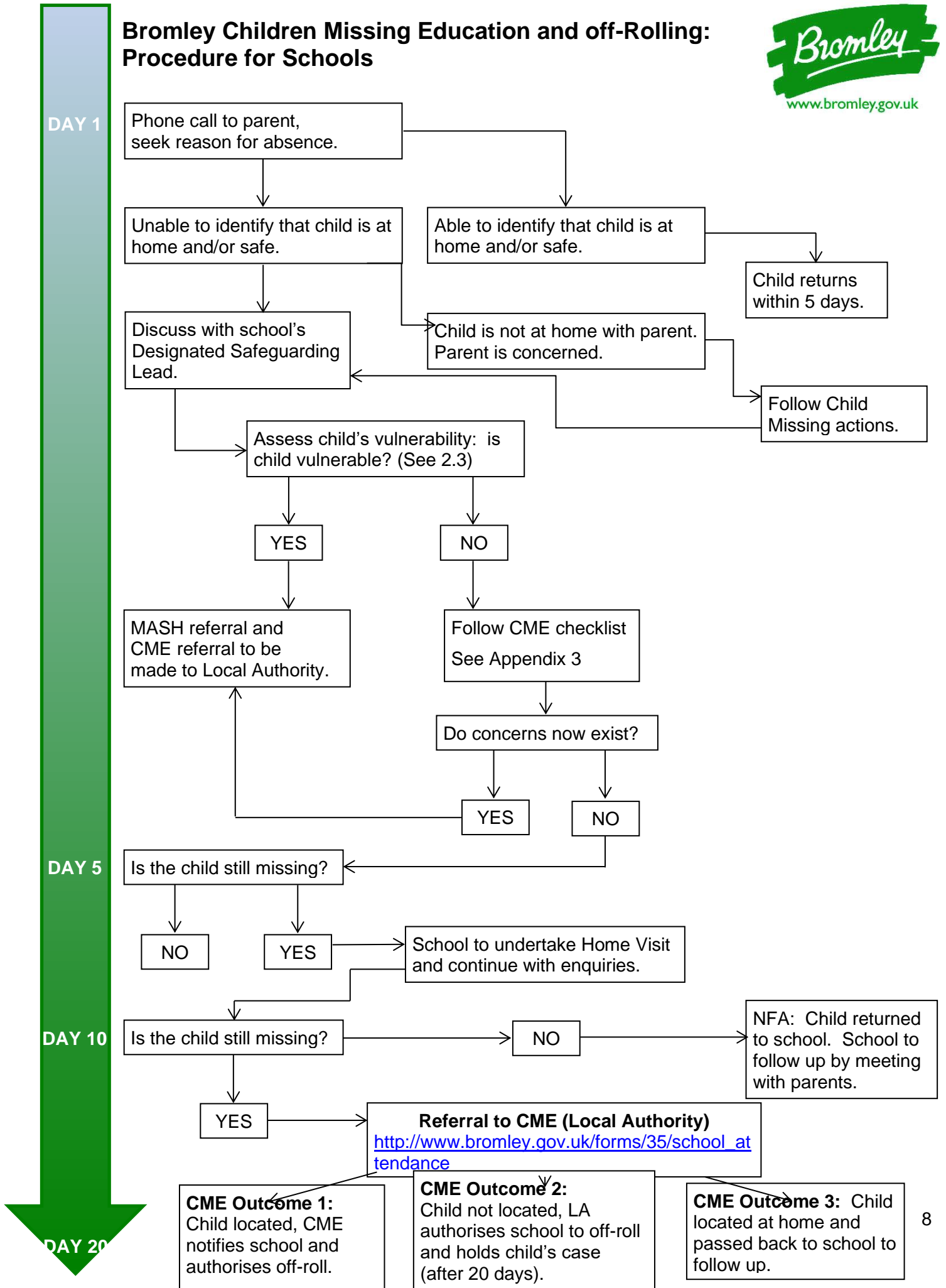
**19(4A) of the 1996 Education Act** provides:

“In determining what arrangements to make under subsection (1) in the case of any child or pupil, a local education authority shall have regard to guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.”

**Section 175 of the Education Act 2002:** imposes a duty upon LAs and governing bodies to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. For these purposes, “functions” includes the powers and duties of LAs and governing bodies.



### Bromley Children Missing Education and off-Rolling: Procedure for Schools



## **Check List for School**

### **Telephone the following:**

- Home numbers
- Mobile numbers
- Parent(s) Work numbers
- Emergency Contact numbers (School should endeavour to hold a minimum of two emergency contact numbers, other than parents)
- Telephoned previous school if a recent transfer

### **Additional enquiries:**

- Are there siblings? Contact siblings school to verify if that child is in attendance
- Enquiries made with peers?

### **Home Visit**

- Home visit undertaken?
- Enquiries with neighbours?

### **Referral to LA**