

Education Services

**Children Missing
Education (CME)**

2024



LONDON BOROUGH OF
HARROW

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Introduction

Local authorities (LAs) have statutory duties relating to the provision of education and to safeguarding the welfare of children, who are not receiving a suitable education. A list of current legislation and guidance is attached within this policy.

Local authorities have a duty under section [436A of the Education 1996](#) (added by [section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)) to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise.

The duty applies in relation to children of compulsory school age who are **not** on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school.

The duty **does not** apply to children of [compulsory school age](#) who are absent from school. The duty complements and reinforces duties that already exist for schools to monitor attendance. Schools have a duty to monitor attendance and may where appropriate make a referral to the Court Attendance Officer (CAO)/ School Attendance Liaison & Elective Home Education Officer (SALEHE) using the [AIM guidance](#) where the attendance of individual pupils gives grave cause for concern.

The Local Authority's procedures are underpinned by the relevant statutory requirements in relation to missing/lost pupils, connected with the DFE's central [s2s \(school-to-school\)](#) Lost Pupils Database and are consistent with and support local child protection best practice.

For the purposes of this document 'Child' refers to anyone of [statutory school age](#).

This policy is intended to ensure that:

- robust systems are in place in Harrow to identify and track children at risk of, or who may be missing education.
- schools and Council Officers are aware of systems and use them effectively.
- partner agencies understand who to notify and how to do so.
- the risk of children missing from education is minimised.
- children who are identified as missing education are returned to an education setting.
- where appropriate we share information with other local authorities.

Why children go missing from education.

Children fall out of the school system because they:

- Fail to start school and therefore never enter the system at key transition points – nursery to primary, infant to junior and primary to secondary and where there are in year admissions.

- Fail to complete a transition between education settings or after moving to a new Local Authority
- Cease to attend through withdrawal or truancy. The school would need to refer to the AIM policy.
- Are removed from school roll without a destination.

The above three examples would need to be referred to the Lead Officer for Children Missing Education (LOCME).

In a small minority of cases there may be safeguarding issues that result in a child going missing because they are abducted, are a victim of crime or because the child runs away from home. It is essential that when a child goes missing in these circumstances an urgent referral is made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Children at particular risk of missing education

[DfE CME guidance](#) has identified that children who have experienced certain life events are more at risk of missing education.

These include:

- Pupils at risk of harm / neglect
- Children of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) families
- Children of service personnel
- Missing children and runaways
- Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System.
- Children who cease to attend school.
- Children of new migrant families

Harrow considers the following groups are also at particular risk of missing education:

- Looked after children and care leavers.
- Children identified as having specific child protection issues including those whose names are placed on a child protection plan.
- Children at risk of sexual exploitation, including children who have been trafficked to, or within the UK.
- Children who could be at risk of any cultural or unlawful practices, for example forced marriage and or female genital mutilation.
- Children with long term medical or emotional problems, including emotional behavioral difficulties.
- Children who are victims of bullying
- Children exposed to domestic abuse, family conflict and/or family breakdown.
- Children whose families have experienced homelessness and who are living in temporary accommodation, including a refuge/hostel.
- Children from mobile and transient families
- Children of parents with long term medical or emotional problems, for example those with mental health problems and those that misuse drugs and alcohol.

- Children who are at risk of becoming involved in crime and/or children whose parents are involved in crime.
- Young carers
- Teenage parents and their children
- Children who have been excluded from school, are persistent non-attenders, or are otherwise missing school.
- Children on roll of alternative education providers
- Children with unrecognised or unmet special educational needs

Children Missing from Education are at greater risk of:

- Physical harm
- Sexual exploitation
- Becoming involved in crime.
- Demonstrating anti-social behaviour
- Misusing drugs and alcohol.
- Being 'Trafficked'
- Being illegally employed.

It is therefore vital that the Local Authority, schools, and other agencies work together to safeguard children and share information about children missing education.

London Borough of Harrow will therefore ensure that all Harrow schools/nurseries and children's centres are made fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to missing/lost pupils, at the start of each academic year and children who may have attended but have no known future education provision.

London Borough of Harrow will closely monitor and review annually the identification and tracking of Children Missing Education procedures to ensure best practice.

Role of Parent/Carers

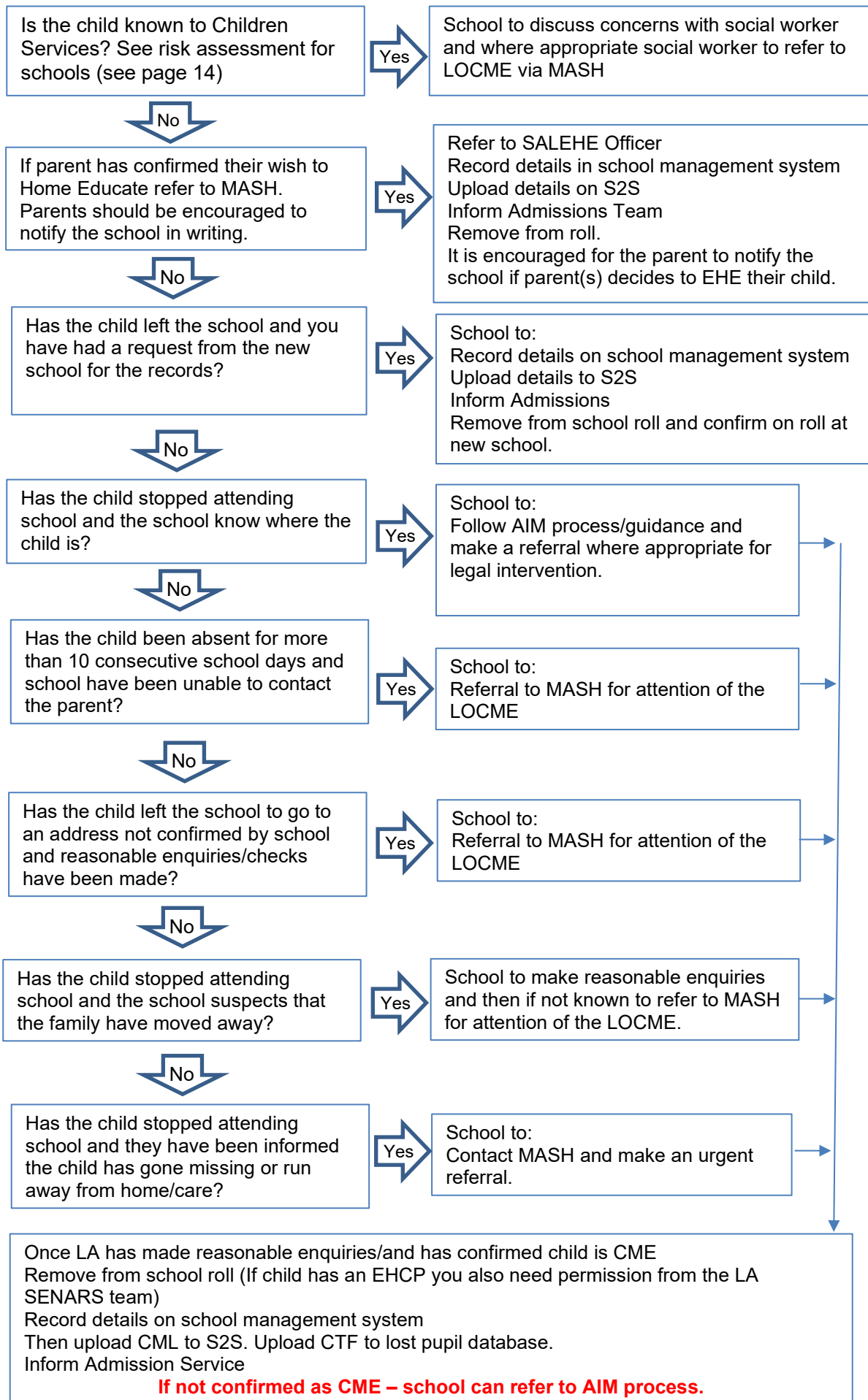
Parents have a duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age are receiving a suitable full-time education. This may be at home or at a school and parents have a right to withdraw their child from school for home schooling at any time provided the child is not subject to a School Attendance Order.

Where parents wish to remove their child or children to be electively home educated (EHE) parents are encouraged to give written notification to the school and the school must notify the Local Authority and take the child's name off the school roll.

London Borough of Harrow may use a School Attendance Order to ensure parents have their child registered on a school roll where the child is not already registered. Harrow may also fine or prosecute a parent where there is an issue of non-attendance for a child if registered on school roll; action will be taken by the Court Attendance Officer (CAO) in Education Services in line with the Attendance Intervention Model policy (AIM).

Parents should inform the school if they are moving to another address in the UK or abroad. Parents will be asked to provide evidence of a new school, their new address and contact details. If the details are not provided, the school will ask LOCME as part of the school process to carry out further checks to establish the destination and the education of the child. Where the child has moved to another borough, and they do not have a school place and they are not being home educated the LOCME will pass on the child's details to the relevant UK council or borough.

The Referral Pathway for Children Missing Education –Schools



Making a referral:

Any professional meeting a child and their family/carers should ask which school the child attends.

If it is not possible to ascertain the name of the school, and/or any concerns are identified that the child could be missing from education, the professional **must** make a referral to the MASH who will then refer the matter to the LOCME in Education Services. This post is responsible for receiving details of children missing from education.

The main MASH contact telephone number is: **020 8901 2690** or via secure email to Duty.Assess@harrow.gov.uk

Any concerned person may also make a referral if they believe a child, is missing education.

MASH will refer these types of referrals to the LOCME

Referrals should be made to the LOCME in the following circumstances:

- Children who are no longer attending school and cannot be located at the last known address.
- Children who have left the school and the parent have not provided a new address / school in the UK or abroad.
- Children who have not started a new school.
- Children who have moved into Harrow and the parent / carer are unable to provide a new school name.
- Children who have not shown up following an offer of a place made by the Admissions Service– applies to both in-year and transfer between schools' settings, or where a family has moved into Harrow and no school application has been made.
- It is recommended good practice that, information is recorded when they are contacted by family asking about school places and the school notify the Admissions Service or LOCME with the contact details for the family along with full names and dates of birth. Please DO NOT assume the parent /carer will contact the Admissions Service or apply online.
- If the parent/carers has failed to satisfy the Local Authority that their child is receiving a suitable education.

It is **NOT** necessary to refer the following to the LOCME.

- Children who have moved and been admitted to another school.
- Children who have moved away and have applied to the new Local Authority Admissions Service or schools. Provided the Admissions Service in the new borough has **confirmed** it has been reported to the new borough's LOCME.
- Children who have moved away and the parent has provided verification to prove they are moving away, and they are leaving the UK.
- Children with poor attendance – Schools should undertake the initial follow up of a pupil's absence in accordance with the [AIM guidance](#) .

It is expected that the referrer will inform the LOCME on any updates on CME cases referred to the LA and the LOCME will inform the referrer of case closures.

Reasonable Enquires by School/LA

A definition of reasonable enquires before a child is removed from the schools roll is listed on **page 13** of the [DFE CME guidance 2024](#)

The LOCME works closely with other agencies, for example Housing, Social Care and other LA teams, to track a missing child and ensure that the child is safe. The LOCME may also work closely with relevant family members and professionals in relation to any child who is missing.

Where the name of a pupil is to be deleted from the admission register, the education establishment must make a return to their Local Authority showing the grounds for deletion under Regulation 9 (1) [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). This is completed via the school's Management Information System.

Procedures for locating missing or lost pupils.

A record of the reasonable enquires made must be recorded in the child's file with the name/team, contact email/telephone number and date of actions taken.

There are three statutory files that can be created by schools and uploaded via Schools-2-Schools (S2S) to discharge their duty.

- Common Transfer Files (CTF) – Used to transfer pupil data from one school to another.
- Children Missing Education – Leavers (CML) – Used to provide London Borough of Harrow with information required when a pupil leaves your school outside the normal phased transfer within 20 days.
- Children Missing Education - Joiners (CMJ) – Used to provide London Borough of Harrow with information required when a pupil joins your school outside the normal phased transfer within 5 days.

School Actions

- If a child leaves a Harrow school with an unknown destination, electively home educated or there are child protection concerns, schools should notify MASH by making a referral.
- For any serious concerns a phone call to MASH must be made in the first instance (Tel: 020 8901 2690)
- If the child is on a child protection plan or is a child looked after, schools are required to contact the case social worker/duty social worker.
- For a child not resident in Harrow refer to LOCME for further tracking who will pass the details to the appropriate Local Authority where the child lives.
- Where a destination has become known where previously unknown, the school needs to upload the new CTF to the receiving school.
- Whenever a pupil joins or leaves a school outside of normal phase

transfer, a CML or CMJ is created and uploaded onto S2S for L.A to collect.

LA Actions

- Files provided through S2S are picked up by the Capita One system and provide a weekly report to the LOCME where there is an unknown destination or where a child is being electively home educated.
- Monitoring / responding to S2S missing messages.
- Where Admissions Officers offer a school place to a child who has been recorded as missing, they will contact the LOCME urgently who will take the appropriate action.
- Where the destination is unknown, and the Admissions Officers receive notification they will refer to the LOCME.
- Where an online application is made for an in-year school place and no previous school is listed the Admission Service will contact the family for the details and pass these to the new school.
- LOCME Officer will request a search on Get Information About Pupils (GIAP) where appropriate.
- LOCME may check with Housing on vulnerable families to ensure that their children are in education.

After four weeks if such efforts prove unsuccessful then the LOCME will advise the school to:

- Create a 'lost pupil' common transfer file (CTF) with XXXXXXXX as the destination is unknown / child missing.
- Remove the child's name from the school roll having consulted Education Services and, where the child has an Education, Health, and Care Plan.
- Upload the CTF to the DfE S2S secure website where it will be held in the Lost Pupil Database.
- **Do not send any pupil data via unsecure email.**

Inter-Borough Procedures for Notifying CME

There is a potential CME issue regarding children who reside in one borough and attend a school in another borough. When families move, leave the country, children move schools or fail to return to school this can be more difficult to monitor and follow up.

Harrow LOCME has protocols and working arrangements with neighbouring local authorities to track children, ensure they find new education placements, receive support, and remain safe during any transition period.

Schools' systems such as CTF and S2S also support the transfer of pupil data between schools.

London Borough of Harrow recognises that these procedures will only function effectively if all Harrow schools and council-based professionals are committed to adhering to the following principle.

[Further information and guidance on the transfer of a CTF](#)

Appendix A

Legislation and guidance

There are various statutory duties upon LAs and parents (supplemented by guidance) relating to the provision of education and the safeguarding of children which are relevant to children missing education.

The principal provisions are as follows:

[DFE Children Missing Education Guidance](#)

[Removing pupils from roll](#) – The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 has guidance on this.

School Places

[Section 14\(1\) Education Act 1996](#) provides that a Local Authority must make sure that there are sufficient schools or school places 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)).

Attendance

[Section 7 Education Act 1996](#) provides that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any specific educational needs (s)he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Furthermore [Section 437 \(1\) Education Act 1996](#) 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 them to satisfy the LA within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.

Additional Educational / Provision Arrangements

[Section 19 \(1\) Education Act 1996](#) and [19\(4A\) Education Act 1996](#) requires every Local Education Authority to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or alternative education provision 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.' (s.19 (6)).

Welfare

[S.175 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.

Section [11 of the Children Act 2004](#) places statutory duties on key people and bodies e.g. a duty on key bodies, including the local authorities, to make arrangements to ensure that when carrying out their functions they take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Links to other relevant law and guidance

[Children Act 1989](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Monitoring attendance](#)

Information Sharing

If there are any concerns with regards to sharing information the professional concerned should refer to the [Harrow Safeguarding Children Board](#) guidance.

[Information Sharing](#): advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents, and carers (July 2018).

Reference should be made, where appropriate, to the [London Child Protection Procedures](#) 'Child Protection Procedures' and the Harrow SCB joint protocol '[Children who go missing](#)'. See Contacts for Missing Person Coordinator / Runaway project.

Further Information

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

Deletions from the school register

9 (1) The Regulations enable schools to delete from their register compulsory school-aged children in the following circumstances:

- (a) the pupil has been registered at another school, unless—
 - (i) a school attendance order naming the school is in force in relation to the pupil;
 - (ii) the pupil is a mobile child, and the school is their main school; or
 - (iii) the proprietor has agreed with a person with control of the pupil's attendance at the other school, or is such a person and has decided, that the pupil should be registered at more than one school.

(b) the pupil was admitted to the school for nursery education and—

(i) they have completed such education and would, if they continued attending the school, be transferred to a reception, or more senior, class at the school; but

(ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again.

(c) the pupil is also registered as a pupil at one or more other schools and—

(i) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again.

(ii) the proprietor of each other school where the pupil is registered has consented to the deletion.

(iii) there is no school attendance order naming the school in force in relation to the pupil; and

(iv) the pupil is not a mobile child or, if they are, the school is not their main school.

(d) a school attendance order relating to the pupil and formerly naming the school has been amended by the relevant local authority to substitute the name of the school with that of another school.

(e) a school attendance order relating to the pupil and naming the school has been revoked by the relevant local authority on the ground that arrangements have been made for the pupil to receive suitable education otherwise than at school;

(f) a parent of the pupil has told the proprietor in writing that the pupil will no longer attend the school after a certain day and will receive education otherwise than at school and—

(i) that day has passed; and

(ii) there is no school attendance order naming the school in force in relation to the pupil.

(g) the pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school and—

(i) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again; and

(ii) the pupil is not a boarder.

(h) the pupil has been given leave of absence and—

(i) the pupil has not attended the school within the ten school days immediately after the end of the period of leave.

(ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and

(iii) the proprietor and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances but—

(aa) they have not succeeded; or

(bb) they have succeeded, and they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, taking into account any reasonable steps they could take (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance.

(i) the pupil has been continuously absent from the school for at least twenty school days and—

(i) none of the circumstances mentioned in Table 2 in [regulation 10\(3\)](#) or in any row of Table 3 in [regulation 10\(4\)](#) other than the final three rows applied to the pupil at any point during that period;

(ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and

(iii) the proprietor and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances but—

(aa) they have not succeeded; or

(bb) they have succeeded, and they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, considering any reasonable steps they could take (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance.

(j) the pupil is detained under a sentence of detention and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school after they cease to be detained under that sentence.

(k) the pupil has died.

(l) the pupil will be over compulsory school age by the next time the school meets and—

(i) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again; or

(ii) the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements to be transferred to the school's sixth form.

(m) the pupil is a boarder at the school and—

(i) the school is a school maintained by a local authority or is an Academy.

(ii) charges for the pupil's board and lodging are payable by a parent of the pupil; and

(iii) those charges remain unpaid by the parent at the end of the school term to which they relate.

(n) the pupil has ceased to be a pupil at the school and the school is not—

(i) a school maintained by a local authority; or

(ii) an Academy; or

(o) the pupil has been permanently excluded from the school.

All other deletions are illegal and could result in court proceedings against the person responsible.

It is not permitted to remove pupils from roll on the grounds of nonattendance alone.

If your child has SEN and attends a special school, you'll need to get the council's permission to educate them at home. You do not need the council's permission if your child attends a mainstream school, even if they have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan.

Completion of compulsory school age

Schools can delete pupils from the roll if they have:

a. reached the end of their compulsory school-age for the setting; and

b. are not continuing their education at the school.

Deletions cannot be made until the children reach their school leaving date, which is the last Friday in June of the school year in which their 16th birthday falls.

NOTE: Where the word deletion/delete is mentioned this relates to removing the pupil from the school register.

Risk Assessment

When assessing risk, the school or a professional should consider the following:

- Is the child known to children safeguarding services?
- Is the child looked after?
- Is the child currently subject to a child protection plan, a child protection investigation, or a child in need?
- If not does the school/professional have any current concerns about the child?
- Have there been previous concerns or involvement with children's safeguarding services in Harrow or another borough?
- Is the child known to Early Support Service?

- Is this a “mobile family” who have moved addresses/boroughs frequently?
- Is there a history of poor attendance?
- Have parents previously been subject to proceedings in relation to poor attendance?
- Are there any immigration issues?
- Is the child at risk of contact with concerning adults including contact online?
- Has the child been known to associate with adults or other children who pose a risk to children?
- Is the child at risk of CSE? (A separate CSE risk assessment should be discussed with MASH / the allocated social worker).
- Is the child at risk due to FGM, forced marriage or abduction and consequently at risk of being removed from the UK?
- Is the child a young carer?
- Is there a history of domestic abuse and violence in the family?
- Is there a history of parental mental ill health or substance abuse?
- Is the fact the child is missing unusual?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk?
- Is the child in the process of being assessed for their special education needs via an EHCP?
- Is there an indication that the child may be subject to radicalisation or extremism?

Where you answer yes or are not sure you should discuss the case with the safeguarding lead in the school and or your manager who will advise if further action should be taken and if a referral should be made to an appropriate team/professional.

Overview of identification and tracking processes

Schools

- School should promptly notify the MASH by making a referral. (If the child is on a child protection plan or if the school have child protection concerns about the child, they must immediately notify the MASH).
- Remove the child’s name from its roll (consult Education Services including SENARS where there is an EHCP)
- Create a ‘lost pupil’ common transfer file (CTF) with XXXXXXXX as the destination is unknown.
- Upload the CTF to the DfE’s secure website where it will be held in the Lost Pupils Database.
- School will add details to SIMS and on the leavers / starters form sent to the Admission Service within five school days.
- If a Harrow school which has previously uploaded a lost child CTF is contacted by a school at which the lost child has subsequently registered, and then the school which sent the CTF to the Lost Pupils Database should create a new CTF file and send this to the receiving school.
- When a pupil joins or leaves a school then a Common Transfer File must accompany him / her as well as a request to the previous school for a copy

of the school file.

- It is recommended good practice that where a parent / carer makes enquires about a school place in person, on the telephone or via email, information is recorded, and the school send an email to the Admissions Service and LOCME with the contact details for the family along with full names and dates of birth.

Roles and Responsibilities in relation to CME

Lead Officer for Children Missing Education

The LOCME Officer co-ordinates the identification, referral, tracking and placement of CME in Harrow and pupils who move out of Harrow.

The LOCME works in partnership with the key stakeholders to ensure that children who are at risk of CME, are referred and followed up. The stakeholders include:

- Schools and alternative education providers
- School Admissions
- SEN team
- Early Support
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Traveller Education
- Elective Home Education
- Housing
- Primary Care Trust colleagues including Health.
- Virtual School,
- Social Care e.g., MASH, Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Team Manager & Child Sexual Exploitation Co-Ordinator
- Prospects
- Youth Offending Service (YOS),
- Police
- Other LAs

The LOCME will manage the co-ordination of the referral process and ensure notifications are recorded and actioned as appropriate and that referral channels are understood by all stakeholders.

Whichever route the information comes through, it is the responsibility of the LOCME to:

- Ensure accurate compilation of data and actions related to identifying CME.
- Maintain and update the CME registers report on the education database.
- Undertake the tracking process of pupils when their whereabouts are unknown.
- Co-ordinate casework, contributing to assessments to determine appropriate provision for a child and providing updates on the CME

register for Senior officers.

- Bring complex CME cases to the attention of the Manager.
- Circulate the CME policy to all schools annually.
- Each year send the schools a reminder that they must obtain full details and to remind them of the CME and off roll procedures.
- Issue a School Attendance Order if the family do not engage. It enables the Local Authority to name a school for the parent to ensure the child attends. This legal sanction can be applied where a parent refuses to enroll their child in a school or fails to satisfy the Local Authority that their child is receiving suitable education, if the Local Authority deems it is appropriate that the child should attend school. This is used as a last resort in CME situations.
- The LOCME, with support from the Data Intelligence team, can carry out checks using the education database, pupil census data and other databases to try to ensure that those children and young people who were previously on a school roll and are no longer on that roll have been admitted to another education provision.
- Provide information for FOI requests.

LA/Schools information management system/Capita One

- Capita One weekly reports are sent to LOCME when an unknown destination for a child is recorded.
- An alert is added to the Capita One database if after reasonable enquires the destination is still unknown.

LA/Admissions

- Where the Admission service staff, offer a school place to a child who has been recorded as missing they will receive an alert message on Capita One to contact the LOCME urgently who will take appropriate action.
- Where the Admissions staff receive a leaver's notification where the destination is unknown, they will refer to LOCME via MASH.

All Professionals

Any professional meeting a child and their family/carers should ask which school the child attends, where there are concerns that the child may not be in education to refer to LOCME.

Glossary of terms

CME	Children Missing Education
AIM	Attendance Intervention Model
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
EHE	Elective Home Education
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
LA	Local Authority
LOCME	Lead Officer for Children Missing Education
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
SALEHE	School Attendance Liaison & Elective Home Education Officer
SENARS	Special Education Needs Assessment & Review Service
S2S	School to School
SEN	Special Education Needs and Review Service
CAO	Court Attendance Officer
SIMS	Schools Information Management System
CTF	Common Transfer File
CML	Children Missing Education – Leavers
CMJ	Children Missing Education - Joiners

For further information, please contact:

Lead Officer for Children Missing Education, Education Services, London Borough of Harrow Email: cme@harrow.gov.uk Tel: 020 8736 6461