

The Spire Church of England Learning Trust

Children Missing Education (CME) Policy 2025 – 2026

This policy is reviewed and updated by the Trust Safeguarding Lead. This policy is annually approved by The Trust and implemented by all schools within the Trust.

This policy will be subject to an annual review in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE). It may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review in order to reflect changes in legislation where appropriate.

This policy has been written in conjunction with the sources listed on Page 3

Reviewed: March 2025

Ratified: April 2025

Next Review Date: March 2026

In collaboration with



List of Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and school office telephone numbers for all schools within The Spire Church of England Learning Trust:



St John's Middle School, Bromsgrove

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) : Mrs Kate Gallinagh
School Office tel no : 01527 832376



St John's Primary School, Kidderminster

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) : Mrs Suzanne Finlay
School Office tel no : 01562 745558



St Matthias Primary School, Malvern

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) : Mrs Ginnie Beale
School Office tel no : 01684 574984



Witton Middle School, Droitwich

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) : Mrs Louise McNally
School Office tel no : 01905 773362



Catshill Middle School, Bromsgrove

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) : Mr Richard Duerden
School Office tel no : 01527 872913



Catshill First School and Nursery, Bromsgrove

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) : Mr Richard Duerden
School Office tel no : 01527 872431

Statutory guidance:

All schools, independent and state funded, are required to have regard to the following statutory guidance:

Children missing education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Statutory regulations:

All schools, independent and state funded, are required to have regard to the following statutory regulations:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (legislation.gov.uk)

Amendments:

- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

In addition, The Spire Church of England Learning Trust schools should refer to the following guidance:

[Children Missing Education Policy 2023.pdf \(\[worcestershire.gov.uk\]\(http://worcestershire.gov.uk\)\)](#)

This policy should be read in conjunction with The Spire Church of England Learning Trust school's following policies:

- Trust and Individual School's Attendance Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Children with Health Needs who cannot attend school policy

Introduction

Each school within The Spire Church of England Learning Trust acknowledges that:

- All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs (Children Missing in Education, Sept 2016).
- Children missing in education are those of compulsory school age not registered with a school or receiving suitable education outside of school.
- Children who go missing in education are at risk of :
 - Underachieving
 - Being victims of harm
 - Exploitation or radicalisation
 - Becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) in later life.

There are many circumstances in which a child may become missing/absent from education. Such reasons may include:

- Pupils who are at risk of harm/neglect
- Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families
- Children of Service Personnel
- Missing children and runaways
- Children who cease to attend school
- Children of new migrant families

Where there is a concern for the child's welfare, the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy adopted by each school within the Trust will be followed.

Purpose of the Children Missing Education (CME) Policy

The purpose of The Spire Church of England Learning Trust's Children Missing Education (CME) Policy is to establish a set of principles to ensure children and young people are safely on roll at each of The Trust schools.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Trust's Safeguarding policies and procedures.

Aim of the Policy

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

Definition of CME

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

Attendance Expectations

Within The Spire Church of England Learning Trust, we believe that attendance at school is key to children making good progress. Within all Trust schools, all families are encouraged positively to make sure their children attend every day.

The Spire Church of England Learning Trust Schools' responsibilities:

- Schools must enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.
- Schools must monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register. Schools should agree with the local authority the intervals at which they will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission.
- Schools should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance. It is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority.

- Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the Local Authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.
- Schools must also arrange full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed period exclusion. This information can be found in the Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England statutory guidance.
- Maintained schools affiliated with the Trust have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. The Spire Church of England Learning Trust Schools have a similar safeguarding duty for their pupils.
- Further information about the Trust and the schools' safeguarding responsibilities can be found in the Keeping children safe in education statutory guidance (KCSiE) 2024.

Recording information in the school's admission register

- It is important that the school's admission register is accurate and kept up to date. Schools should regularly encourage parents to inform them of any changes whenever they occur, through using existing communication channels such as regular emails and newsletters. This will help the school and Local Authority locate children missing education.
- Where a parent/carer notifies a school that a pupil will live at another address, the school is required to record in the admission register:
 - a. the full name of the parent/carer with whom the pupil will live;*
 - b. the new address; and*
 - c. the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.*
 - Where a parent/carer of a pupil notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school in future, schools must record in the admission register:
 - a. the name of the new school; and*
 - b. the date when the pupil first attended or is due to start attending that school.*

Monitoring attendance through the daily register

All schools within The Spire Church of England Learning Trust must:

- Enter pupils on the register every day that the school has agreed or been notified that the pupil will attend
- Address poor or irregular attendance
- Refer poor attendance to the LA
- Investigate any unexplained absences as part of the school's wider safeguarding duties
- Keep the school's admission register accurate and up to date

Each school within The Spire Church of England Learning Trust should inform the LA of the details of pupils who:

- Fail to attend regularly
- Have missed 10 school days or more without permission (or because of illness, unavoidable cause, a religious holiday or the LA's failure to make the required travel arrangements)

Enter new pupils onto the register as soon as they start

When schools within The Spire Church of England Learning Trust are told that a new pupil will be joining the school, but the pupil doesn't attend on the agreed date, the school should try to establish the child's whereabouts and consider alerting the LA.

If a pupil starts at the school and the previous school is unknown, then schools should let the LA know so they can search for the previous school in the DfE's school to school (S2S) system.

Remind parents/carers to tell you about any changes to their information

Schools should do this via existing communications such as emails and newsletters. This will help all parties when enquiring about missing children.

All schools within The Spire Church of England Learning Trust should look to hold **more than 1** emergency contact number for each pupil, to help get in touch with an adult if there are any concerns.

As soon as a parent or carer informs the school about a **change of address** for a pupil, the following must be recorded in the admission register:

- The full name of the parent/carer with whom the pupil will live
- The new address
- The date from when it's expected the pupil will live at this address

Where a pupil is registered at **another school** or will be attending one in future, the following **must** be recorded in the register:

- The name of the new school
- The date when the pupil has started, or is due to start, attending their new school

Sharing information with the Local Authority

- Schools must notify the Local Authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the regulations, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply at standard transition points – where the pupil has completed the school's final year – unless the local authority requests such information to be provided.
- Where a school notifies the Local Authority that a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register, the school must provide the Local Authority with:

- a. the full name of the pupil;*
- b. the full name and address of any parent/carer with whom the pupil lives;*
- c. at least one telephone number of the parent/carer with whom the pupil lives;*
- d. the full name and address of the parent/carer who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable;*
- e. the name of pupil's destination school and the pupil's expected start date there, if applicable; and*
- f. the grounds in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register*

- All schools are required to notify the Local Authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. Schools will need to provide the Local Authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

Providing information on standard transitions

- All schools are under an automatic duty to provide information to the Local Authority for non-standard transitions. This relates to pupils removed from the admission register before completing the final year of education normally provided by the school, or pupils added to the admission register after the start of the first year of education normally provided by that school.
- Schools are also only under a duty to provide information to the Local Authority for standard transitions if a Local Authority requests that schools make such returns. This relates to pupils removed from the school's admission register after the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by the school, or pupils added to the admission register at the start of the first year of education normally provided by the school. For most pupils, a standard transition occurs when a pupil moves between a primary and secondary school, but this can also include other types of schools including where pupils move between infant and junior schools and in local areas with three-tier education systems with first, middle and high schools.
- In a small number of cases, pupils removed from the admission register in one school would be a standard transition but their transfer to another school would be a non-standard transition and vice-versa. In such cases, only the school where the non-standard transition occurs is under an automatic duty to notify the Local Authority. The Local Authority would need to make a request for the information from the other school, if they required information on the standard transition.

Making reasonable enquiries

- The term 'reasonable enquiries' grants schools and Local Authorities a degree of flexibility in decision-making, particularly as the steps that need to be taken in each case will vary. The term 'reasonable' also makes clear that there is a limit to what the school and local authority is expected to do.
- In line with the duty under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, the expectation is that the school and the Local Authority will have in place procedures designed to carry out reasonable enquiries. The type of procedures may include the appropriate person checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords – private or social housing providers – and other local stakeholders who are involved. They should also record that they have completed these procedures. If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care (and the police if appropriate).

- A pupil's name can only be removed from the admission register under regulation 8(1), sub-paragraph (f)(iii) or (h)(iii) if the school and the local authority have failed to establish the pupil's whereabouts after jointly making reasonable enquiries. Local Authorities and schools should agree roles and responsibilities locally in relation to making joint enquiries.

If there is evidence to suggest the child has moved to a different Local Authority area, contact should be made with the named person in the new authority using secure communication methods. The Local Authority should maintain a record of the child's details until they are located or attain school leaving age.

When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown, it is reasonable to expect that the local authority and the school will complete and record one or more of the following actions:

- a. make contact with the parent/carer, relatives and neighbours using known contact details;*
- b. check local databases within the Local Authority;*
- c. check Key to Success or school school (s2s) systems;*
- d. follow local information sharing arrangements and where possible make enquiries via other local databases and agencies e.g. those of housing providers, school admissions, health services, police, refuge, Youth Justice Services, children's social care, and HMRC;*
- e. check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and/or the Border Force;*
- f. check with agencies known to be involved with family;*
- g. check with Local Authority and school from which child moved originally, if known;*
- h. check with any Local Authority and school to which a child may have moved;*
- i. check with the Local Authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is;*
- j. in the case of children of Service Personnel, check with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS); and*
- k. home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.*

- This list is not exhaustive or prescriptive, and so local authorities and schools should treat each case on its individual merits and use their judgement, ensuring they have taken into account all of the facts of the case. It should be recognised that the type of reasonable enquiries required to try to locate a child will differ from case to case and additional enquiries to those suggested in this section may be necessary.
- Making these enquiries may not always lead to establishing the location of the child, but will provide a steer on what action should be taken next, for example, to

contact the police, children's social care and, in cases where there may be concerns for the safety of a child who has travelled abroad, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Using Common Transfer Files to transfer pupil information

- The Department provides a secure internet system – school2school – to allow schools to transfer pupil information to another school when the child moves. If the school the child is leaving agrees, the local authority may do this on the school's behalf.
- The Common Transfer File (CTF) guidance makes clear that all schools maintained by a Local Authority in England are required when a pupil ceases to be registered at their school and becomes a registered pupil at another school in England or Wales, to send a CTF to the new school. All schools within The Spire Church of England Learning Trust should send CTFs when a pupil leaves to attend another school. Independent schools can be given access to school2school by the Department. Where a pupil transfers to a new school in Scotland or Northern Ireland the previous school in England is still required to send a CTF.
- The school2school system also contains a searchable area, where schools can upload CTFs of pupils who have left but their destination, next school is unknown, or the child has moved abroad or transferred to a non-maintained school. If a pupil arrives in a school and the previous school is unknown, schools should contact their Local Authority who will be able to search the database.
- There may be exceptional circumstances when standard rules for sending and receiving a CTF for a pupil might not apply. Each case would need to be judged on its merits in consultation with relevant parties. Circumstances when it is not considered appropriate to pass on details via a CTF might include a family escaping a violent partner; if the family is in a witness protection programme; or where there are concerns that the child is at risk of forced marriage. Guidance on how to share information in these circumstances is included in the CTF guidance.

Sharing information with others

- Families moving between Local Authority areas can sometimes lead to a child who is unknown to any Local Authority and consequently missing education. Where a child has moved or where the destination of a child is unknown, local authorities should identify relevant local authorities – either regionally or nationally – and check with them in order to ascertain where the child has moved.

- Once the location of the child is established, the named person in the local authority where the child lives should satisfy themselves that that the child is receiving suitable education.
- Secure systems should be used to share and transfer personal information. Local Authorities should not make blanket enquiries, as contacting all Local Authorities with a list of children is poor practice. This is also not a secure method of sharing personal information. Best practice is for Local Authorities to carry out thorough local checks in their own authority area before contacting specific Local Authorities that they believe to be linked to the child.

Children at particular risk of missing education

Children fall out of the education system because they:

- Fail to start appropriate provision and therefore never enter the system.
- Fail to make the transition between schools within or across the Local Authority area.
- Cease to attend due to exclusion or withdrawal.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education so it is vital that local authorities make judgements on a case-by-case basis. Although not exhaustive, the list below presents some of the circumstances that local authorities should consider when establishing their CME policies and procedures:

- a. Pupils at risk of harm/neglect** – Children may be missing from education because they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Where this is suspected schools should follow local child protection procedures. However, if a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made immediately to children’s social care (and the police if appropriate). Local Authority officers responsible for CME should check that a referral has been made and, if not, they should alert children’s social care. The Department’s statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education provides further advice for schools and colleges on safeguarding children.
- b. Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families** – Research has shown that many children from these families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. It is therefore important that schools inform the local authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child’s education. Although many are settled, some GRT families move regularly and their children

can be at increased risk of missing education. Local authority Traveller Education Support Services (TESS), where these exist, or the named CME officer within the local authority, can advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring the minimum disruption to GRT pupils' education, for example dual registration with other schools or the provision of electronic or distance learning packages where these are available.

- c. Children of Service Personnel** – Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently – both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice. Schools and local authorities should contact the MoD Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) on 01980 618244 for advice on making arrangements to ensure continuity of education for those children when the family moves.
- d. Missing children and runaways** – Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education. Further sources of information about missing children are listed at the back of this document.
- e. Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System** – Children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education. Local authority Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are responsible for supervising those young people (aged 8 to 18). YOTs should work with the Local Authority CME officer to ensure that children are receiving, or return to, appropriate full-time education. Where a young person was registered at a school prior to custody, the school may be able to keep the place open for their return.
- f. Children who cease to attend a school** – there are many reasons why a child stops attending a school. It could be because the parent/carer chooses to home educate their child. However, where the reason for a child who has stopped attending a school is not known, the Local Authority should investigate the case and satisfy itself that the child is receiving suitable education.
- g. Children of new migrant families** – children of new migrant families may not have yet settled into a fixed address or may have arrived into a Local Authority area without the authority becoming aware, therefore increasing the risk of the child missing education.

Local Authorities' responsibilities

Local Authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age.

The Local Authority should consult the parents of the child when establishing whether the child is receiving suitable education. Those children identified as not receiving suitable education should be returned to full time education either at a school or in alternative provision.

Prompt action and early intervention are crucial to discharging this duty effectively and in ensuring that children are safe and receiving suitable education. Worcestershire Local Authority should have robust policies and procedures in place to enable them to meet their duty in relation to these children, including ensuring that there are effective tracking and enquiry systems in place, and appointing a named person to whom schools and other agencies can make referrals about children who are missing education.

Some children who are missing from education can be identified and supported back into education quickly; other children who have experienced more complex problems face tougher obstacles to getting back into suitable education. When developing policies and procedures for children not receiving a suitable education, Local Authorities should consider the reasons why children go missing from education and the circumstances that can lead to this happening.

Arrangements made under section 436A also play an important role in fulfilling the Local Authority's wider safeguarding duties. This duty should therefore be viewed alongside these wider duties and local initiatives that aim to promote the safeguarding of children.

Local Authorities should have in place arrangements for joint working and information sharing with other local authorities and agencies. Individual Local Authorities can determine the specific detailed arrangements that work best in their area that not only meet this statutory duty but also enable them to contribute to a range of work aimed at improving outcomes for children. The statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children, provides advice on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Worcestershire Local Authority should undertake regular reviews and evaluate their policies and procedures to ensure that these continue to be fit for purpose in identifying children missing education in their area.

Where there is concern for a child's welfare, this should be referred to Local Authority children's social care. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, the police should also be involved. Where there is a concern that a child's safety or well-being is at risk, it is essential to act without delay.

Local Authorities have other duties and powers to support their work on CME. These include:

- Arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion
- Safeguarding children's welfare, and their duty to cooperate with other agencies in improving children's well-being, including protection from harm and neglect;
- Serving notice on parents/carers requiring them to satisfy the Local Authority that the child is receiving suitable education, when it comes to the Local Authority's attention that a child might not be receiving such education
- Issuing School Attendance Orders (SAOs) to parents/carers who fail 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
- Prosecuting parents/carers who do not comply with an SAO;
- Prosecuting or issuing penalty notices to parents/carers who fail to ensure their school-registered child attends school regularly
- Applying to court for an Education Supervision Order for a child to support them to go to school.

Parent/Carers' responsibilities

- Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education. Some parents/carers may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw them from school at any time to do so, unless they are subject to a School Attendance Order.
- Where a parent/carers notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the Local Authority. However, where parents/carers orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school should consider notifying the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity.
- Children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans or statements of special educational needs (SEN) can be home educated. Where the EHC plan or

statement sets out SEN provision that the child should receive at home, the local authority is under a duty to arrange that provision. Where the EHC plan or statement names a school or type of school as the place where the child should receive his or her education, but the parent/carer chooses to home educate their child, the Local Authority must assure itself that the provision being made by the parent/carer is suitable. In such cases, the Local Authority must review the plan or statement annually to assure itself that the provision set out in it continues to be appropriate and that the child's SEN continues to be met.