

EMPOWERING FUTURES ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

MISSING CHILD, MISSING LEARNER & CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION POLICY

Policy Name	Missing Child Policy
Site	Birmingham
Version	1.0
Approved By	Director / DSL
Date Reviewed & Confirmed	18 January 2026
Next Review Due	January 2027

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Empowering Futures Alternative Provision (EFAP) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare, safety, and wellbeing of all children, young people, and adult learners accessing our provision.

We recognise that learners in Alternative Provision may experience increased vulnerability due to factors including, but not limited to:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs
- Previous disengagement from education
- Risks of exploitation, criminal involvement, or going missing
- Emotional dysregulation or trauma
- Complex family or social circumstances

EFAP recognises that **children who go missing or who are missing from education are**

at heightened safeguarding risk. This policy sets out clear procedures to prevent, identify, respond to, and report incidents where a learner:

- Is not present when expected
- Leaves the premises without permission
- Fails to return from a break or activity
- Goes missing during off-site learning
- Disengages or stops attending education
- Does not join or abruptly leaves an online session where risk is identified

All such incidents are treated as **potential safeguarding emergencies**.

2. LEGAL AND STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

This policy is informed by and complies with:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Education Act 1996 (including Section 436A)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- DfE Alternative Provision Guidance
- Local Authority Missing Child and CME Procedures
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework
- Prevent Duty Guidance (where contextual risk exists)
- Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

For adult learners (18+), safeguarding duties are informed

- by:
- Care Act 2014
 - Mental Capacity Act 2005

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Children and young people aged 11–18
- Adult learners aged 18+
- All staff, tutors, mentors, assessors, and contractors
- All EFAP premises
- Off-site activities and community-based delivery
- Online and blended learning provision

It applies to learners who are:

- Full-time or part-time
- Attending short courses
- Referred by Local Authorities, schools, or partners
- Attending evening or weekend provision

4. DEFINITIONS

Missing Child / Missing Learner

A learner is considered missing when:

- Their whereabouts cannot be established
- They are absent from site and staff are unaware of their location
- They leave the premises without permission
- They fail to return at an agreed time

- They disappear during off-site provision
- They disengage suddenly from an online session where risk is known

Unauthorised Absence vs Missing

An unauthorised absence becomes a **missing incident** where:

- There is a safeguarding concern
- The learner is vulnerable
- The absence is unusual or out of character
- There is risk of harm or exploitation
- Contact with parents/carers cannot be established
- The learner is under 16 and unaccounted for
- An adult learner with vulnerabilities cannot be contacted

Staff must **always err on the side of caution**.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Director / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) •

Leads emergency and safeguarding responses • Liaises with Police, Local Authorities, and partner agencies • Authorises escalation to emergency services

- Ensures safeguarding records are completed
- Oversees post-incident reviews

Deputy DSL / Manager

- Coordinates search and communication procedures
- Contacts parents/carers and Local Authorities
- Maintains accurate incident chronology

All Staff

- Supervise learners appropriately
- Immediately report unexplained absence
- Follow missing learner procedures
- Record all actions taken

Parents / Carers

- Provide accurate contact information
- Inform EFAP of changes or concerns

Adult Learners

- Notify staff if absent or delayed
- May be subject to welfare checks where vulnerability is identified

6. PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

EFAP reduces risk by:

- Completing individual risk assessments
- Maintaining accurate registers
- Monitoring entry and exit points
- Supervising transitions and breaks
- Implementing behaviour and support plans

- Working closely with families and Local Authorities
- Providing safeguarding training
- Monitoring transport and taxi arrangements

7. MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE – ON SITE

Step 1: Immediate Response (within 10 minutes) • Notify

DSL or Deputy DSL immediately

- Search classrooms, toilets, communal areas
- Conduct building sweep
- Check CCTV (if applicable)
- Speak to peers and staff
- Verify timetables

Step 2: Telephone and Contact Checks

- Contact learner (if permitted)
- Contact parent/carer
- Contact transport provider
- Confirm whether learner has returned home

Step 3: Police Escalation

Police must be contacted immediately where:

- Learner is under 16
- Learner is vulnerable
- Risk of exploitation, harm, or criminal involvement exists
- Circumstances are out of character

Local Authority commissioning officers and relevant services must be notified. **Step 4: Continued Search (where safe)**

- Only with DSL authorisation
- Local vicinity only

- No use of personal vehicles

Step 5: Documentation

- Complete Missing Child Form
- Record full chronology
- Update safeguarding records

8. MISSING LEARNER PROCEDURE – OFF SITE

- Halt activity immediately
- Ensure supervision of remaining learners
- Attempt contact with learner
- Search immediate area
- Notify DSL
- Escalate to Police if not located promptly
- Inform parents/carers and Local Authority

9. MISSING ADULT LEARNER PROCEDURE

EFAP will conduct welfare checks where adults are:

- Identified as vulnerable

- Experiencing mental health concerns
- In distress prior to leaving
- Absent from high-risk practical sessions

Actions may include contact attempts, emergency contact notification, or Police referral where risk is identified.

10. ONLINE LEARNING – MISSING DURING SESSION

A learner may be considered missing if:

- They leave unexpectedly
- They do not respond to contact
- Signs of distress were observed

Procedures include attempts to re-establish contact, DSL notification, parent/carer contact (for under 18s), and Police referral where safeguarding concerns arise.

11. SUPPORT FOLLOWING INCIDENT

When a learner is located:

- Provide reassurance and support
- Offer medical attention if required
- Conduct return-to-provision discussion
- Update risk assessments and support plans
- Share information on a need-to-know basis

Persistent incidents trigger multi-agency review.

12. RECORDING AND REPORTING

All incidents are:

- Logged on safeguarding systems
- Recorded chronologically
- Reported to Local Authorities where required
- Reviewed through DSL oversight
- Available for Ofsted, LA, and EQA scrutiny

13. MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

EFAP works collaboratively with:

- Police
- Social Care
- Virtual Schools
- CME and Missing Children Teams
- Youth Justice
- CAMHS
- Local Authority commissioning teams
- Schools and families

14. PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Strategies include:

- Trauma-informed practice
- Regulation and sensory support
- Key workers

- Safe spaces
- Structured routines

- Enhanced supervision

- Transport monitoring

15. POLICY REVIEW

This policy is reviewed:

- Annually
- After any incident
- Following LA or Police guidance
- After Ofsted inspections

16. CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

(CME) 16.1 Definition

A child of compulsory school age is considered **Missing Education** where they are not registered at a school or provision and are not receiving suitable education, and their educational placement or whereabouts cannot be confirmed.

CME is recognised as a **significant safeguarding risk**.

16.2 Identification of CME Risk

Indicators include:

- Persistent non-attendance

- Failure to engage following referral

- Withdrawal without confirmed placement
- Breakdown in communication

- Dual-registered learners ceasing attendance

16.3 CME Escalation Procedure

Day 1–5:

- Contact parent/carer and learner

- Liaise with school and LA

- Record actions

Day 6–10:

- Escalate to DSL

- Review safeguarding risk

- Notify LA of emerging concern

By Day 10–20:

- Formal CME referral to Local Authority

- Provide attendance data and chronology

- Notify home LA, school of roll, and Virtual School where applicable

EFAP will not close records without LA confirmation.

16.4 Roles and Responsibilities – CME

The DSL oversees CME processes, LA liaison, and record keeping. Staff maintain attendance records and escalate concerns promptly.

16.5 Recording and Evidence

CME cases are logged, documented chronologically, retained securely, and made available for audit and inspection.

16.6 Multi-Agency Working

EFAP works with CME teams, schools, social care, and partner agencies to locate and re-engage learners.

16.7 Safeguarding Link

CME is treated as a safeguarding issue and managed alongside child protection procedures where risk is identified.

16.8 Review and Quality Assurance

CME cases inform safeguarding audits, staff training, and preventative strategies.

APPROVAL

Approved by:

Rhean White

Director & Designated Safeguarding Lead

Empowering Futures Alternative Provision