



Briefing Note:
Children Missing Education
Statutory Guidance Update
September 2025



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Who is this briefing note for?

Headteachers, DSLs, Attendance Leads, Governors

Purpose of the Update

The Department for Education has revised the Children Missing Education (CME) guidance to reflect:

- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Working Together to Improve Attendance statutory guidance

These changes aim to strengthen identification, tracking, and safeguarding of children missing education, with a renewed emphasis on multi-agency collaboration and early intervention.

Key Changes and Safeguarding Implications

1. Alignment with Attendance Regulations

- CME guidance now mirrors the 2024 attendance regulations, ensuring consistency across pupil registration, absence tracking, and safeguarding responses.

2. Enhanced Identification Duties

- Local authorities must use more robust systems to identify CME, including children not on roll or persistently absent.
- Schools are expected to escalate concerns swiftly, especially where safeguarding risks are evident.

3. Clearer Legal Responsibilities

- The statutory duty to locate and re-engage CME is reinforced, with safeguarding risks (e.g. exploitation, neglect, trafficking) explicitly referenced.
- Schools must ensure their CME protocols are compliant and reflect these legal expectations.

4. Multi-Agency Collaboration Formalised

- Schools, health professionals, youth offending teams, and police are now formally recognised as key partners in CME identification and support.
- Information sharing and joint working are no longer optional—they are expected.

5. Focus on Prevention and Early Help

- The guidance promotes proactive outreach to families, especially those affected by exclusion, SEND, housing instability, or disengagement.
- Schools should embed CME awareness into pastoral and safeguarding systems.

Recommended Actions for Schools

Policy Review

- Update CME and attendance policies to reflect the 2025 guidance and 2024 regulations.
- Ensure safeguarding and attendance teams are aligned in their approach.

Staff Training

- Provide targeted training for DSLs, attendance officers, and pastoral staff on CME risks and procedures.
- Include CME in whole-school safeguarding updates.

Audit and Data Tracking

- Review current CME tracking systems for gaps in identification, follow-up, and escalation.
- Ensure data is shared appropriately with local authority CME officers.
- Strengthen Multi-Agency Links.
- Establish or refresh local protocols for joint working with health, police, and social care.
- Nominate a lead for CME within the safeguarding team to coordinate responses.
- Embed CME in Safeguarding Culture.
- Use pupil voice and contextual safeguarding principles to identify hidden harm.
- Ensure governors are briefed on CME risks and school responsibilities.

Children missing education are often those most vulnerable to harm. This updated guidance reinforces the need for vigilance, coordination, and compassion. Schools must act not only as educators but as safeguarding anchors within their communities.

At **Helen Hogan Safeguarding Matters** we continue to discuss our most vulnerable children and how as educators we can challenge safeguarding decisions for children who are not in regular attendance in school or who are missing from education.

This continues to require robust protocols around attendance tracking and building relationships with children and their families to understand the reasons for their absence and the wider risks in their extended contexts so full and thorough assessments can lead to positive outcomes.