



**Hertfordshire County Council: Children Missing
Education Policy
September 2025-26**

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1. Introduction

A child is not defined as missing from education if they have a school place but are not attending regularly, if they are being home educated or if they attend alternative provision such as a college or Education Support Centre.

1.1 Children Missing Education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school in line with statutory guidance below:

- The legal framework for this policy is the CME statutory guidance issued by the DfE, Children missing education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

1.2 All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have.

1.3 Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are **not** registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

2 Purpose

2.1 Local Authorities are required to have a dedicated Children Missing Education (CME) Officer to locate, track and ensure children in their area have access to an education. This is to fulfil the duty outlined in section 436A of the Education Act 1996.

This is for children who:

- have never accessed education (have neither enrolled at a school, nor received education otherwise than at school since reaching statutory school age)
- leave educational provision without a confirmed education destination, and/or fail to access a school place when moving to a new area or country

2.2 Hertfordshire Local Authority works collaboratively with its education establishments and services to identify, support and safeguard children who are missing education by:

- Identifying children who are missing education
- Ensuring all CME children are speedily located
- Supporting other Local Authorities to locate their CME children

3. Children at particular risk of missing education

Children Missing Education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, child sexual exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment, or training) later in life. CME could be:

3.1 A child of statutory school age (5-16) not on roll at a registered school

3.2 A child allocated a place at school who has not attended

3.3 A child registered as being educated at home but not receiving an appropriate education

3.4 Children have a higher risk of becoming CME when they move across Local Authority boundaries, and certain life events make some children more vulnerable to missing education such as, but not limited to:

- Children of homeless families, living in temporary accommodation, multiple occupancy or bed and breakfast accommodation
- Families fleeing domestic violence
- Children supported by social care: On a Child in Need (CiN) Plan or a Child Protection (CP) Plan; or being supported by Early Help
- Children of Gypsy / Roma / Traveller background
- Children from highly mobile families e.g. asylum seekers, or economic migrants
- Young people in the criminal justice system
- Children with long-term medical or emotional health problems
- Children in private fostering arrangements
- School aged parents
- Children of parents with learning difficulties or a mental health diagnosis

4. Schools Responsibilities

4.1 The Department for Education's CME Legal Framework states in Point 16 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 must notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

4.2 For Cohort Pupils (Reception, Year 2-3 or Year 7), when a parent has been offered a school place for their child, schools must arrange for the child to come into school for an induction prior to the September start date.

4.3 For In-Year applications, when a parent has been offered a school place the school must arrange to meet with the parent and child to attend an admissions meeting to discuss enrolment and provide a start date.

4.4 Once a start date has been agreed the child must be added to the school's register.

4.5 In the event a child does not arrive on the start date, school is to make reasonable attempts to contact the parent via telephone, email and letter and if after several attempts, contact is unsuccessful, schools must email csf.cme@hertfordshire.gov.uk or complete the CME referral form [Children Missing Education referral form](#)

4.6 If a parent informs a school that they do not wish their child to come to that school, the school must email the Attendance Duty team: attendancedutyeast@hertfordshire.gov.uk or attendancedutywest@hertfordshire.gov.uk

4.7 If school is informed by School Admissions that the child will not be coming to their school, schools must complete the leaver's destination section of the school's Management Information System to remove pupil from their register, indicating the date the pupil was removed and the reason for removal.

4.8 School Admissions will refer cases to csf.cme@hertfordshire.gov.uk if unable to establish a family's whereabouts.

5. Referring a child who is CME

5.1 In the event of schools, parents, partners and multi agencies, or individuals are made aware that a child is **not** registered or attending a school, they must inform the CME Officer at csf.cme@hertfordshire.gov.uk immediately.

5.2 Alternatively contact csf.cme@hertfordshire.gov.uk or complete the online referral form [Children Missing Education referral form](#) providing all the information.

5.3 The CME Officer will process all referrals to establish the situation.

5.4 For children that are being removed from roll the setting must complete the Removal from Roll form and return is to Attendance Duty team [Removal from roll guidance - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning](#)

5.5 Where a child is recorded as CME and the family inform the Local Authority that they will deliver home education, if the child has previously been home educated and the provision was assessed as unsuitable, they will remain CME until the provision is assessed as suitable via the enquiry process. For more information, please see the Hertfordshire EHE policy [ehe-policy-sept2024](#)

6. Local Authorities Responsibilities

6.1 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.

6.2 Arrangements made under section 436A also play an important role in fulfilling the local authority's wider safeguarding duties. Existing safeguarding procedures and mechanisms for reporting and recording child protection concerns must be followed at all times.

6.3 The local authority's CME Officer will record and maintain the child's details on the Missing Children Management Information System and will also:

- Interrogate systems and maintain accurate records
- Contact relevant multi agencies (social care, police, NHS etc.)
- Make Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) referral if required
- Make cross border enquiries
- Establish family location
- Confirm educational provision
- Contact public services (housing, benefits, council tax) to establish that the child & family are resident at that address
- Provide Social Worker with information to inform border control where relevant

6.4 After all enquiries have been concluded by the CME Officer and the child's whereabouts remains unknown, a review is conducted to confirm all actions have been exhausted. This enables the case to either be passed to Children's Social Care or closed.

6.5 Where the CME Team cannot locate a child, electronic records will be updated via the School to School-National Pupil Database.

6.6 Where a child is on a Child in Need, or Child Protection Plan and they leave the UK, the allocated social worker will be responsible for contacting their counterpart and/or the police authority in the relevant countries.

6.7 If significant concerns persist, and the whereabouts of a child remains unknown, a referral must be made immediately to Social Care, so any risk of significant harm is reduced.

7. Legal interventions

7.1 Where a CME Officer can demonstrate that a child of statutory school age is resident in Hertfordshire and is not on roll at a school and / or not in receipt of suitable education provision (e.g. home education or Education Other Than at School (EOTAS)); the local authority may commence a School Attendance Order (SAO) or Education Supervision Order (ESO).

8. Contact

8.1 Help us to help safeguard children by using the form on the link below and tell us in confidence if you think you know of any children who are missing from education. Please send the completed form directly to csf.cme@hertfordshire.gov.uk

8.2 The CME officers within Hertfordshire are:

- Jacqui Ellis - CME Officer – West area – covering Watford & Three Rivers, St Albans & Dacorum, Hertsmere Boroughs
- Wendy Hasler – CME Officer – East area – covering East Herts & Broxbourne, Stevenage & North Herts, Welwyn Hatfield Boroughs

8.3 The CME Manager is Mario Demetriou who has strategic and operational responsibility for this cohort.

9. CME Policy Review

9.1 The CME Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis so will next be reviewed in September 2026.