

Children Missing from Education Policy

Background and Context

This policy should be read alongside our Safeguarding Policy and Missing/Absconding Student Policy.

The policy has regard to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (DfE, Sept 2019) and 'Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities' (DfE, September 2016).

The following is taken from the latter mentioned document, and provides the context for this policy.

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.

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. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education. Local authorities should focus their resources effectively in intervening early in the lives of vulnerable children to help prevent poor outcomes.

A child missing education from school due to repeated or unexplained absence, or by leaving school unexpectedly is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, or that a family may be in need of additional support.

It is noted that some children who are missing from education can be identified and supported back into education quickly, whilst others, who have experienced more complex problems, face greater obstacles to getting back into suitable education. VLC exists to enable children to access education, particularly those who would otherwise miss out due to exclusion or anxiety, and so many of the students VLC works with are at risk of becoming CME.

This policy covers those instances where:

- there is a repeated pattern of absence
- the reason for absence is unclear or unexplained
- a volunteer or member of staff has concerns about the nature of a student's absence

This policy seeks to deal with children and young people who miss education in these circumstances, particularly on repeat occasions and for those children who leave VLC without clear indications of where they will be continuing their education.

Definition

VLC adopts Warwickshire County Council's CME team's definition. A child missing education refers to:

- Children whose whereabouts/educational provision are unknown, including:
 - children not at their last known address, and either has not taken up an allocated school place as expected, or
 - children with 10 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation.

- Children whose whereabouts are known but educational provision is not in place.

Children whose education entitlement is most vulnerable include those who are:

- affected by domestic violence;
- living in temporary accommodation or are homeless;
- are highly mobile ie Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families or Service families;
- under the supervision of the youth justice system;
- affected by substance or alcohol misuse;
- unaccompanied asylum seekers;
- victims of bullying or discrimination;
- at risk of sexual exploitation;
- at risk of 'honour' based violence including forced marriage;
- at risk of female genital mutilation;
- looked after;
- young carers;
- teenage parents;
- permanently excluded from school;
- have long term health problems;
- have parents with mental health problems;
- have parents with learning difficulties.

Procedure

VLC will work closely with local schools and the local authority to monitor the admission, attendance, absences and transition of students.

VLC will carry out daily registration and absences will be reported twice daily to students' schools/referrers and parents.

Where:

- there is a repeated pattern of absence,
 - the reason for absence is unclear or unexplained, and/or
 - a volunteer or member of staff has concerns about the nature of a student's absence,
- the VLC's Designated Safeguarding Lead's (DSL) or Deputy be consulted and, if appropriate, a WSCB Green Form/MASH Referral Form should be completed. This will subsequently be stored securely, together with any responses and outcomes.

As many of VLC's students are part time and attend other provision, it is difficult to define a length of time by which VLC considers a student's absence to be a concern. However, VLC generally accepts 2 school weeks as a length from which a student's absence is a concern. Regardless, VLC will notify student's schools of their absences twice daily, via CLM, including details of any communication with parents or reasons for absence. It is our aim that reasons for student's absence will be picked up well before the student is deemed to be missing from education.

Where a student has 2 school weeks of absence and all reasonable steps (see below) have been taken by VLC/the student's school, to establish their whereabouts without success, VLC will make an immediate referral to WCC's Education and Learning Business Unit at 01926 742036, or via cme@warwickshire.gcsx.gov.uk

Reasonable steps at establishing whereabouts include:

- telephone calls to all known contacts;
- letters home (included recorded delivery);
- contact with the student's school and/or referring agency;
- possible home visits, where it is safe to do so;
- enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through VLC contacts;
- all contact and outcomes to be recorded on CLM.

VLC will ensure that all students are registered on CLM and that their attendance, any reasons given or contact made is updated twice daily. When a student leaves VLC, we will make sure that reasons are outlined clearly.

When a student leaves VLC without clear indication that they will be continuing to receive education, VLC will contact the Warwickshire Children's Services Children Missing Education Team to advise them of the situation and to start their tracking procedures.

In all case of serious concern, regardless of the length of time the student has been absent, the DSL will contact the MASH team, in line with VLC's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, for further advice.