

# Children Missing Education (CME) in the Early Years

## Best practice guidance for schools

### Transition to the reception year in school

**Purpose:**

**This good practice guidance is intended for reception teachers in schools. It outlines the processes, steps and procedures which are recommended as good practice in Leicestershire during a young child's transition to school.**

**Whilst guidance is already available for schools regarding the attendance of children of statutory school age, this guidance has been developed to ensure clear processes are in place for all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). There is no national guidance for children of non-statutory school age, but this advice has been developed in line with the statutory guidance for local authorities on children missing education (DfE 2016).**

**In being aware of and following this guidance you are helping to keep children safe and ensuring that they receive an appropriate education.**

**These processes and procedures do not replace safeguarding procedures. If you have reason to believe a child is at risk of significant harm you should contact First Response in accordance with the Safeguarding Children Partnership's (SCP) procedures.**

**Introduction:**

All children of non-statutory school age have the right to health and early years services to help them achieve their full potential. All professionals within early years services should seek to engage families to ensure that no child slips through the net.

The safeguarding of children in Leicestershire is of the highest priority and, to ensure that children and families who fail to engage or disengage from services are located, response needs to be quick. All agencies have a responsibility to share appropriate information, work together and ensure all reasonable efforts are made to locate children and their families.

Recent national and local serious case reviews indicate there is no room for complacency. It is vital every professional is even more vigilant of the signs that may indicate a child is at potential risk – this includes identifying children who go missing from early years services and/or education.

**In your role as reception teacher, you should be aware of and give consideration to the following suggested processes, steps and procedures:**

- Gather as much information as possible on each child and their family from the outset – from the family themselves, early years provision and the “Inwards Allocation List” (available to view on the School Admissions Portal)
- Where possible, use the information in the “Inwards Allocation List” to inform feeder settings /early years providers which children you are expecting to start school in September. Early years providers may then be able to identify children who have not been allocated a school place
- If children do not attend settling in sessions prior to starting school, contact the family (addresses and contact details are on the “Inwards Allocation List”) and, where relevant, contact the child’s feeder setting/early years provider (these details are also on the “Inwards Allocation List”). Work with the child and family to:
  - establish reason(s) for non-attendance
  - raise awareness of the importance and benefits of attending settling in sessions
  - try to overcome concerns, misconceptions or barriers - e.g. the family may benefit from an accompanied visit to school
- If a family notifies you that their child will not be attending your school despite being on the list, ensure:
  - both you and the child’s parents/carers are clear about the reasoning behind this (e.g. wishing to delay starting school, appealing against the school place offered, etc.)
  - parents/carers are advised to fill in the [School Admissions contact form](#) if there are any uncertainties or remaining questions
  - the child’s early years provider is made aware where relevant
  - you call your School Admissions officer/fill in the [School Admissions contact form](#)

- If a family notifies you before September that they intend to home-school their child, be aware that:
  - unless the child has SEND, parents/carers of non-statutory school age children do not legally have to notify anyone – but practically it is much better if they do
  - Leicestershire County Council prefer that parents call the Inclusion Service on 0116 305 2071 /email [homeeducation@leics.gov.uk](mailto:homeeducation@leics.gov.uk)
  - practitioners should support parents/carers if necessary to notify the LA – see <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/inclusion-service/home-education>
  - call the Inclusion Service (0116 305 2071) and your School Admissions officer/ fill out the [School Admissions contact form](#) if you have any reason to believe that the LA are not aware
  - you can also fill in and send the [Inclusion Service Referral Form](#) – tick the box for ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION and fill in the relevant details, also completing section 2
  
- If a child on your school’s list doesn’t attend school during the first days of term:
  - check possible whereabouts with family, siblings, staff, early years provider
  - contact any known extended family and/or emergency contact
  - contact your School Admissions officer/ fill out the [School Admissions contact form](#) and contact:
    - the Inclusion Service (0116 305 2071) if child is of statutory school age
    - the Early Years Provider Helpline (0116 305 7136) – if child is not yet of statutory school age
  - consider visiting the family’s last known address – check for visible signs of property being occupied, check with neighbours
  
- If there are concerns regarding attendance later on in the academic year but the child is still of non-statutory school age:
  - Follow the procedure above if the absence is unexplained

- Ensure you have a clear log of absences – write a report on a monthly basis (i.e. last day of each month). This will not be reported to the local authority via the monthly PME data return until the child is of statutory school age but you should have a clear history of all children’s attendance
- If there are significant and immediate concerns, contact First Response (0116 305 0005)
- If there are concerns regarding attendance later on in the academic year and the child is of statutory school age:
  - check possible whereabouts with family, siblings, staff, early years provider
  - contact any known extended family and/or emergency contact
  - contact your School Admissions officer/ fill out the [School Admissions contact form](#) and the Inclusion Service (0116 305 2071)
  - consider visiting the family’s last known address – check for visible signs of property being occupied, check with neighbours
  - consider completing the [Inclusion Service referral Form](#)

**Key questions to consider when gathering information on children and families:**

- Have there been any concerns regarding the attendance of the child at previous early years provision, including any unexplained absences or absences due to medical reasons?
- Is there a history of the family moving on suddenly without any explanations as to why?
- Are there reasons why the family are less likely to engage with pre-school services? e.g. looked after children, gypsy/traveller background, living in women’s refuge or temporary accommodation, family with a transient lifestyle, migrant children, etc.
- Is there any school or local authority intervention in relation to older siblings’ attendance?

**Top tips:**

- Routinely record and amend children's details at every opportunity and remind parents/carers to inform practitioners of any changes of addresses, contact details, etc.
- Keep records of and look for patterns in non-attendance; record actions, decisions made, conversations, agencies contacted, etc. when trying to locate children and their families
- Do everything possible to work with families, early years provision and other agencies (e.g. health, social care, Family Help) to share relevant information and to support in the search should a child be missing from education
- Do what is reasonable in terms of searching and timescales

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