

Children missing education: guidance for Headteachers and Governing Bodies

Summary

About this guidance

This guidance is to be used as a non-statutory advice by school leaders, school staff and governing bodies in all ODST academies. It also contains information about schools' other statutory duties.

1. Introduction - overview

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities who have a statutory function to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, children missing education (CME). ODST believes this is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education and will cooperate with local authorities to help them fulfil their statutory function.

2. ODST Schools' responsibilities

2.1. All ODST Schools and academies will

- 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
- undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts if a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date and consider notifying the local authority
- monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register and address poor or irregular attendance.
- comply with the reasonable requests from their local authority to inform them of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission¹.
- Only remove a child from the admission register where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days but only after the school and the local authority have failed to establish the whereabouts of the child.
- arrange full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed period exclusion.

¹ or because of illness, unavoidable cause, religious holiday, or the local authority's failure to make the required transport arrangements.

- honour their safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils to investigate any unexplained absences. (Further information about schools' safeguarding responsibilities can be found in the *Keeping children safe in education* statutory guidance).

3. Recording information in the school's admission register

3.1. ODST Schools will regularly encourage parents to inform them of any changes whenever they occur. Where a parent notifies a school that a pupil will live at another address, all ODST schools are required to record in the admission register:

- the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live;
- the new address; and
- the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.
- Where a parent of a pupil notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school in future, schools must record in the admission register²³:
 - the name of the new school; and
 - the date when the pupil first attended or is due to start attending that school.

4. Sharing information with the local authority

4.1. ODST Schools will notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point. This duty does not apply at standard transition points – where the pupil has completed the school's final year. Where an ODST school notifies a local authority that a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register, the school will provide the local authority with:

- the full name of the pupil;
- the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- at least one telephone number of the parent with whom the pupil lives;
- the full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable;
- the name of pupil's destination school and the pupil's expected start date there, if applicable; and
- the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register (see Annex A).

4.2. ODST schools will notify the local authority **within five days** when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. ODST Schools will provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

5. Providing information on standard transitions

5.1. In a small number of cases, pupils removed from the admission register in one school could be a standard transition but their transfer to another school would be a non-standard transition and vice-versa. For example, a pupil leaving a primary school at the end of Year 2 is a non-standard transition, but their transfer to a junior school at the beginning of Year 3 is a standard transition. In such cases, only the school where the non-standard transition occurs will notify the local authority.

6. Making reasonable enquiries

6.1. When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown, it is reasonable to expect that an ODST school will complete and record one or more of the following actions:

- make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details;
- check local databases within the local authority;
- check Key to Success or school2school (s2s) systems;
- follow local information sharing arrangements and where possible make enquiries via other local databases and agencies e.g. those of housing providers, school admissions, health services, police, refuge, Youth Justice Services, children's social care, and HMRC;
- check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and/or the Border Force;
- check with agencies known to be involved with family;
- check with local authority and school from which child moved originally, if known;
- check with any local authority and school to which a child may have moved;
- check with the local authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is;
- in the case of children of Service Personnel, check with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Children's Education Advisory Service ([CEAS](#)); and home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.

7. Using Common Transfer Files to transfer pupil information

7.1. The Department provides a secure internet system – [school2school](#) – to allow schools to transfer pupil information to another school when the child moves. ODST schools will use Common Transfer File (CTF) information when a pupil leaves to attend another school. Where a pupil transfers to a new school in Scotland or Northern Ireland the previous school in England is still required to send a CTF.

8. Children at particular risk of missing education

8.1. There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education:

8.1.1. **Pupils at risk of harm/neglect** – Children may be missing from education because they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Where this is suspected schools should follow local child protection procedures. The Department's statutory guidance [Keeping children safe in education](#) provides further advice for schools and colleges on safeguarding children.

8.1.2. **Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families²** – It is important that schools inform the local authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education.

8.1.3. **Children of Service Personnel** – Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently – both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice. Schools and local authorities should contact the MoD Children's Education Advisory Service ([CEAS](#)) on 01980

² [Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveler pupils: final report](#) DFE

618244 for advice on making arrangements to ensure continuity of education for those children when the family moves.

8.1.4. **Missing children and runaways**³ – Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education.

8.1.5. **Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System** – Children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education.

8.1.6. **Children who cease to attend a school** – there are many reasons why a child stops attending a school. It could be because the parent chooses to home educate their child.

8.1.7. **Children of new migrant families** – children of new migrant families may not have yet settled into a fixed address or may have arrived into a local authority area without the **authority becoming aware, therefore increasing the risk of the child missing education.**

9. Delegation

9.1. The relevant body has chosen to delegate this functions to local governing bodies and headteachers as set out in this policy.

9.2. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout ODST

10. Monitoring & Evaluation

10.1. The Local Governing Body and headteacher will monitor the operation and effectiveness of the school's attendance policies with a regard to the relevant body's statement Policy and deal with any queries relating to it. The relevant body, through the ethos committee, will monitor any concerns or complaints raised in relation to the policy on a tri-annual basis.

³ See '[Children who run away or go missing from home or care](#)' statutory guidance