

Aberdare Community School Ysgol Gymunedol Aberdâr



Children Missing From Education Policy

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Signature of Headteacher	<i>Chwedd Morgan</i>
Signature of Chair of Governors	<i>Mama</i>
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Rhondda Cynon Taf

Education and Inclusion Services

Attendance and Well Being Service

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

Updated August 2022

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Terms and abbreviations used in this document

Children Missing Education (CME) Any child of compulsory school age (5 to 16) who is not on a school roll or being educated otherwise than at school

Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS) previously known as the Education Welfare Service based within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Compulsory school age begins the term following a child's 5th birthday and ceases during the school year that a child reaches his/her 16th birthday. (Always the last Friday in June each year).

Parents or Carers which for the purposes of school attendance, includes an adult who has day-to-day care of a child or young person

Common Transfer System (CTS) is the system which allows schools and Local Authority's to exchange pupil movement information electronically.

Common Transfer File (CTF) is an electronic data file, containing pupil information which moves from school to school.

School to School (S2S) The secure transfer site with a searchable area known as the "Lost Pupil Database" where CTFs for pupils without a known destination are securely stored.

DfE Department for Education

Unique Pupil Number (UPN) A number which identifies each pupil in Wales and England and is allocated on first entry to school. The intention is for this number to remain with that pupil throughout their school career.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 436A has placed a duty on local authorities to make arrangements to establish, so far as it is possible to do so, the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education. In relation to children, suitable education is efficient full-time education suitable to her/his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have (Education Act 1996, Section 7).
- 1.2 The duty applies in relation to children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and who are not receiving suitable education otherwise than being at school, for example, at home, privately or in alternative provision.
- 1.3 **The duty does not apply in relation to children who are registered at a school and are not attending regularly.** Schools have a duty to monitor attendance through the attendance register and to follow their attendance procedures when the attendance of an individual pupil gives cause for concern.
- 1.4 The Children Act 2004 and Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 place a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people and to share information. This principle underpins this policy and there is an expectation that all agencies will work together to ensure that children and young people do not 'slip through the net' and become missing.
- 1.5 These missing children and young people are amongst the most vulnerable in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT); children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later on in life. This document outlines the robust procedures that are to be followed within Rhondda Cynon Taf to identify, locate and engage children who are CME and to ensure that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is effectively meeting its obligations under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 436A).
- 1.6 These robust procedures ensures that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) has arrangements in place for close joint working and appropriate information sharing with other local authorities and relevant partner agencies that come into contact with children and families including all council service areas (Education, Children's Services, Youth Offending Service, Revenues and Benefits), Health, South Wales Police, housing agencies, as well as links with the Border Agency.
- 1.7 RCTCBC is committed to ensuring:
- Tracking procedures are monitored to ensure best practice with regard to safeguarding children and young people;
 - Work with other agencies is carried out so that the Local Authority (LA) knows all children of statutory school age who reside within RCT and that their education provider is identified;

- All pupils of statutory school age who go missing from schools in RCT and move within the LA or to other areas are located in a timely manner;
- Support is provided to other LAs to locate their own missing/lost pupils when they inform RCT of their potential existence in the county.

1.8 Finally it should be noted that this document does not apply to young people who run away from home or care placement. This group is subject to separate policies from the Children Services and South Wales Police.

2. Purpose of the Policy

2.1 The purpose of this document is to establish a set of principles which all agencies can subscribe to and to set out the responsibilities of staff in schools, the LA and partners in ensuring that all children and young people have the opportunity to access appropriate and suitable educational provision and is underpinned by RCT's safeguarding procedures to ensure that the LA:

- Ensures all services within the Authority are aware of their shared responsibilities;
- Is able to fulfil its statutory duty to provide an education for all children of compulsory school age (year 11 students are covered by this policy until the last Friday in June of their 16th year);
- Identify, reengage and maintain contact with those children and young people missing from education who reside in RCT;
- Ensure the LA, schools and families work together, along with other partners, to track learners believed to be not to be on roll with an education provider until they are registered in a new school or other educational provision.

2.2 This policy outlines that the authority will achieve it's aims by:

- Ensuring appropriate referral systems and procedures are in place to respond to reports or concerns that a child or young person may be deemed as "Missing from Education";
- Ensuring that all children and young people are supported to access an appropriate education provision;
- Make all reasonable attempts to track children and young people who move out of RCT until such a time as they are in a known destination by liaising with CME Officers in other Local Authorities;
- Support and assist with the school admission process to avoid delay;
- Maintain an efficient electronic database system, whilst logging all communication and tracking information for each child;
- Ensure schools and professionals are aware of, understand and correctly follow existing procedures on CME.

3. Definition of a Child Missing from Education

3.1 The DfE defines Children Missing Education as:

“Any child of compulsory school age (5 to 16) who is not on a school roll or being educated otherwise than at school and who has been out of education provision for a substantial period of time (currently agreed to be four weeks)”.

4. How Children Go Missing from Education

4.1 Children and young people who fall out of the education system are among the most vulnerable and it is essential that services work together to support them so that they can re-engage with the mainstream education or be provided with an alternative that is appropriate to their circumstances as quickly as possible.

4.2 The reasons children and young people “go missing” from education are varied and often complex in terms of their personal circumstances, family structure or background. Some of the most common reasons are:

- Failure to register a child for admission to school at age 5 years;
- Parents who elect to home educate their children (see RCT Elective Home Education Policy);
- Failure to attend another school following a permanent exclusion;
- Being withdrawn from school by parents and failing to remain in contact with services;
- Having a travelling lifestyle or a lifestyle which involves frequent moves;
- Failure to transfer between schools/key stages, especially if there is a house move at the same time;
- Moving into the local authority area and not making a school admission application.

5. High Risk Groups include:

5.1 Some children living in certain circumstances are at greater risk of becoming CME. Amongst these are (this list is not exhaustive):

- Young runaways;
- Young people who may be lost within the criminal justice system;
- Children living in women’s refuges;
- Refugees and asylum seeking young people and families;
- Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Families ;
- Families of Armed Forces personnel;
- Those at risk of sexual exploitation (CSE) including those trafficked into or within the UK;
- Those at risk of forced marriage and honour based violence;
- Families in distress e.g. domestic violence, homelessness, bereavement etc.;
- Children and young people with substance misuse and mental health difficulties (or have parents with those difficulties);
- Children who are privately fostered;

- Teenage parents;
- Children and young people who have been permanently excluded from school;
- Pupils removed from school registers following lengthy absence such as an extended family holiday or heritage visit;
- Migrant families who arrive from abroad.

6. Relevant Referring Agencies

6.1 This policy does not replace any Child Protection Procedure. Existing safeguarding procedures and mechanism for reporting and recording child protection concerns are to be observed at all times

6.2 Any professional who locates a child who they feel is without suitable educational provision should notify the Attendance and Wellbeing Service immediately. It is expected that our key partners in this area of work will include:

- Schools;
- All Education support services ;
- Health (including CAMHS);
- Police;
- Community and Children Services;
- Housing;
- Voluntary Services;
- Women's Aid Refuges;
- Careers Wales;
- Counselling Services;
- Local Community Partnerships and Services.

6.3 Schools

- 6.3.1 Schools have a vital role to play in preventing children going missing from the education system and are obligated to act without delay when trying to locate the whereabouts of a child by using existing contact information on the family, or the extended family. Schools have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 and the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 in respect of their pupils and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. Should initial enquiries fail to establish the whereabouts of the child/children, a referral must be made to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service who will undertake further investigations. (Schools should use the Attendance Toolkit procedures in the normal way, making the initial enquiry initially as a WRV or as an Emergency Wellbeing referral (if the child has not been seen for 5 days for an unknown reason) which if the circumstances warrant would escalate into a referral as a Child Missing from Education, or by completing the Children Missing Education box on the AWS referral form).
- 6.3.2 If a school has pre-existing concerns of a child protection nature the matter would also be referred to Children’s Services and/or the Police.
- 6.3.3 Schools are obliged by law not to remove a pupil from roll until all avenues have been exhausted and the AWS has advised that it is appropriate to do so. The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 outline the grounds on which pupils of compulsory school age can be deleted from the admissions register.
- 6.3.4 Schools must have systems in place which help to minimise these situations and they include:
- If a pupil is expected to join a school and does not arrive, reasonable attempts must be made to contact parents. If this fails, then the matter must be referred to the local authority’s School Admissions department and/or the AWS;
 - In cases of pupil transfers, the common transfer system (CTS) helps to ensure the accurate transfer of pupil information. The law requires pupil information be sent to a “new” school within fifteen days of leaving the “old” school. The Unique Pupil Number (UPN) is included as an identifier for the pupil;
 - If a pupil disappears without warning or if a family advises school that they are moving without a known destination and all attempts made by the school and the LA fail to secure their destination, schools have a statutory responsibility to use the common transfer system via the school to school (s2s) website (Lost Pupil Database). The s2s is a secure website established to hold pupil information until such time as it is retrieved by a new school/local authority;
 - In circumstances when families make application for extended leave for holidays, schools are advised to ask for contact information in the event a family fails to return when expected;

- Monitoring the transition between Key stage 2 and Key stage 3 is essential to ensure all pupils arrive as expected at secondary school. This is especially relevant should parents make choices other than the “natural” transfer school e.g. faith school and independent schools; if a child does not attend on the first day in September all schools are encouraged to refer that child on their weekly WRV and submit a CME referral if necessary, under no circumstances should a pupil who is expected to attend be removed from roll before efforts have been made to establish their whereabouts first.
- In the event that a parent of a registered pupil chooses to remove their child from school because they have elected to home educate, (refer to the Elective Home Education policy), parents must advise school of that decision in writing. The school may then remove the pupil’s name from the school roll from that date and submit the information to the local authority and where it will be stored electronically and the pupil’s details added to the Elective Home Education list. **Parents wanting to make this decision for a child who is registered at a special school must first obtain the agreement of the local authority.**

6.4 Education Support Services

6.4.1 The LA-based education services may learn that a child or young person is leaving the area and has no plans to enrol in new school e.g. within additional learning needs department, including English as an Additional Language (EAL) may identify concerns. They should make a referral to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service using the CME referral form.

6.5 School Admission Team

6.5.1 The School Admissions Team should communicate information to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service on children and young people that have failed to arrive at their destination following internal school transfers and in year admissions procedure. They should make a referral to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service using the CME referral form

6.6 Children Services and Youth Offending Services

6.6.1 These services will, through their assessment and planning interventions with children and young people, be able to identify a lack of provision. Social workers must be aware of this information particularly in cases where a child may be on the child protection register and not registered at school. They should make a referral to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service using the CME referral form.

6.7 Health Professionals and Police

6.7.1 These partners will, in the course of their normal day-to-day responsibilities, come into contact with families and be in a position to identify whether a child or young person is in an education provision

or not. They should make a referral to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service using the CME referral form.

6.8 Members of the Public

6.8.1 Members of the public may learn that a child or young person has not been registered at a school, particularly if a family is new to the area. They can contact the Attendance and Wellbeing Service via telephone, letter or email to provide the details. There is a Children Missing from Education page on the external internet site which provides the public with details of how they can inform the LA should they feel that a child is not in receipt of education.

6.9 Other Local Authorities

6.9.1 Other Local Authorities have a named individual with the responsibility for this area of work. In most authorities it falls within the remit of the Education Welfare Service. Families moving between local authority areas can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education. When the Attendance and Wellbeing Service become aware of a child moving to another LA and a school has not been identified, contact will be made with the new LA and relevant information will be shared to ensure the child is receiving an education either by attending school or otherwise.

6.10 Front line staff in each of the agencies who regularly come into contact with families with children must ensure that for each new contact, basic information about the child is recorded. This must include the child's name, address, age, the name of the child's primary carer, the child's GP, and the name of the child's school if the child is of school age. Gaps in this information should be passed on to the relevant authority in accordance with local arrangements.

6.11 Referrals can be made by completing the referral form or by making contact using the details below:

Attendance and Wellbeing Service

Email: aws@rctcbc.gov.uk

Telephone: 01443 744298

7. Action by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service Following Referral

7.1 On receipt of a referral the following action will be initiated:

- Determine if the pupil is:
 - Moving into RCT;
 - Moving out of county;

- Moving within RCT but has not arrived at their intended destination;
- Under statutory school age and has not arrived at the school they had applied for or was removed from school whilst in nursery or reception class where the circumstance around the withdrawal gives cause for concern.

7.2 When a child is moving into RCT the following procedures will be undertaken by the service following receipt of the referral form and all available information pertaining to the child and family:

- A home visit undertaken by Attendance and Wellbeing Officer (including neighbourhood enquiries);
- Information to parents/carers on local schools and support with the authority's admission process;
- Relevant information gathered to consider the appropriate provision;
- Consideration for a referral to other support services would be appropriate to the circumstances e.g. Children Services, Access and Inclusion Services, (ECPS, EAL) or local community based support services initiated e.g. Resilient Families
- Consideration of a School Attendance Order should the parent/carers not engage.

7.3 When a child is thought to have moved out of county, the following procedures will be undertaken by the service following receipt of information pertaining to the possible location of the family from the school/service area that made the referral:

- Consideration for the child's vulnerability, length of absence, level of concern and any perceived risks raised by the referrer;
- Information sought from other service areas and partner agencies to attempt to determine the location of the pupil;
- Contact made with other LAs where it is believed the pupil may be residing for a home visit to be made/investigation to continue in that LA;
- Inform the RCT school when the pupil can be removed from their roll.

7.4 When a child is moving within RCT, either due to transition, a house move or through parental choice (in-year transfer), the following procedure will be undertaken to determine the whereabouts of the child if the family's intention to educate is unclear. This process is likely to commence following notification by the previous LA or by the School Admissions team:

- Consideration for the child's vulnerability, length of absence, level of concern and any perceived risks raised by the referrer;
- A home visit undertaken by Attendance and Wellbeing Officer (including neighbourhood enquiries);
- Information sought from other service areas and partner agencies to attempt to determine the location of the pupil;
- Relevant information gathered to consider the appropriate provision;
- Information to parents/carers on local schools and support with the authority's admission process.
- Consideration for a referral to other support services would be appropriate to the circumstances e.g. Children Services, Access and

Inclusion Services, (ECPS, EAL) or local community based support services initiated e.g. Resilient Families

- Consideration of a School Attendance Order should the parent/carer not engage.

7.5 Under statutory school age pupils that have not arrived at the school will be identified via a central report pulled by the School Admissions team, the names on this report are then cross referenced with Childrens services and any vulnerable children identified and referred to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service:

- Consideration for the child's vulnerability, level of concern and any perceived risks raised by the referrer and/or Children's Services;
- A home visit undertaken by Attendance and Wellbeing Officer (including neighbourhood enquiries);
- Relevant information gathered to consider the appropriate provision;
- Consideration for a referral to other support services would be appropriate to the circumstances e.g. Children Services, Access and Inclusion Services, (ECPS, EAL), or local community based support services initiated e.g. Team Around the Family (TAF);
- If agreed that the child is not ready to start nursery/reception, the child will be monitored at the point of turning 5 years to ensure they are re-enrolled at an appropriate provision.

7.6 This would also be the case for pupils under statutory school age who have been removed from school whilst in nursery or reception class where the circumstance around the withdrawal gives cause for concern.

8. Reducing the Risk of Children Missing Education

8.1 It is important to recognise the importance of reducing the risk of children missing education and there are a number of safeguarding measures already in place within RCT that help to minimise the opportunities for children to remain unregistered. They include:

- All schools have regular contact with an Attendance and Wellbeing Officer (AWO) regarding pupils that may have gone 'missing';
- The Attendance and Wellbeing phone line that deals with queries from schools, service areas and the public and is managed by the central officers five days a week;
- An established formal referral process that is communicated to all relevant services and partners and all schools provided with an Attendance Toolkit outlining the process;
- School registers are made available for compliance checks;
- Truancy operations are arranged with local police officers;
- Advice and support is available to schools on maintaining safe registration practices including circumstances where a child may be removed from roll;
- A named Attendance and Wellbeing contact with responsibility for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families;
- Information on all CME enquiries are logged and monitored electronically;

- Information on CME obligations is included in the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board endorsed training packages (Level 1, 2 and 3) to ensure that services are kept reminded and updated of their responsibility for identifying and referring concerns;
- Information is provided to school governors during the School Attendance training offered through the Governor Support Service training programme;
- A structured process is in place to ensure contact is maintained with the elected home educated community, via the EOTAS service;
- Local arrangements through multi agency partnerships and the development of the Resilient Families Service and the introduction of Education appraisers within the AWS has enhanced the sharing of information opportunities.

9. Contacting the Local Authority for Children Missing Education

9.1 Information is available on the AWS website:

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/SchoolsandLearning/Schoolattendance/ChildrenMissingfromEducation.aspx>

9.2 Information, advice and guidance is also available by contacting the Attendance and Wellbeing Service directly:

Kimberley Bowditch-Jones
Attendance, Wellbeing and CME Team Leader
Attendance and Well Being Service,
Ty Trevithick,
Abercynon,
Mountain Ash
CF45 4UQ

Tel: 01443 744298

Email: aws@rctcbc.gov.uk