Children Missing Education Policy

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Note	This policy must not be amended without prior approval of the Education Director		

Table of Contents

Section	
1	**Supporting Documents**
2	**Introduction**
3	**Aim & Scope**
4	**Abbreviations/Definitions**
5	**Policy Content**
6	**Responsibilities**
7	**Training Requirements**
8	**Equality Impact Statement**
9	**Sources of Information / References**
10	**Version Control (where else is this policy located, ie. Circle, Nourish, Radar)**
11	**Appendices**

1. Supporting Documents

- Attendance Policy (EDU.POL.005)
- Safeguarding Children in Education Policy (EDE.POL.002)
- Admissions Policy (EDU.POL.002)
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy (EDU.POL.012)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy (EDU.POL.022)

Related policies are held within RADAR in the School's policy folder.

2. Introduction

At Acorns School, we believe that every child of compulsory school age is entitled to a full-time education that is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they have. Many of our pupils join us with disrupted educational histories, and we know that time spent out of education raises the risk of harm, exploitation and poor outcomes.

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A child who is not receiving suitable education, either at school or otherwise, is a child missing education. We treat children missing education as a safeguarding matter. This policy sets out how we identify children who are missing education or at risk of it, how we act quickly to support their return, and how we work with the local authority to keep every child visible and in education.

3. Aim & Scope

This policy applies to all staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers, and visitors at Acorns School. It aims to:

- Make sure no child of compulsory school age falls out of education unnoticed.
- Set out how we identify pupils who are missing education or at risk of becoming so.
- Explain the enquiries we make before a pupil is removed from roll, and how we work jointly with the local authority.
- Explain when and how we notify and refer to the local authority.
- Make sure children missing education are treated as a safeguarding concern and supported back into suitable education as quickly as possible.

4. Abbreviations and Definitions

Children missing education. A child of compulsory school age who is not on a school roll and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school, for example at home or in alternative provision. It also includes children on roll whose attendance has stopped and whose whereabouts or education cannot be confirmed.

Compulsory school age. From the start of the term after a child's fifth birthday until the last Friday in June in the school year they turn sixteen.

Suitable education. Efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they have.

Reasonable enquiries. The steps a school and local authority take, jointly where required, to establish a pupil's whereabouts and whether they are receiving suitable education, before the pupil's name is removed from the admission register.

Elective home education. Education provided by parents at home instead of at a school, by parental choice.

5. Policy Content

5.1 Principles and Approach

Our approach to children missing education rests on the following principles:

- Every child counts. We account for every pupil, every day, and we never let a child quietly disappear from education.

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- It is a safeguarding issue. A child who is missing education may be at risk of harm, neglect, exploitation or radicalisation, so we respond with the same urgency we apply to any safeguarding concern.
- We act without delay. The longer a child is out of education, the greater the risk, so we make enquiries promptly and keep time out of education to a minimum.
- We work in partnership. No single person holds the full picture, so we share information lawfully and work jointly with the local authority, families and other agencies.
- We are child centred. We try to understand the reasons behind a child's absence, and we work with the family to remove barriers and support a return to suitable education.

5.2 Children Missing Education in Practice

Children at higher risk of missing education

Any child can become missing from education, but some groups are at higher risk. At Acorns School, staff are alert to the heightened risk for children with special educational needs and disabilities, children with an education, health and care plan, children who are looked after or who have left care, children at risk of harm or exploitation, children in alternative provision, children of families who move frequently or live in temporary accommodation, children at risk of forced marriage or so-called honour-based abuse, young carers, and children whose attendance is severe or persistently low. Given the needs of our pupils, we treat this risk as ever present rather than exceptional.

Preventing children from missing education

Prevention starts with attendance. At Acorns School, we monitor attendance daily through the admission and attendance registers, and we follow up every unexplained and unexpected absence promptly. We use attendance data to identify pupils who are at risk of missing education and we work with each pupil and their family to understand and remove the barriers to attendance, in line with our Attendance Policy (EDU.POL.005) and Working Together to Improve School Attendance. Where a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern, we offer support early rather than waiting for the situation to worsen.

The admission register and notifying the local authority

At Acorns School, we keep an accurate admission register and attendance register. We notify the local authority when a pupil is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point, and when a pupil's name is removed, giving the information required by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. When a pupil joins us, we record the pupil's full name, the name and address of every parent the pupil normally lives with, and the school the pupil last attended, and we request the records from the previous school. We treat any gap or inconsistency in a child's history as a concern to follow up.

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Reasonable enquiries before removing a pupil from roll

We never remove a pupil from roll simply because they have stopped attending. Where we have reason to believe a pupil may have left or may not be receiving suitable education elsewhere, we carry out reasonable enquiries jointly with any of the local authorities that our pupils are funded from, to establish the pupil's whereabouts and what education they are receiving, before any decision to remove them from the admission register is made.

Reasonable enquiries include contacting every parent using every contact we hold, contacting the emergency contacts, contacting the local authority and any school the child may have moved to, checking with other agencies involved with the family, and, where appropriate and safe, a home visit. We keep a written record of every enquiry. We do not delete the pupil from the register until the joint enquiries are complete or the local authority agrees, in line with the 2024 regulations. Where a child cannot be located, we treat this as a safeguarding concern and escalate it as such.

Referring to the local authority

Where our enquiries lead us to reasonably believe that a pupil is no longer attending and the parents have not given written notice that the child is moving to another school or being educated otherwise than at school, we make a referral to the child's home local authority children missing education team as soon as possible. We continue to take part in joint reasonable enquiries even after we have made the referral. When the pupil's name is removed from the admission register, we provide the local authority with the full information required by the 2024 regulations as part of the deletion return.

Pupils who leave or move

When parents tell us their child will leave, we ask for this in writing and ask where the child will continue their education, including the name and address of any new school where known. We confirm a place has been taken up before we remove a pupil from roll. Where a family says the child will be educated at home, we inform the local authority so it can carry out its own enquiries into the suitability of that education. We do not advise or pressure any family towards home education to manage attendance or behaviour, and we never remove a child from roll informally.

Safeguarding response and information sharing

Where staff have a safeguarding concern about a child who is, or may become, missing education, they act immediately, follow our Safeguarding Children in Education Policy (EDE.POL.002) and involve the designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead considers whether a referral to children's social care is needed, and contacts the police where a child may be at immediate risk or a crime may have been committed. We share information lawfully and promptly with the local authority and other agencies, and we do not let concerns about data

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protection get in the way of protecting a child. We check that a referral has been made wherever a child missing education also raises a safeguarding concern.

Supporting children back into education

When a child is identified as missing education, our aim is to keep time out of suitable education to an absolute minimum. We work with the local authority and the family to secure a suitable place and a planned, supportive return, and we adapt our communication so that families understand and engage with the process. Where a return to school is not the right step, we work with the local authority on suitable education otherwise than at school. We document the action taken on each case.

5.3 Recording, Monitoring and Reporting

Enquiries, concerns, referrals and notifications relating to children missing education are recorded on CPOMS, with a clear record of every action and date. Attendance and children missing education data is monitored by leadership, reviewed regularly with the designated safeguarding lead, and reported to the proprietor and governors. Trends and individual cases are reviewed so that Acorns School learns from each case and acts earlier next time.

5.4 Equality and Inclusion

At Acorns School, this policy is applied fairly and without discrimination, in line with the Equality Act 2010. Children with special educational needs and disabilities and other vulnerable groups are at higher risk of missing education, so we pay particular attention to their attendance and engagement and we adapt our practice to remove disadvantage. Where a pupil has an EHCP, the school will inform the relevant local authority SEND team whenever CME concerns arise, in addition to attendance and safeguarding notifications. Any concern that this policy disadvantages a pupil or group should be raised with the headteacher.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Pupils

Attend regularly and tell a trusted adult if something is making it hard for them to come to school.

6.2 Staff

Monitor attendance daily and follow up unexplained or unexpected absence promptly; report any concern that a pupil may be at risk of missing education to the designated safeguarding lead and the attendance lead without delay never assume another person or agency is dealing with a concern.

6.3 Leadership

Leadership at Acorns School make sure attendance is monitored rigorously, that staff know how to raise concerns, that enquiries are made promptly, and that

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referrals and notifications to the local authority are made on time and properly recorded. Leadership makes sure no pupil is removed from roll until the correct process has been followed.

6.4 Governance

The proprietor and governors at Acorns School hold leadership to account for the effectiveness of this policy. They make sure the school meets its duties to identify and support children missing education, and they review attendance and children missing education data.

6.5 Parents and carers

Make sure their child receives suitable full-time education tell the school in writing, in advance, if their child is going to leave and where they will continue their education, for example:

- The name and address of a new school or that the child will be educated otherwise than at school.
- Keep the school up to date with current contact details, including more than one emergency contact.
- Co-operate with enquiries by the school and the local authority to confirm their child is receiving suitable education.

6.6 Named leads

Acorns School Marple

The designated safeguarding lead at Acorns School is Paula Tankard. The deputy designated safeguarding lead is Carrie-Anne Harrsion. The lead responsible for attendance and children missing education at Acorns School is Simone Stopford, Assistant Headteacher. The local authority for Acorns School is Stockport.

Acorns School Ashley

The designated safeguarding lead at Acorns Ashley School is Paula Tankard. The deputy designated lead is Ellie Coot. The lead responsible for attendance and children missing education at Acorns Ashley School is Ellie Coot. The local authority for Acorns Ashley School is Cheshire East.

7. Training Requirements

All staff receive training on identifying children at risk of missing education and on how to raise a concern, as part of safeguarding induction and annual safeguarding updates. The designated safeguarding lead and the attendance lead at Acorns School receive role-specific training on the admission register, the reasonable enquiries process and local authority referral routes, refreshed in line with our wider safeguarding training cycle.

8. Equality Impact Statement

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All policies will be developed and implemented in a manner that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all individuals. Policies must align with relevant equality legislation and reflect the expectations and standards set by our regulatory bodies. They will demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of those we support, as well as our workforce.

9. Sources of Information / References

This policy reflects current statutory guidance and legislation, including:

- Children Missing Education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools (DfE, September 2025).
- Education Act 1996, including section 7 (parental duty to secure education), section 19 (education for children out of school), section 436A (local authority duty to identify children missing education) and sections 437 to 443 (school attendance orders).
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, July 2026).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025, and 2026 from 1 September 2026).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026).
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, including the duty to co-operate to promote children's wellbeing.
- Equality Act 2010.

10. Version Control

This document can also be found in Radar. This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes. The named owner for review at Acorns School is the headteacher.

11. Appendices

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11.1 Appendix A: School-Specific Annex

At Acorns School Marple the following local arrangements apply:

- Local authority: Stockport
- Local authority children missing education team contact: eas@stockport.gov.uk
- Designated safeguarding lead: Paula Tankard
- Deputy designated safeguarding lead: Carrie-Anne Harrison
- Attendance and children missing education lead: Simone Stopford, Assistant Headteacher
- Local arrangements for register checks and emergency contacts: All register information is held on Arbor. Our administrator can be contacted on: admin.acorns@keyseducation.ac.uk

At Acorns School Ashley the following local arrangements apply:

- Local authority: Cheshire East
- Local authority children missing education team contact: Education Welfare 01270 375255
- Designated safeguarding lead: Paula Tankard.
- Deputy safeguarding lead: Ellie Coot.
- Attendance and children missing education lead: Ellie Coot
- Local arrangements for register checks and emergency contacts: Attendance is monitored in weekly attendance meetings with the SLT. Daily attendance is inputted by the school's administrator.

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11.2 Appendix B: Reasonable Enquiries Checklist

Staff use this checklist before a pupil is removed from the admission register and when making a children missing education referral. Every step is recorded on CPOMS with the date and outcome.

- Contacted every parent or carer using every telephone number, email and address held
- Contacted all emergency and additional contacts held for the pupil
- Checked whether the pupil has started at another school and confirmed the place
- Contacted the local authority and shared what we know
- Checked with other agencies involved with the family, for example social care or the SEND team
- Considered and, where appropriate and safe, carried out a home visit
- Considered whether a safeguarding referral to children's social care or the police is needed
- Recorded the decision, confirmed the local authority agrees, and completed the deletion return with the required information

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