

Belton Church of England Primary School

Children Missing from Education Policy



September 2026 – August 2027

Updated to reflect KCSIE 2026 and the DfE Children Missing Education statutory guidance updated 8 September 2025.

Approved by: Governing Body
Policy owner: Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead
Review date: September 2027

1. Policy statement

Belton Church of England Primary School is committed to ensuring that every child receives a suitable education and is safeguarded from harm. The school recognises that unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence from education can be a safeguarding warning sign and may place children at increased risk.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Attendance Policy, Admissions Policy, SEND Policy and procedures for children educated otherwise than at school. It supports the school's arrangements for responding to children who are absent from education and for identifying children who may become Children Missing Education (CME).

KCSIE 2026, which comes into force on 1 September 2026, requires schools to have appropriate safeguarding arrangements to respond to children absent from education, particularly where absence occurs repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods. The DfE's CME statutory guidance is also statutory guidance for schools and governing bodies and should be followed unless there are reasonable grounds not to do so.

2. Definition of Children Missing Education

For the purposes of this policy, Children Missing Education (CME) 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.

A child may be CME where they:

- are in the process of applying for a school place and are not receiving suitable education;
- have been offered a school place for a future date but have not yet started;
- are receiving elective home education which has been assessed as unsuitable; or
- have been recorded as CME for an extended period, for example where their whereabouts are unclear or unknown.

A child is not CME simply because they are registered at a school but are persistently or severely absent. However, persistent or prolonged absence is a safeguarding concern and may place a child at risk of becoming CME in the future.

3. Relationship between 'absent from education' and CME

The school will distinguish between a pupil who is registered but absent from school and a child who is not registered at a school and is therefore potentially CME. These situations require linked but different responses.

- For registered pupils, attendance is monitored daily and unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence is followed up promptly.
- Where absence raises safeguarding concerns, the school will not wait for a particular number of days before taking safeguarding action.
- Where the child's whereabouts become unclear or unknown, the school will work with the local authority and other relevant agencies to make reasonable enquiries.
- The school will take action to prevent registered pupils from becoming CME, including early identification of barriers to attendance and appropriate support.

4. Safeguarding principles

The school will use a child-centred, risk-based approach. There is no single threshold at which an absence automatically becomes a safeguarding referral. The response will depend on the individual circumstances, known vulnerabilities and the information available.

- The safety and welfare of the child will remain the primary consideration.
- Absence will be considered alongside other known safeguarding information and patterns of behaviour.
- The school will act promptly where there is reason to believe a child may be at risk of harm.
- Information will be shared lawfully and proportionately where this is necessary to safeguard a child.
- All enquiries, decisions, actions and outcomes will be recorded.

5. Children who may be at greater risk

The school will be particularly alert to children who may be at greater risk of becoming CME, including:

- children who are frequently absent or go missing from education, home or care;
- children with SEND whose needs are not being adequately supported;
- children who have experienced suspension or permanent exclusion;
- looked-after children and care leavers;
- children and families living in temporary accommodation or experiencing homelessness;
- newly arrived or migrant children, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children;
- children who move frequently between homes or local authority areas;
- children known to youth justice services;
- children who may be experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking or other safeguarding concerns;
- children who are electively home educated where the suitability of the education is a concern;
- children who fail to start school or fail to take up an allocated school place; and
- children whose circumstances mean that their education or whereabouts are unclear.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher

- Ensure that the school has effective systems for attendance, safeguarding and CME.
- Ensure that staff understand their responsibilities and that concerns are escalated appropriately.
- Liaise with the local authority and other agencies when required.
- Ensure decisions about removal from the admission register comply with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and local authority procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Consider the safeguarding significance of unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence.
- Assess vulnerability and decide whether a safeguarding referral or other escalation is required.
- Coordinate reasonable enquiries where a child's whereabouts are unclear or unknown.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns and actions are recorded on the school's safeguarding recording system.
- Work with the attendance lead, headteacher, local authority and other agencies as appropriate.
- Ensure concerns about a child who may be at risk of becoming CME are considered alongside other safeguarding information.

Attendance lead / school office

- Take and record attendance accurately each day.
- Follow up unexplained absence promptly in accordance with the school's Attendance Policy.
- Maintain accurate contact details and admission-register information.
- Escalate concerns to the DSL and/or headteacher without delay.
- Maintain records of reasonable enquiries and actions taken.

All staff

- Be alert to repeated or prolonged absence and other signs that a child may be at risk.
- Report concerns promptly to the DSL or the appropriate member of the safeguarding team.
- Do not assume that attendance issues are solely an attendance matter where there may be safeguarding concerns.
- Share relevant information in accordance with safeguarding and information-sharing procedures.

7. First-day response to unexplained absence

From the first day of unexplained or unauthorised absence, the school will follow its Attendance Policy and consider whether there is any safeguarding concern. The school will use the contact information held on record and will make further enquiries where necessary.

1. Check the attendance register and reason for absence.
2. Attempt to contact parents/carers using the school's recorded contact methods.
3. Consider whether the absence is unusual for the child or forms part of a pattern.
4. Check existing safeguarding, SEND, attendance or pastoral information where relevant.
5. Refer immediately to the DSL if there is any concern that the child may be at risk of harm.
6. Where the child's safety cannot be established, escalate without delay to the appropriate safeguarding agency and/or police as appropriate.

8. When safeguarding concerns are present

The school will not delay a safeguarding referral simply because the child has been absent for only one day. Where the circumstances indicate that a child may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the DSL or headteacher will follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and make an immediate referral to Children's Social Care and/or the police as appropriate.

Factors that may increase concern include:

- the child is subject to a child protection plan or is otherwise known to Children's Social Care;
- the child is looked after or otherwise particularly vulnerable;
- there is a known risk of exploitation, trafficking, abduction, forced marriage, FGM or radicalisation;
- there are concerns about domestic abuse, violence, substance misuse or other risks in the household;
- the child has significant SEND or medical needs and essential support may not be available;
- the absence is sudden, unexpected or out of character;
- there has been a significant incident before the absence;
- there are concerns about bullying, peer-on-peer abuse or harmful sexual behaviour; or
- there is any other information that causes the school to believe the child may be unsafe.

9. Reasonable enquiries

Where there is no immediate reason to believe the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the school will make reasonable enquiries and will work with the local authority where required. Enquiries will be proportionate, support-focused and based on the child's circumstances.

- Contact parents/carers and other appropriate family contacts using the information held by the school.
- Check with relevant staff who may have recent information about the child.
- Consider information from the child's peers or other appropriate contacts where this is proportionate and safe.
- Check whether the family has moved or whether there is information suggesting a new address or local authority area.
- Liaise with the local authority and relevant agencies where appropriate.
- Where appropriate and safe, arrange or request a home visit in accordance with local authority procedures and risk assessment.
- Keep a clear written record of all attempts, information received, decisions and actions.

10. Children whose whereabouts are unknown / CME referral

Where the school has reason to believe that a child is no longer receiving suitable education and/or their whereabouts are unknown, the school will follow the local authority's CME referral process. The school will provide the local authority with the information and records required to support the enquiry.

The school will not simply close a pupil's record because a family cannot be contacted or because the child has stopped attending. The school will follow the statutory admission-register requirements and local authority procedures before any deletion from the register.

11. Use of GIAP and S2S

Where appropriate, the school will work with the local authority to use Get Information About a Pupil (GIAP) and School to School (S2S) to establish whether a child is registered at another school and to support the safe transfer or tracing of pupil information.

- GIAP may be used by authorised users to search pupil-level information and establish whether a child is registered elsewhere.
- S2S supports the secure transfer of pupil information and Common Transfer Files (CTFs).
- Where a pupil arrives without a CTF, the school will liaise with the local authority and use the appropriate DfE/local systems to establish the child's previous school and secure the transfer of relevant information.
- All information sharing will be lawful, necessary and proportionate and will comply with safeguarding and data-protection requirements.

12. Admissions, starters and children who do not start

The school will maintain accurate admission records and will follow the local authority's arrangements for in-year admissions and notification of starters and leavers.

- Where a child is allocated a place but does not start, the school will notify the appropriate local authority service and make enquiries as required.

- Where a child is transferring from another school, the school will seek the information necessary to ensure continuity of education and safeguarding.
- Where a child is expected to start but does not arrive, the school will consider the circumstances immediately and will not assume that the child has simply moved elsewhere.
- The school will liaise with the local authority where there is uncertainty about a child's school place or educational provision.

13. Removing a pupil from the admission register

A pupil's name will only be removed from the admission register where one of the permitted grounds in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies and the school has completed the required notifications and enquiries. The school will follow the local authority's current CME and pupil-registration procedures.

Where a pupil is absent for a prolonged period and the circumstances fall within a ground for deletion, the school will undertake the required reasonable enquiries, including working jointly with the local authority where required. The school will not use prolonged absence as a reason to remove a child from roll without following the statutory process.

The school will not engage in off-rolling. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll simply because they are difficult to place, have attendance difficulties, have SEND, or because removal would improve school performance data.

14. Elective home education

Parents have a right to educate their child at home. However, where a child is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school, the local authority has duties in relation to CME and education law. Where a parent indicates an intention to electively home educate, the school will follow the local authority's current EHE procedures and ensure that safeguarding considerations are not overlooked.

Where the child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, the school will liaise with the local authority so that the plan and the child's needs are appropriately considered.

15. SEND and children with additional vulnerabilities

The school recognises that children with SEND may be particularly vulnerable where their needs are not being adequately met. Reduced attendance or parental withdrawal from school may indicate unmet need rather than simply a parental choice. The school will work with the child and parents/carers to identify barriers, review support and involve the SENDCo and relevant external professionals as appropriate.

- Consider whether reasonable adjustments or additional support are required.
- Review the child's provision and SEND support where attendance is deteriorating.
- Consider whether an EHC plan review is required where significant unmet needs are contributing to non-attendance.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns are considered separately from, but alongside, SEND needs.
- Avoid assumptions that a child's SEND explains away absence or disengagement.

16. Children in temporary accommodation, newly arrived families and mobility

The school will be alert to the additional risks associated with homelessness, temporary accommodation, frequent moves and newly arrived or migrant families. Where a family moves, the school will seek to establish the child's new address and educational arrangements and will liaise with the relevant local authority.

Where a child moves to another local authority, the school will share relevant information through secure and appropriate channels to support a safe transition and prevent the child becoming lost between services.

17. Information sharing and record keeping

The school will share information where it is necessary and proportionate to safeguard children or fulfil statutory duties. Information sharing will follow the school's safeguarding and data-protection procedures.

- Records of attendance and contact attempts will be maintained accurately.
- Safeguarding concerns will be recorded on the school's safeguarding recording system.
- Reasonable-enquiry records will include dates, actions, outcomes and decisions.
- Relevant information will be shared with the local authority and other agencies where necessary.
- Where a pupil moves school, safeguarding information and pupil records will be transferred securely and in accordance with statutory requirements.

18. Staff awareness and training

All staff will be made aware of the school's safeguarding response to children absent from education, including the significance of repeated and prolonged absence. This will form part of safeguarding induction and annual safeguarding training.

- Staff will know who the DSL and deputy DSLs are and how to report concerns.
- Staff will understand that absence can be a safeguarding warning sign.
- Staff will know that safeguarding concerns must be reported without delay and should not be left for attendance processes to resolve.
- The DSL will ensure that staff understand the relationship between attendance, CME and safeguarding.

19. Monitoring, review and quality assurance

The Headteacher, DSL and attendance lead will monitor attendance and CME-related concerns regularly. The governing body will receive appropriate assurance through safeguarding and attendance reporting.

- Patterns of repeated and prolonged absence will be reviewed.
- Cases where a child is at risk of becoming CME will be monitored until resolved.
- The effectiveness of reasonable enquiries and referrals will be reviewed.
- The school will review this policy annually and sooner where statutory guidance or local authority procedures change.

20. Local contacts and procedures

The school will maintain a current list of local safeguarding and CME contacts. These details must be checked before the policy is published and whenever the local authority changes its arrangements.

Service	Current contact details
Local Authority Children Missing Education (CME) Team	0116 3052071
Children's Social Care	0116 3055500
Local Authority Attendance Team	https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/school-attendance
Local Authority SEND Team (where relevant)	https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/education-and-childcare/send-support-in-schools/contact-our-sena-service

21. Statutory and related guidance

- Keeping children safe in education 2026 – Department for Education (in force from 1 September 2026).
- Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools – Department for Education, updated 8 September 2025.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Working together to improve school attendance – Department for Education.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Education Act 1996, including section 436A.
- Education Act 2002, including section 175.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006.

22. Policy review record

Date	Version	Changes	Approved by
September 2026	2026–2027	Full update to reflect KCSIE 2026, DfE CME statutory guidance updated September 2025, and School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.	Governing Body