

Children in Care Missing from Education - Additional Guidance

Where a child moves to a new care placement which means that they are unable to access their current school, consideration should be given as to whether the child should stay on the school's admission register ('on roll'). This guidance is intended to provide a set of considerations which should be explored to decide in the best interests of the child for their educational development and their safety and wellbeing.

This guidance is for:

- Schools and other education providers
- Local authority education officers
- Social workers

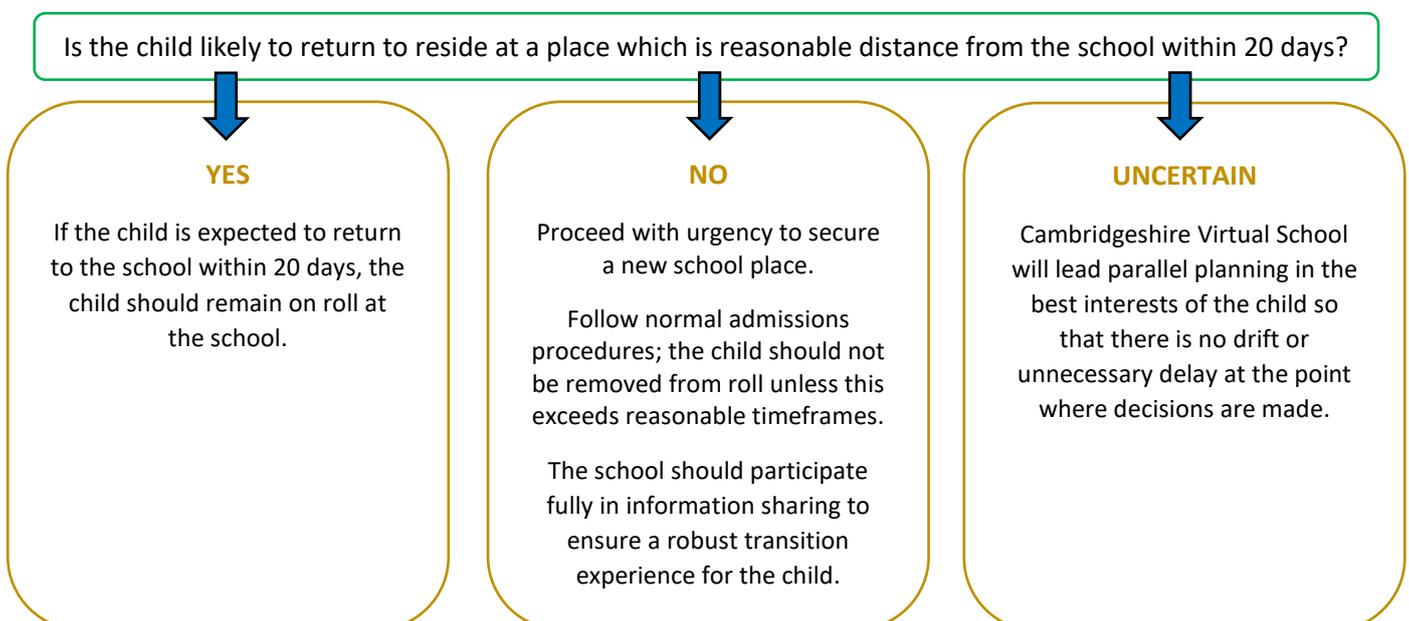
Alongside this guidance, it may be useful to refer to:

- [Children missing education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- [11.2 - CME Policy \(For Maintained Schools and Academies\) September 2021 \(cambslearntogether.co.uk\)](http://cambslearntogether.co.uk)

Context

- Both at the point of entering care, and throughout their childhood, children in care may experience planned and unplanned placement moves. When a placement changes, every effort is made to maintain the child's access to school, however at times this may not be possible or safe.
- For children in care, school may be their primary place of safety and security and therefore it should be acknowledged that the loss of this key environment and relationships is sizeable.
- Data shows that children in care typically underperform academically; each day of non-attendance for a child in care is therefore significant.
- Any removal from roll must be in line with the statutory guidance; usually the reason for a child in care is 'except in the case of a boarder, that he has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which he is registered.'¹
- If a child in care is removed from roll, they will usually become a child missing in education (CME) as a child whose whereabouts are known but does not have any educational provision in place.
- A child in care who is a registered pupil at a special school cannot be removed from roll without the consent of the local authority, or if that authority refuses to give consent, without a direction of the Secretary of State.²
- [Further reading: Children's Commissioner - Pass the parcel \(children posted around the care system\)](#)

Points for Consideration



¹ Regulation 8(1)(e), Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

² Regulation 8(2), Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

INTERIM PROVISION

- All children have an entitlement to education and whilst a new school place is being secured (or the child is awaiting a return to the area), interim education provision must be put in place.
- The local authority will work alongside the original school to ensure this is in place.

SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Schools have safeguarding responsibilities for all pupils on their roll.
- To support schools to fulfil their safeguarding duties, Social Care will provide regular updates on the whereabouts, contact details and safety/wellbeing of a child beyond reasonable distance of the school.

ATTENDANCE REGISTER

- Schools have a responsibility to record attendance for all pupils on their roll.
- Social Care will provide updated details of a child's whereabouts so that schools can ascertain and record attendance.
- The 'C' code can be used for a child who does not live within reasonable distance following a home placement move.
- Approved interim alternative provision can be coded as 'B' for attendance and 'O' for non-attendance.

CHILDREN WITH AN EHCP

- Securing a new school place for a child with an EHCP includes a 15-day consultation period for chosen settings.
- Belonging Regulations mean that responsibilities for a child in care's EHCP are shared between Cambridgeshire and the new local authority.
- The local authority will work to expedite processes where possible when seeking to secure a setting, matched to the child's needs.

UNCERTAIN PLANS

- Parallel planning should not extend beyond 20 days unless there is clear justification.
- By day 20, if uncertainty remains, transition into the new school should take place.
- The original school should be prepared to take the child back on roll if they return to within reasonable distance.

BEYOND DAY 20

- Occasionally, children remain on roll at their original school beyond 20 days due to complicating circumstances, such as difficulties securing a suitable specialist setting or a child who experiences multiple placement moves in quick succession.
- The instability of multiple placement moves in quick succession can have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of children in care and on parallel planning.
- Whether or not to retain the child on the school's roll needs careful thought. The considerations made by the school must focus on the impact on the child.
 - Is it in the child's best interests?
 - What are the disadvantages and/or benefits to the child if they were removed from roll?
- Schools should consult with the local authority when considering next steps, with the context and individual circumstances of the child being taken into account.

POSITIVE ENDINGS

- Schools must actively support with transition/information sharing with new settings.
- Given the amount of loss and broken attachments children in care may experience, it is essential to provide a positive goodbye, which promotes healthy closure and minimises loss.
- This should be planned to best meet the child's needs and may include a final visit to the school, or a phone call/letter.