

Briefing Report to People Scrutiny Panel

Children Missing Education (CME)

16th September 2024

Trevor Dunn - Head of Access to Education

[middlesbrough.gov.uk](https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk)


Middlesbrough
moving forward

Definition

Children missing education (CME) is a term used by DfE to identify a particular subset of children who are at increased risk and are not attending school.

To be CME, children must satisfy all three of the following criteria:

- * be of compulsory school age
- * not be registered at a school
- * not be receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school

LA Responsibility

Local Authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children missing education and return them to full time education.

Where there is concern for a child's welfare, this should be referred to the local authority's children's social care team. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, the police should also be involved.

In Middlesbrough the CME Officer will initiate and pursue appropriate enquiries to trace the pupil and regularly review the case until the pupil is re-engaged in education, or is found to be resident in and known to another LA.

In addition LA's have a range of other duties which include:

- Arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion.
- Serving notice on parents requiring them to satisfy the local authority that the child is receiving suitable education, when it comes to the local authority's attention that a child might not be receiving such education.
- Issuing School Attendance Orders (SAOs) to parents who fail to satisfy the local authority that their child is receiving suitable education, if the local authority deems it is appropriate that the child should attend school.
- Prosecuting or issuing penalty notices to parents who fail to ensure their school-registered child attends school regularly.

Middlesbrough's Context

The various categories of CME children are as set out below:

1. Children who are referred by schools to the Authority as missing.

The number of referrals we receive each month varies, but on average it is around 25. We have a dedicated CME Officer in place who manages these referrals and conducts extensive searches across the local community, other local authorities, the Child Health Information Service, the Child Benefits Agency and Border Force in an attempt to trace the children. In the majority of cases the children are believed to have left the UK and returned to their country of origin. Roughly half of the referrals are for Romanian children with the rest being made up of Asian, British and other European.

2. Children who are electively home educated, but the Authority has deemed are not receiving an adequate education.

The Elective Home Education team (EHE) review the quality of education that parents are providing for their children. Where this is deemed to be inadequate, the team will make arrangements for the child to return to school.

This may involve use of our statutory powers by way of a School Attendance Order.

3. Children who have recently arrived in the town and are awaiting a school place.

There is a shortage of primary school places in the town centre which can result in newly arrived children waiting for a suitable place to become available. There are sufficient places available for all of the children in Middlesbrough but sometimes families find it difficult to travel longer distances to attend school in other parts of the town.

In July we had 11 primary aged children who had been waiting for a place more than a month, but none who had been waiting more than 3 months.

There was around 45 secondary aged children waiting for places in July. The majority of these children had received offers of school places before the end of term.

4. Children who have been permanently excluded from school and are not in a full time alternative setting.

Education arrangements for children who have been excluded from school are managed by the Inclusion Team. This team is responsible for the placement of children following an exclusion, regular placement reviews and the quality assurance of alternative provision.

In Middlesbrough, 6th day education provision is delivered by several registered alternative provisions/schools. Most pupils in alternative provision receive a full-time education; 39% of children access the provision on a reduced timetable basis. These reduced timetables are used to accommodate an assessment/ transition plan or because it is in the child's best interests to reflect their individual needs.

At times when exclusion figures are high, some pupils wait for a placement to become available at one of the registered providers. During this period they receive an interim education package which is coordinated by the Local Authority. At present, there are 31 children receiving an interim education package. There are plans for 28 of these children to transition into a school placement over the next 6 weeks.

5. Children in the Authority's care for whom full time education has not yet been secured.

In July we had 8 children in our care who were not on a school roll (though all were being provided with suitable education via the Virtual School).

The reasons why looked after children may not be in school vary, but they usually fit one of the criteria below:

- They have special needs and are awaiting a suitable specialist provision to become available.
- They have recently come into care and had no school place prior to this, so a suitable school is in the process of being identified.
- They have been moved to an out of town location for safeguarding reasons.

The King's Speech

The King's speech in July 2024 set out plans to require LA's to maintain a register of CME children and Electively Home Educated children (EHE).

Middlesbrough LA already maintain these registers.

