



Children Missing and Children Missing Education Policy

Prepared by: The Central Team

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1. Purpose and scope

This policy covers (a) a pupil unexpectedly absent or missing from school, education, transport, an off-site activity or a supervised area; (b) persistent unexplained absence; (c) a pupil who leaves without a confirmed education destination; and (d) safeguarding and welfare information transfers when pupils move school or local authority. It applies to all LSE staff and contractors.

2. Safeguarding principles

The immediate priority is pupil safety. Children with autism, communication differences, sensory needs or associated vulnerabilities may face heightened risks. Staff must not assume an unexplained absence or missing incident is simply related to SEND. A missing pupil may be exposed to exploitation, injury, anxiety or abuse. Follow the child's risk plan and provide communication-appropriate support.

3. Named responsibilities

Paul Barrett (Headteacher) has overall oversight; Craig Kelly (Lead DSL, SENDCo and Senior Attendance Champion) leads safeguarding, decision-making, local-authority liaison and records; Kim Ochs (Pastoral Lead/Deputy DSL), Rob Walker and Paul Barrett (Deputy DSLs) provide cover; the school office maintains attendance registers and emergency contact records; teachers and TAs maintain pupil supervision and escalate immediately.

4. Immediate missing-on-site response

Any staff member who cannot locate a pupil must alert the senior leader/DSL immediately and secure supervision for other pupils. Record the last confirmed location/time, clothing, presentation, communication/sensory needs, risk profile, recent triggers and known safe places. Initiate a coordinated on-site check without causing avoidable public alarm. Check exits, adjacent areas, toilets, regulation spaces and known pupil locations while maintaining safe staffing ratios. The DSL/Headteacher coordinates search and escalation. If the pupil is at immediate risk or cannot be located promptly in circumstances suggesting risk, call 999; do not wait for a prescribed number of minutes. Contact family and relevant transport provider where appropriate. Log key decisions, searches, personnel, timings, contact and recovery.

5. Off-site visits and school transport

Staff supervising work experience, education visits and community-based activities follow the visit-specific risk assessment and emergency plan, call emergency services where proportionate, and inform LSE leadership/DSL and parents/carers. Staff must promptly check handover failures with the transport provider and family. Staff must not assume the child is safe merely because transport is scheduled.

6. First-day and repeated absence

The school office follows the Attendance Policy, including first-day calls and ongoing follow-up. Unexplained absences are promptly referred to Craig Kelly. Staff contact the family, emergency contacts and relevant professionals where necessary and proportionate. Repeated absences, unexplained patterns, missed transport or school refusal may indicate emerging needs: assess risk and coordinate Early Help, SEN and safeguarding responses rather than waiting for an enforcement or significant-harm threshold.

7. Children missing education and destination verification

Before a pupil is removed from the admission register, the school follows the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, Kent CME procedures and relevant notification requirements. Confirm the receiving school, address and start date where reasonably possible, liaising with both home and receiving local authorities when relevant. If no suitable next provision can be confirmed, promptly inform the responsible local authority and safeguarding partners where appropriate; do not delete a pupil from the register solely because contact is lost. Maintain and document enquiries, attempts to locate, relevant referral and escalation decisions.

8. Statutory information-sharing duty (2026)

Section 16LA of the Children Act 2004, inserted by section 4 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, came into force on 30 September 2026. Where LSE, acting through its authorised staff, holds information about a

child or another individual connected to the child which it considers relevant to safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare, it must disclose the relevant information to another organisation or practitioner within section 16LA(4) if and insofar as LSE considers disclosure may facilitate that recipient's relevant safeguarding or welfare functions (including services provided under qualifying arrangements). The duty also applies to relevant requests received from an eligible recipient. These decisions are not dependent on a threshold of significant harm being reached. Staff must identify, record and bring relevant emerging safeguarding or welfare information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Craig Kelly, Kerry Lowther or a Deputy DSL without unnecessary delay. This includes concerns arising from attendance, emotional wellbeing, SEND, friendships, family circumstances, behaviour, online activity, pastoral work, therapy and transition planning. The DSL will identify the appropriate recipient, verify its role and eligibility under section 16LA, assess relevance and how sharing may facilitate safeguarding or welfare, and arrange secure, timely and proportionate disclosure. Staff must not assume that a formal Early Help, section 17 or section 47 threshold is required before relevant information can or must be shared. The section 16LA duty does not apply where, on a careful child-centred assessment, disclosure would be more detrimental to the child than withholding it. Such an exception should be unusual and the reasons documented. The duty displaces an obligation of confidence where its conditions are met, but DOES NOT displace UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 or other legal restrictions. LSE must identify and document an applicable lawful basis, meet any additional conditions for special-category or criminal-offence information, ensure accuracy and data minimisation, and use approved secure channels. Where a recipient is not within section 16LA(4), information sharing must be considered separately under the applicable safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection frameworks. Consent to receive voluntary Early Help services is separate from consent as a lawful basis for sharing information.

9. Safe transfer across education settings and local authorities

For a pupil joining or leaving Life Skills Enterprise, including an in-year transfer or a move across local authority boundaries in England, the DSL will communicate with the counterpart DSL and the placing/home local authority as appropriate. The school will request and provide relevant child protection, safeguarding, attendance, early-help and welfare information promptly and securely to eligible recipients, including information needed before the first day to allow appropriate protection, reasonable adjustments and support. The child protection file will be transferred separately from the general pupil file, ordinarily within five days of an in-year transfer or the first five days of a new term, with earlier contact where risk or complexity requires it. Record the request, sent material, recipient verification, receipt acknowledgement and any outstanding documents; escalate missing or uncertain destinations under the Children Missing Education procedures.

10. Return, welfare, debrief and follow-up

On safe return, check immediate health and wellbeing and seek medical assistance if needed. The DSL considers sensitive, accessible debrief with the pupil, parent/carer and relevant staff, and whether police/social care or other professionals must be updated. Record circumstances, triggers, views, actions, future safeguards and any relevant plan or environmental changes. Repeated incidents trigger multi-agency review.

11. Recording, review and training

The DSL or delegated authorised person will record the child, issue and purpose; the identity and eligibility of the recipient or requestor; the information selected and why it may assist their relevant functions; any decisions about transparency with the child and family; the lawful basis and additional conditions where relevant; the security arrangements, date and confirmation of receipt; and the rationale for decisions to share, defer or withhold. Children and families should normally be informed appropriately and accessibly unless doing so would be unsafe or otherwise inappropriate. Urgent safeguarding action or a direct referral to police/social care must never be delayed by an internal approval process. All staff receive induction and periodic refreshers on missing-pupil responses, supervision, duty of care, DSL routes, emergency contacts and local CME pathways. This policy is reviewed after a significant incident or statutory change and at least annually.

Information-sharing legal references

- Children Act 2004, section 16LA (in force 30 September 2026)
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, section 4
- Department for Education, Information sharing to safeguard children and young people: statutory guidance, updated 10 September 2026
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership procedures and local authority Children Missing Education arrangements

This is a draft for proprietor approval and DPO review where required. It does not replace emergency services, statutory referral or local safeguarding procedures.