# SHIREMOOR PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD MISSING EDUCATION POLICY



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**Policy statement**

Shiremoor Primary School is committed to ensuring that every child receives a suitable, full-time education and that no child is unnecessarily deprived of access to education.

The school recognises that children may become missing from education for a variety of reasons, including family circumstances, safeguarding concerns, changes of address, difficulties accessing school places, prolonged absence and physical or mental health needs.

The school has a responsibility to identify children who may be at risk of missing education, respond promptly to unexplained or prolonged absences, maintain accurate pupil records, fulfil its statutory reporting responsibilities and work collaboratively with parents, carers, the Local Authority and relevant external agencies.

This policy covers:

- Children Missing Education (CME).
- Children whose whereabouts are unknown or whose circumstances cannot be established.
- Children who have stopped attending school or whose attendance has deteriorated significantly.
- Children unable to attend school, either temporarily or for prolonged periods, because of physical or mental health needs.
- Children with recurring or intermittent health-related absences.
- Children requiring support, alternative arrangements or reintegration following a period of health-related absence.

The school will always act in the best interests of the child, with safeguarding and continuity of education as central considerations.

**Legal framework and statutory guidance**

This policy has been developed with regard to the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Education Act 1996, including Sections 7, 14, 19, 436A and 437–442.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Education Act 2002, including Section 175.
- Children Act 2004.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Children and Families Act 2014.
- Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools (September 2025).
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (July 2026).
- Education for Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School (statutory guidance).
- Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition).

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The school will have regard to relevant statutory guidance and will work in partnership with the Local Authority to meet its legal responsibilities.

**Aims and objectives**

The aims of this policy are to:

- Identify children who may be missing from education as early as possible.
- Ensure that unexplained and prolonged absences are investigated promptly.
- Fulfil all statutory requirements relating to attendance monitoring, information sharing and reporting to the Local Authority.
- Safeguard children whose whereabouts or circumstances are unknown.
- Ensure that children who cannot attend school because of health needs continue to receive suitable education.
- Promote equality of access to education for children with medical conditions, disabilities and mental health difficulties.
- Work effectively with families and external agencies to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Support children to return to school following prolonged or recurring periods of absence.
- Maintain accurate records of actions, decisions, referrals and communication.

**Definitions**

**Children Missing Education (CME)**

Children Missing Education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school.

This may include children:

- Whose whereabouts are unknown.
- Who have moved away without providing details of their new address or educational arrangements.
- Who have not taken up an agreed school place.
- Who have left a school without confirmation of a new educational placement.
- Who are not receiving suitable education at home or through another arrangement.
- Who are in the process of applying for a school place but are not currently receiving suitable education.

A child who remains registered at the school but has poor, persistent or severe absence is not automatically classified as CME. However, the school must continue to monitor their attendance, investigate concerns and fulfil its reporting obligations.

**Children missing education due to health needs**

For the purposes of this policy, this refers to children who remain registered at the school but are unable to attend, or can only attend intermittently, because of physical or mental health needs.

This may include children experiencing:

- Long-term physical illness.
- Serious injury or recovery from surgery.
- Chronic medical conditions.
- Mental health difficulties, including anxiety and school-related distress.
- Hospital admission or ongoing hospital treatment.
- Recurring health conditions resulting in frequent periods of absence.
- Medical treatment or appointments that significantly affect school attendance.
- Health conditions that make full-time attendance temporarily or permanently unsuitable.

These children are not automatically CME but may require additional educational provision and support under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.

**Roles and responsibilities**

**Governing Body**

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the school has an effective policy and procedures for identifying and responding to children missing education.
- Monitor the school's compliance with statutory attendance and safeguarding requirements.
- Ensure appropriate systems are in place to identify children with prolonged health-related absences.
- Hold the Headteacher accountable for the effective implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher will:

- Ensure the policy is implemented consistently.
- Ensure statutory returns and notifications are completed within the required timescales.
- Liaise with the Local Authority regarding CME and children unable to attend because of health needs.
- Ensure appropriate resources and support are available.
- Escalate safeguarding concerns to the appropriate agencies.
- Ensure that decisions relating to removal from the school admission register are lawful.

**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**

The DSL will:

- Consider whether unexplained absence or a child's disappearance raises safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure concerns are recorded and appropriate safeguarding referrals are made.
- Liaise with Children's Social Care, the police and other relevant agencies where appropriate.
- Ensure that vulnerable children are prioritised when conducting enquiries.
- Consider whether absence may be linked to neglect, abuse, exploitation, domestic abuse, mental health difficulties or other safeguarding risks.
- Ensure relevant safeguarding information is shared appropriately and securely.

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**Attendance**

The Attendance Lead will:

- Monitor attendance daily.
- Identify unexplained, irregular and prolonged absences.
- Follow the school's first-day absence procedures.
- Contact parents and carers to establish the reason for absence.
- Conduct and record reasonable enquiries when a child's whereabouts are unclear.
- Make the appropriate Local Authority attendance and sickness returns.
- Maintain accurate records of contact, interventions and referrals.
- Work with the DSL and senior leadership team to escalate concerns.

**All staff**

All staff will:

- Be alert to signs that a child may be missing education or at risk of disengaging from education.
- Report unexplained absences and safeguarding concerns promptly.
- Share relevant information with the DSL and Attendance Lead.
- Maintain confidentiality and follow the school's information-sharing procedures.

**Parents and carers**

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child receives a suitable education.
- Notify the school promptly when their child is absent.
- Provide information about the reason for absence and expected duration where known.
- Inform the school of changes to contact details, address or family circumstances.
- Provide relevant information about health needs that affect attendance.
- Engage with the school and relevant professionals to support their child's education.

**Procedures for identifying Children Missing Education**

**Monitoring attendance**

The school will maintain accurate attendance and admission registers in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Attendance will be monitored at the beginning of every morning and afternoon session.

The school will:

- Identify unexplained absences promptly.
- Contact parents or carers on the first day of unexplained absence.
- Make further attempts to contact parents using all available contact details where necessary.
- Use alternative emergency contacts where appropriate.
- Consider whether a home visit is necessary and proportionate.

- Review attendance patterns to identify children at risk of becoming disengaged from education.
- Escalate concerns to the DSL where the child's safety or whereabouts cannot be established.

The school will not assume that a child is safe simply because a parent has provided a reason for absence if there are other concerns about the child's welfare.

**When a child's whereabouts are unknown**

Where a child is absent and the school cannot establish their whereabouts, the school will undertake reasonable enquiries.

These may include:

- Attempting to contact all parents and carers with parental responsibility or day-to-day care.
- Contacting emergency contacts provided by the family.
- Checking the accuracy of the child's address and contact information.
- Reviewing recent communications and information held by the school.
- Contacting relevant professionals already involved with the family, where appropriate.
- Considering a home visit where safe and proportionate.
- Contacting the Local Authority CME team in accordance with local procedures.
- Making a referral to Children's Social Care where safeguarding concerns are identified.

Where there is an immediate risk of harm, the school will contact the police or Children's Social Care without delay.

The school will not wait for a prolonged period of absence before reporting a serious safeguarding concern.

All enquiries and actions will be recorded, including dates, times, outcomes and decisions.

**Children who fail to take up an agreed school place**

Where a child does not attend school on the agreed admission date, the school will:

- Contact the parent or carer immediately.
- Establish why the child has not attended.
- Confirm whether the child is still expected to take up the place.
- Make reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts.
- Inform the Local Authority where required.
- Refer the matter to the CME team where the child's whereabouts or educational arrangements remain unclear.

The school will ensure that the child's name is entered on the admission register in accordance with the statutory requirements.

**Children who move away or leave the school**

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Where the school becomes aware that a child has moved away or is intending to leave, it will establish:

- The child's new address, where known.
- The name and address of the new school, where applicable.
- The expected date of transfer.
- Whether the child will receive suitable education through another arrangement.
- Whether there are any safeguarding concerns relating to the move.

The school will make the appropriate pupil movement return to the Local Authority.

Where a child has moved and their destination is unknown, the school will work with the Local Authority to undertake reasonable enquiries.

The school will not remove a child from its admission register simply because the child has stopped attending or the family has indicated that they may be moving.

**Removal from the admission register**

The school will only remove a child's name from the admission register where one of the lawful grounds set out in Regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies.

The school will ensure:

- The relevant statutory ground has been established.
- All required conditions have been met.
- Any required Local Authority consultation or agreement has taken place.
- Reasonable enquiries have been completed where required.
- The appropriate notification is made to the Local Authority.
- The decision and supporting evidence are recorded.

In particular, where a pupil has been continuously absent for 20 school days without authorisation, the school will not automatically remove their name from the register.

For the relevant statutory grounds, joint reasonable enquiries with the Local Authority must be undertaken to establish the child's whereabouts and circumstances. The required conditions concerning the likelihood of the child returning must also be satisfied.

A child must not be removed from the register simply because their attendance is poor, because they have a long-term medical condition, or because the school is experiencing difficulties providing support.

The school will not engage in off-rolling or encourage parents to remove a child from the school roll to avoid attendance or performance concerns.

**Statutory reporting requirements to the Local Authority**

The school recognises that accurate and timely reporting is essential to the Local Authority's responsibility to identify children missing education.

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The school will comply with the following requirements.

**Pupil movement returns**

Under Regulation 13 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the school must make the required returns to the Local Authority when a pupil's name is added to or removed from the admission register outside standard transition times.

Where a pupil joins the school outside the normal admission points, the school must provide the required new pupil return within five days.

The school will provide the Local Authority with the information required by the regulations and will follow any additional local reporting arrangements.

**Attendance returns**

The school must provide attendance returns to the Local Authority in accordance with Regulation 13.

These returns include details of pupils of compulsory school age who:

- Have failed to attend school regularly; or
- Have been absent for at least 10 continuous school days in circumstances recorded using the relevant unauthorised absence codes.

The school will submit returns at the intervals agreed with the Local Authority.

**Sickness returns**

Under Regulation 13 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the school must make a sickness return to the Local Authority where it has reasonable grounds to believe that a registered pupil of compulsory school age:

- Will be unable to attend because of sickness for at least 15 consecutive school days; or
- Will be, or has been, unable to attend because of sickness for a total of at least 15 school days during the school year, whether consecutive or not.

The return must be made as soon as possible after these conditions are satisfied.

The school will provide the pupil's full name and address and any other information required through the Local Authority's reporting process.

A sickness return is a separate statutory reporting requirement and must not be confused with a CME referral.

The school will not delay a sickness return simply because it is awaiting a formal medical diagnosis or additional medical evidence where the statutory reporting conditions have already been met.

**Local Authority CME referrals**

Where reasonable enquiries suggest that a child may be missing education, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority CME team using the agreed local referral process.

The school will provide relevant information, including:

- Child's full name and date of birth.
- Last known address.
- Parent/carer contact details.
- Date of last attendance.
- Details of attempts to contact the family.
- Details of any known change in circumstances.
- Information about other agencies involved.
- Any safeguarding concerns.
- Details of enquiries already undertaken.

The school will retain a record of the referral and any response received.

The school will not assume that making a CME referral removes its responsibility to continue safeguarding and attendance enquiries.

**Children unable to attend school due to health needs**

**Our commitment**

The school recognises that children may be unable to attend school because of physical or mental health needs.

The school is committed to ensuring that these children continue to receive an appropriate education and are not disadvantaged because of their health circumstances.

The school will work in partnership with parents, healthcare professionals, the Local Authority and other relevant agencies to establish suitable support.

The child's health, wellbeing and individual circumstances will be central to all decisions.

**Early identification and support**

Where a child begins to experience health-related absence, the school will:

- Contact parents or carers to understand the circumstances.
- Establish the likely duration and impact of the health condition, where known.
- Identify any barriers to attendance.
- Consider whether reasonable adjustments are required.
- Review the child's educational needs and current provision.
- Consider whether a healthcare professional's advice would assist.
- Identify whether a referral to the Local Authority is required.
- Maintain regular, supportive communication with the family.

The school will not assume that a child is unwilling to attend when their absence may be linked to an underlying physical or mental health difficulty.

**Prolonged or recurring health-related absence**

Where a child is expected to be absent for an extended period, or experiences recurring absences due to health needs, the school will take a proactive approach.

The school will:

- Discuss the child's needs with parents or carers.
- Consider available medical information and advice.
- Identify what education can reasonably be provided by the school.
- Consider whether the child could access a modified timetable or phased return, where appropriate.
- Liaise with the Local Authority regarding its Section 19 responsibilities.
- Make the statutory sickness return when the relevant threshold is met.
- Develop a plan for maintaining the child's education and connection with school.
- Review arrangements regularly.

The school will not wait until a child has been absent for 15 school days before raising concerns with the Local Authority if it is already clear that the child will be unable to attend for a prolonged period.

**Local Authority responsibility under Section 19**

Under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a duty to arrange suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, exclusion or otherwise, would not receive suitable education unless arrangements were made for them.

Where it becomes clear that a child will be away from school for a prolonged period because of health needs, the school will contact the Local Authority to discuss suitable educational provision.

The Local Authority may arrange provision such as:

- Education at home.
- Hospital education.
- Tuition through an alternative provider.
- A combination of school-based, home-based and hospital education.
- Other suitable arrangements according to the child's individual needs.

The Local Authority should ensure that suitable education is available without unnecessary delay and should not leave children without access to education for more than 15 school days.

Where it is clear from the outset that a child will be away for a long period or will have recurring absences, the school will seek early consideration of appropriate provision.

The school will cooperate with the Local Authority and provide relevant information about the child's needs, abilities, educational progress and curriculum.

**Education provided by the school**

While a child is unable to attend, the school will consider what educational support it can reasonably provide.

Depending on the child's circumstances, this may include:

- Providing suitable learning materials and resources.
- Providing online learning opportunities.
- Offering remote teaching where appropriate.
- Maintaining contact with the child and family.
- Providing feedback on completed work.
- Liaising with any home tuition or hospital education provider.
- Ensuring continuity of curriculum and learning.
- Making arrangements for the child to remain involved in school activities where appropriate.

The nature and amount of work will be adapted to the child's health, ability and capacity to engage.

The school recognises that a child who is seriously unwell may not be able to manage a full academic workload. Their health and recovery will take priority.

**Mental health-related absence**

The school recognises that mental health difficulties can be as significant a barrier to attendance as physical illness.

Where a child experiences anxiety, emotional distress, school-related anxiety or another mental health difficulty, the school will:

- Listen to the child and take their concerns seriously.
- Work sensitively with parents and carers.
- Consider any underlying safeguarding concerns.
- Explore appropriate support through the school's pastoral and safeguarding systems.
- Liaise with relevant health professionals where appropriate and with consent or another lawful basis.
- Consider reasonable adjustments.
- Develop a supportive plan to help the child maintain access to education.
- Review whether a phased return or alternative arrangements are appropriate.

The school will avoid treating genuine health-related absence as a straightforward attendance enforcement issue.

However, the school will continue to work with the family to identify appropriate support and prevent unnecessary disengagement from education.

**Children with disabilities or ongoing medical conditions**

The school will consider its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions statutory guidance.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered where a child's disability or medical condition places them at a substantial disadvantage.

Where appropriate, the school will:

- Review the child's individual healthcare plan.
- Consider changes to the school environment or daily routines.
- Consider adjustments to attendance arrangements.
- Ensure staff are aware of relevant medical needs.
- Work with healthcare professionals.
- Ensure the child is not disadvantaged because of their disability or medical condition.

The school will not make assumptions about a child's ability to attend or participate in education based solely on their diagnosis.

**Attendance coding and recording**

The school will record absence in accordance with the statutory attendance regulations and current Department for Education attendance guidance.

Where a child is absent because of illness, the appropriate illness code (I) will be used.

The school will:

- Record attendance accurately for every session.
- Ensure that the reason for absence is established.
- Update provisional absence codes when the circumstances become known.
- Record relevant information about the nature of unavoidable absence where required.
- Monitor patterns of illness-related absence.
- Maintain records of communications with parents and professionals.

Absence due to health needs will not automatically be recorded as unauthorised.

Where the reason for absence is unclear, the school will make reasonable enquiries and apply the appropriate attendance code once the circumstances have been established.

**Supporting reintegration following health-related absence**

The school recognises that returning to school following a prolonged period of illness can be difficult.

A reintegration plan will be considered where appropriate and may include:

- A meeting with parents or carers.
- Consultation with relevant health professionals.
- An assessment of the child's current needs.
- A phased return to school.
- A temporary modified timetable where appropriate.

- Access to pastoral support.
- A named member of staff to support the child.
- Adjustments to workload, activities or the school environment.
- Regular review meetings.

Any reduced timetable will be exceptional, time-limited, supported by a clear plan and regularly reviewed. It must not be used as a substitute for arranging suitable education.

The school will ensure that arrangements are in the child's best interests and will work towards the fullest appropriate access to education.

**Safeguarding and information sharing**

The school recognises that children missing education may be particularly vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of harm.

The school will therefore consider safeguarding risks whenever a child's whereabouts are unknown or their absence gives cause for concern.

Relevant information may be shared with:

- The Local Authority CME team.
- Children's Social Care.
- The police.
- Health professionals.
- Other schools and educational providers.
- Other relevant safeguarding partners.

Information will be shared in accordance with data protection legislation and safeguarding requirements.

The school will not allow data protection concerns to prevent necessary and proportionate information sharing where this is required to safeguard a child.

All information will be handled securely and only shared with appropriate individuals and agencies.

**12. Record keeping and monitoring**

The school will maintain appropriate records of:

- Attendance and absence.
- Contact with parents and carers.
- Reasonable enquiries.
- Home visits.
- CME referrals.

- Local Authority notifications.
- Sickness returns.
- Meetings with families and professionals.
- Educational provision during health-related absence.
- Reintegration plans.
- Safeguarding referrals and decisions.

The Headteacher and relevant senior leaders will regularly review attendance information and cases involving children at risk of missing education.

The school will monitor the effectiveness of its procedures and identify any improvements needed.

**13. Staff training and awareness**

Relevant staff will receive appropriate training and guidance to ensure they understand:

- Their responsibilities for attendance monitoring.
- The definition of Children Missing Education.
- The difference between CME and prolonged absence.
- The statutory reporting requirements.
- The school's reasonable enquiry procedures.
- The importance of safeguarding and information sharing.
- The support available to children with health-related absence.

The DSL and Attendance Lead will ensure that staff know how to report concerns promptly.

**14. Policy review**

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance or Local Authority procedures.

The Governing Body / Academy Trust will oversee the policy and ensure that it remains effective in protecting children and promoting their right to education.

**15. Related school policies**

This policy should be read alongside:

- Attendance Policy.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.
- SEND Policy.
- Behaviour Policy.
- Equality and Accessibility Policy.
- Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School procedures.

**Appendix 1: Key statutory reporting**

| Circumstance | School responsibility |
|---|---|
| New pupil joins outside standard transition points | Submit new pupil return to the Local Authority within 5 days. |
| Pupil removed from admission register outside standard transition points | Submit the required pupil movement return. |
| Pupil fails to attend regularly | Include the pupil in the statutory attendance return at the locally agreed intervals. |
| Pupil has at least 10 continuous school days of absence recorded using the relevant unauthorised absence codes | Include in the statutory attendance return. |
| Pupil is expected to be unable to attend because of sickness for at least 15 consecutive school days | Submit a sickness return as soon as possible once the statutory conditions are met. |
| Pupil has accumulated at least 15 school days of sickness absence during the school year, whether consecutive or not, and the school has reasonable grounds to believe the absence is due to sickness | Submit a sickness return as soon as possible once the statutory conditions are met. |
| Child's whereabouts are unknown or there are concerns that they may be missing education | Undertake reasonable enquiries and refer to the Local Authority CME team in accordance with local procedures. |
| Immediate safeguarding concern | Refer to Children's Social Care and/or contact the police as appropriate, without waiting for attendance reporting thresholds. |

**Important:** The 15-day sickness reporting requirement is separate from the Local Authority's Section 19 responsibility to arrange suitable education for children who cannot attend because of health needs. Early referral is encouraged where prolonged absence is anticipated.

**Appendix 2: Local contacts to be completed by the school**

| Service | Contact details |
|---|---|
| Local Authority CME team | [Insert contact details] |
| Local Authority Attendance / Education Welfare Team | [Insert contact details] |
| Local Authority Education for Children with Health Needs Team | [Insert contact details] |
| Children's Social Care | [Insert contact details] |
| Emergency safeguarding contact | [Insert contact details] |
| School Designated Safeguarding Lead | [Insert name/contact details] |
| School Attendance Lead | [Insert name/contact details] |

# SHIREMOOR PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD MISSING EDUCATION POLICY

**Important compliance points to retain**

There are five particularly important requirements I would draw attention to when adopting this policy:
1. **15 school days – sickness reporting:** The school must make a sickness return to the Local Authority as soon as possible when it has reasonable grounds to believe a child will be absent for 15 consecutive school days due to sickness, or will have accumulated 15 school days of sickness absence during the academic year.
2. **10 school days – attendance reporting:** Relevant pupils with 10 continuous school days of absence recorded under the specified unauthorised absence codes must be included in the statutory attendance return.
3. **Five days – new pupil reporting:** A new pupil return must be made within five days when a pupil joins outside standard transition points.
4. **20 school days – removal from roll:** This does not mean a child can automatically be removed after 20 days. The relevant statutory conditions and joint reasonable enquiries with the Local Authority must be completed.
5. **Health-related absence:** The school should contact the Local Authority early when it becomes apparent that a child will be unable to attend for a prolonged period. The Local Authority's Section 19 duty is not dependent on waiting for the 15-day sickness reporting threshold.

**Official guidance and legislation**

These are the key documents underpinning the policy:

- Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools (September 2025) .
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (updated July 2026) .
- Education for Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School

https://www.gov.uk/government/publicatio...

- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 .
- Illness and Your Child's Education – GOV.UK .