

Children Missing Education (CME) and Missing pupils (family whereabouts unknown)

**A guide and information for
parents/carers, schools and
partner agencies in
Gloucestershire**

January 2025

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Introduction

This information pack is available to

- make schools aware of the Local Authority's responsibilities regarding children missing education (CME)
- provide additional information about Gloucestershire's procedures relating to CME for parents/carers.
- provide a framework for parents/carers, schools and the LA (Local Authority) to work together to identify children missing education and get pupils back into education.

This guidance does not replace any part of the Keeping Children Safe in Education, Child Protection or Safeguarding procedures that already exist within Gloucestershire, and they should be followed as appropriate.

Statutory guidance means that the Local Authority should follow this guidance, unless there is good reason not to in a particular case.

Statutory guidance Children Missing Education 2016 relates to:

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (added by section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) [Education Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Education Act 1996 (section 7, 8, 14 and 19) [Education Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 4 and 38) [Education and Inspections Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2016 [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

The Children Missing Education Team

The Local Authority has named a CME officer within the Access to Education team who has strategic responsibility for the work of the team in respect of CME. The CME Officer and team of In Year and Parent Advisers manage CME cases and advise schools, parents and other professionals about:

- the legal framework for CME
- procedures for identifying and reporting CME

The CME Officer

- collates information on all reported cases of CME of statutory school aged children in Gloucestershire maintained schools, academies, free schools, alternative provision academies, independent schools and Alternative Provision Schools
- liaises with partner agencies and other Local Authorities and schools across Britain to track pupils who may be missing education
- arranges weekly Missing Mondays meetings where the CME Officer, Parent Advisers and In Year Coordinators discuss updates and actions for all Children Missing Education, making additional referrals where required.

The Parent Adviser Role

- collaboratively works with schools to investigate the whereabouts of a family whose location cannot be ascertained.
- works with parents/carers of Children Missing Education (no school place) to ensure they are supported to return to education.

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 a school.

Compulsory school age

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday.

If they turn 5 between:

1 January and 31 March, child is of compulsory school age on 31 March.

1 April and 31 August, child is of compulsory school age on 31 August.

1 September and 31 December, child is of compulsory school age on 31 December.

A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year when they reach sixteen.

Parent

For the purposes of education law, the Department for Education (DfE) considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not

- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person – this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, a guardian or other relative
- any person who, although they are not a biological parent and do not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person
- A person typically has care of a child or young person if the child lives with them either full or part time and they look after them, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education.

School

For this guide, 'school' refers to all maintained schools, academies, free schools, independent schools, alternative provision schools or any education provision where a child is registered as their main education base.

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity.

The Local Authority's responsibility regarding CME

Local Authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of compulsory school aged children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise.

Identifying CME

A child is classed as CME if they are:

- of compulsory school age and
- not on a school roll and
- not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school, for example, at home, privately or in alternative provision.

This might be:

- a child who has arrived into Gloucestershire and whose parent has been unable to secure a school place
- a child who has left private schooling

- a child who is deemed not to be receiving a suitable education whilst Electively Home Educated
- a child who has left a custodial establishment

Identifying Pupils who are missing education where the family whereabouts are unknown

CME also includes those children who are missing (family whereabouts unknown), and are usually children who are registered on a school roll / alternative provision

This might be:

A child who is not at their last known address and either

- has not taken up an allocated school place as expected,

or

- has 10 or more days of continuous absence from school without explanation,

or

- left school suddenly and the destination is unknown

The LA identifies children who may be missing education. Working with schools, partners and other agencies, the LA:

- receives notification from an individual or agency of children who are missing education.
- undertakes case work to ensure the parent of a Child Missing Education is offered suitable full-time education.
- undertakes case work to establish the whereabouts of a family who are not at their last known address and whose destination is unknown.

Children at particular risk of missing education

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, so it is vital that Local Authorities make judgements on a case-by-case basis. Although not exhaustive, the list below presents some of the circumstances that local authorities should consider:

- a. Pupils at risk of harm/neglect
- b. Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families
- c. Children of Service Personnel
- d. Missing children and runaways
- e. Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System
- f. Children who cease to attend a school

g. Children of new migrant families

Who might report a child as CME?

Anyone concerned that a child is missing education, either because they are not in receipt of education provision or their family whereabouts are unknown can make a CME referral to the Access to Education team at Gloucestershire County Council. Most referrals come from:

GCC (Gloucestershire County Council) Admissions

if parents have followed standard admissions processes and it has not been possible to secure education provision for their child.

School

if a child, with their family, has suddenly disappeared and attempts by the school to contact the family have failed.

CME Officer from another LA

if it is believed a child has moved to Gloucestershire from that area.

Inclusion Service or Parent Adviser

if the parent adviser is made aware of a family new to area through existing community relationships and has not secured a school place through standard admissions processes.

If a child registered as Electively Home Educated (EHE) is deemed not to be receiving a suitable education or has suddenly disappeared and attempts to contact have failed.

Social Worker/Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

If a child is not on a school roll and there are concerns about the family's ability to secure suitable education provision.

CME referral procedures

For every referral, the CME Officer will run checks on education/social care/NHS databases and liaise with relevant professionals regarding potential child protection/Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) concerns.

If a child is on a school roll and has:

- stopped attending and no contact can be made with the parent to establish a reason for the absence or
- ceased to attend the school and the forwarding address/new school is not known or
- not returned from holiday within 10 school days of the expected date of return,

the school should try to establish the family's whereabouts within 10 school days before making a CME referral (Appendix A)

The Access to Education team will make further enquiries and attempts to locate the family including:

- visiting the home address, making enquiries with neighbours
- investigating all known contacts
- liaising with social care, health, housing, police, government departments and other agencies
- making contact with other LAs (Local Authority) and CME Officers

If a child is not on a school roll and not receiving a suitable education, the Access to Education team aim to secure education provision as soon as possible.

If a parent cannot secure a school place through the usual procedures or with help from the In Year Admissions team in Gloucestershire, and it is likely that the child will not be receiving a suitable education for 20 school days or more, the Access to Education team will record the child as CME and allocate a Parent Adviser to support the family. Their role may include:

- Supporting family to secure a school place
- Applying to the Fair Access Panel to name a school place
- Applying for a School Attendance Order (if parent refuses to accept an offered school place)

Once the whereabouts of the child are known, the CME Officer will update the original referrer. In rare cases where the child cannot be located, the CME Officer will publish a message on the national Schools 2 Schools secure website. The school should then create a Common Transfer File (CTF) using the code XXX XXXX.

Referrals for Section 19 of the Education Act 1996

Gloucestershire County Council, schools, and parents/carers of pupil's resident in Gloucestershire have a responsibility to work together to ensure children/young people are supported to access an appropriate, full-time education.

Alternative Education Provision can be arranged under the following categories;

- Permanent exclusion
- Illness
- Otherwise

For further information please see [Section 19 Policy](#)

Referrals from Other LAs

When another LA contacts Gloucestershire believing a child has moved into the county, the CME Officer will find out if contact has been made with GCC Admissions team.

- If the child is known to be accessing education, the CME Officer will inform the referring LA who can remove the child from their CME database.
- If the child is not known to the Admissions team but an address has been given indicating the family is in the county, the Access to Education team will liaise with the Admissions team to ensure the family know how to find a school place for their child.
- If the Access to Education team is unable to locate the family in Gloucestershire, the referring LA will be informed so that they can continue to investigate the child as missing education.

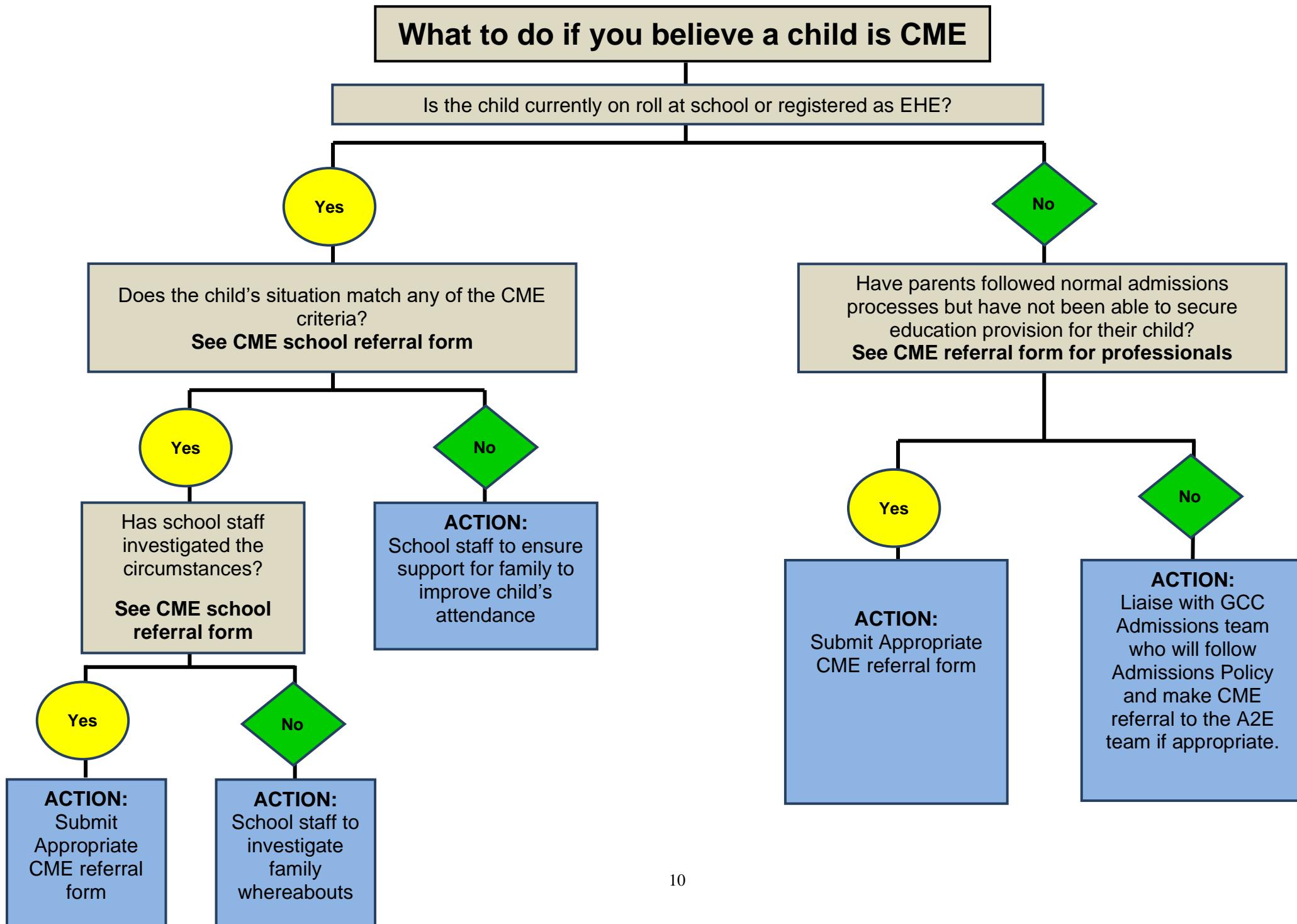
Referrals to other LAs

If a child leaves a Gloucestershire school and provides an address in a new county but no details of a new school, then the CME officer in the receiving LA will be informed. If that officer can confirm they have located the family, the case will be closed to Gloucestershire. If the other LA is unable to locate the family, the case will remain open to Gloucestershire and the Access to Education team will continue to investigate the child as missing education.

Monitoring and tracking

The LA monitors and tracks information from a variety of sources (including School to School Service and Capita) to establish a child's whereabouts or access to education.

What to do if you believe a child is CME



Additional Support for Schools

Deletions from the Admissions Register

The following guidance affects all non-standard transitions at all schools including independent schools and is based on legislation available at:

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 [Education \(Pupil Registration\)\(England\)\(Amendment\) Regulations](#)

The DFE (Department for Education) Guidance Working together to Improve School Attendance gives guidance and sets out the grounds under which children can be removed from a school admission register.

[Working together to improve school attendance](#)

Depending on which grounds for deletion apply, there are certain actions which need to be undertaken to:

- end the pupil record in schools' Information Management System
- transfer pupil records to the new school using Common Transfer File (CTF)
- notify the LA

Notifying the LA

- Schools must inform the LA when they are about to delete a (compulsory school aged) pupil's name from the admission register at any non-standard transition point.
- Schools are required to inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school. For schools who share data with the LA through B2B, entering details of the destination school (including start date) into the Destination box and new address into the Future Address panel allows this information to be shared automatically.
- For some of the grounds for deletion, the LA must be informed in a timely manner
 - Permanent Exclusion – LA must be informed immediately using the online system 'JADU.' GCC Schoolsnet Guidance can be found here [Exclusions \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](#)
 - Parental decision to Electively Home Educate – LA must be informed within 3 days of receiving notification from parents using the deregistration from school for Elective Home Education form. GCC Schoolsnet Guidance can be found [Elective home education \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](#)

Attendance Guidance

Information on statutory and recommended practice for Gloucestershire schools, school interventions to improve attendance and legal processes in relation to attendance of concern can be found on GCC Schoolsnet at [DfE Attendance Guidance \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](#)

Files in schools Information Management System

Full instructions for saving, uploading, and receiving files via S2S can be found in the guide for schools at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-to-school-guides-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

Ending record in schools Management Information System (MIS)

For SIMS users:

- Record a Destination School (include: date of leaving your school in School History, Reason for leaving from drop-down menu, Detail of new school and new school start date in Destination after Leaving free-text box)
- Record a Future Address (if pupil has moved or due to move please update address history – a future move or start date can be selected)
- Record Evidence (use communication log to record comments regarding deletions or investigations into family whereabouts in Summary Notes)

For more help on completing records in SIMS or Bromcom, please contact the Schools ICT Team on 01452 427272 or by emailing sso@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

For assistance with other MIS, please contact your provider.

Creating CTF

The S2S system allows schools to securely share information, for example to transfer pupil records using the common transfer file protocol (CTF).

When the new school is known, the CTF can be created using the naming protocols, which include the new schools DfE number, uploaded securely to S2S and the new school can download the CTF.

If the new school is not known the CTF can be uploaded to XXX XXXX (in place of the school DFE number).

If the new school is one outside of England and Wales, or a non-maintained school, the CTF can be uploaded to MMM MMMM.

Full instructions for saving, uploading and receiving files via S2S can be found in the guide for schools at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-to-school-guides-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

Notifying the LA

Schools must inform the LA when they are about to delete a (compulsory school aged) pupil's name from the admission register at any non-standard transition point.

Schools are required to inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school. For schools who share data with the LA through B2B, entering details of the destination school (including start date) into the Destination box and new address into the Future Address panel allows this information to be shared automatically.

For some of the grounds for deletion, notifying the LA by e-mail allows schools to provide all details in a timely manner i.e. where there is a duty for the LA to provide education following a permanent exclusion or register a child as being in receipt of Home Education.

When a pupil's family whereabouts are unknown the LA will have already been made aware of the pupil via a CME referral and will have jointly been working with the school to try to locate the family.

SCHOOL CME REFERRAL FORM – CHILD WHOSE FAMILY WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN

(This form should **not** be used for matters of persistent absence – please contact the Inclusion Service inclusionservice@gloucestershire.gov.uk for all absence queries)

Your Details	Name:		Date:	
	School			
Child and family details	Forename(s):		Surname	
	DOB:		Gender:	
	Date last in education		Date last seen	
	Parent(s) names and all contact details (please include last known address)			

Supporting details
(Please tick if appropriate)

Child in Care
Formerly/Currently known to Social Care
Special Educational Needs
Traveller

Checklist

Action	Date completed	Outcome
Carry out first day calling (if this is an automated system the school should make telephone contact manually)		
Attempt to get in touch with all known emergency contacts (at various times of day) <i>Provide contact details</i>		

Gather further information including details of siblings from other agencies, wider school community (e.g., staff, other pupils, friends)		
Home visit within 5 school days if appropriate		
Social Media searches – e.g. contact details of a parent or school noted on Facebook		

Any other additional information relevant to this referral:

If a child is subject to a child protection plan, is a child in care or there are reasons to be concerned for the child's safety, inform Social Care immediately and follow GSCB procedures.

If child is not located following checks, please send referral form to the Access to Education team, **no later than the tenth day of absence** and continue checks as appropriate. The Access to Education team will make further enquiries and attempts to locate the family including making contact with other LAs and CME Officers. In rare cases where the child cannot be located the CME Officer will publish a message on the national Schools 2 Schools secure website. The school should then create a CTF using XXX XXXX.

Please securely return this with any attachments or relevant information to:

Access to Education Team, Shire Hall, Westgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 2TP
 Email: missingpupils@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Child Missing Education (CME) Referral for professionals (other than school)

CME refers to any child of compulsory school age who is not registered at any formally approved education activity eg school, alternative provision, elective home education, and has been out of education provision for a substantial period of time

Please confirm that the child is CME or at risk of being CME. The child is not registered at a school or other approved education activity and:							
has been out of education provision for at least 20 school days or							
is at risk of being out education provision for 20 school days or more.							
Referrer contact details (name, organisation, telephone number, email):	Date of referral:						
Child details <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Forenames:</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Surname:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date of birth:</td> <td>Year group:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gender:</td> <td>Date last in education:</td> </tr> </table>		Forenames:	Surname:	Date of birth:	Year group:	Gender:	Date last in education:
Forenames:	Surname:						
Date of birth:	Year group:						
Gender:	Date last in education:						
Parent names and contact details: include all known family surnames							
Summary of contact with the family to date:							

If a child is subject to a child protection plan, is a child in care or there are reasons to be concerned for the child's safety, inform Social Care immediately and follow GSCB procedures.

Please securely return this with any attachments or relevant information to:

Access to Education Team, Shire Hall, Westgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 2TP
Email: missingpupils@gloucestershire.gov.uk

USEFUL CONTACTS

CME Officer (procedural advice and guidance on CME)
Access to Education, Shire Hall, Gloucester GL1 2TP
Tel: 01452 328774

Inclusion Service (attendance advice)
Shire Hall, Gloucester GL1 2TP
Tel: 01452 427800

GCC In Year School Admissions Team (advice on applying for school places)
Shire Hall, Gloucester GL1 2TP
01452 426015
inyear.admissions@gloucestershire.gov.uk

The Virtual School (Educational support for looked after children)
Jane Featherstone, Shire Hall, Gloucester GL1 2TP
Tel: 01452 328360

Children & Families Helpdesk (to report welfare concerns about a child)
Tel: 01452 426565
[email: childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk)