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# ***CHESHIRE WEST and CHESTER***

*People Directorate*

*Children and Young People Services*

*Children and Young People Missing Education*

***CME Guidance and Procedures***

***1<sup>st</sup> September 2025***

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## 1. INTRODUCTION - Overview

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This Guidance sets out the key principles to enable Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) to implement their legal duty under **section 436A of the Education Act 1996**, to enable arrangements to identify, as far as is possible to do so, children missing education.

**Children Missing Education are children of compulsory school age (5 – 16 yrs) who are not registered pupils at a school or setting and are not receiving a suitable education otherwise, and whose whereabouts are unknown.**

It is intended that this document will be used as a point of reference by Head Teachers/Principals, staff members in schools and settings, and all other professionals whose work brings them into contact with children and young people and their families. This Guidance is also shared with partners in CW&C schools and those in the Independent Sector, as a model of good practice.

This document provides a framework within which, consistent practices and procedures can be applied, in compliance with Department for Education Statutory CME Guidance 2016.

Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, becoming victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and NEET (not in education, employment, or training) later in life.

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and key partner agencies is critical to ensure that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving a suitable education.

CW&C Children and Families Service are committed to working with schools and settings and other key partners, to improve the monitoring and swift return of children and young people to a suitable education provision. Prompt action and early intervention are crucial when discharging this duty effectively to ensure that children are safe and receiving an appropriate education.

CW&C have effective tracking and enquiry systems in place and have a named point of contact to whom schools and other agencies can make referrals concerning children who are missing education. CW&C monitors the number of children/young people in the Local Authority area who are known not to be receiving a suitable education, including those reported to have newly transferred into the area. CW&C have clear access rules and procedures to ensure fair and safe data processing, in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Adopting these procedures will also ensure that all Children's Services in CW&C maintain high standards of safeguarding and will:

1. Meet statutory duties relating to the provision of education and safeguarding the welfare of children & young people missing education.
2. Ensure that robust systems are in place within the Local Authority to identify and track children and young people missing from education, or who are at risk from doing so.

3. Ensure that monitoring and reporting systems are in place to identify, where applicable, any lead agency or key worker who may be involved in supporting a child or their family, who has been reported as a child missing in education.
4. Ensure all CW&C Schools and Settings are fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to children missing education and will properly support and challenge, where appropriate, in meeting these responsibilities.
5. Support and assist other Local Authorities to locate their own missing/lost pupils.

**This Guidance does not replace Safeguarding Procedures and child protection.**

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**current Local and Pan Cheshire mechanisms for reporting and recording**

## **2. GROUPS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK**

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 when establishing their CME policies and procedures:

- **Pupils at risk of harm/neglect** – Children may be missing from education because they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Where this is suspected, schools must follow local child protection procedures. However, if a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral must be made immediately to Children's Social Care (and the police if appropriate). Local Authority officers responsible for CME should check that a referral has been made and, if not, they should alert Children's Social Care. The Department's statutory guidance ***Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024)*** provides further advice for schools and colleges on safeguarding children.
- **Children of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller families (GRT)** - It is important that schools inform the Local Authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without first identifying a new destination school, particularly during the transition from primary to secondary, so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education. The Local Authority Traveller Education Consultant and Education Welfare Service (School Attendance Support Team-SAST) can advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring the minimum disruption to GRT pupils' education, for example "dual" registration with other schools.
- **Children of Service Personnel** – Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently – both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice. The Local Authority CME and Tracking Officer will liaise with the MoD Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) to ensure safeguarding and continuity of education provision.
- **Missing children and runaways** – children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation, or abduction as well as missing education. The CME and Pupil Tracking Officer will liaise with key partners to ensure appropriate safeguarding measures are followed.
- **Children who cease to attend a school** – there are many reasons why a child stops attending a school. It could be because the parent chooses to home educate their child. However, where the reason for a child who has stopped attending a school is not known,

the Local Authority will investigate the case and satisfy itself that the child is receiving a suitable education. In all cases the CME and Pupil Tracking Officer will liaise with relevant Local Authority Officers, where appropriate.

- **Children of new migrant families** – children of new migrant families may not have yet settled into a fixed address or may have arrived in a Local Authority area without that Authority becoming aware, therefore increasing the risk of the child missing education.

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### **3 NOTIFICATIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION AND REFERRAL ROUTES**

Notification of children missing in education can be received from internal partners, multi -agency professionals, other Local Authorities or from any other person who comes into regular contact with a child or young person.

Cheshire West and Chester work in partnership with key stakeholders and partner agencies and any other professional who frequently comes into contact with school aged children and young people. **It is an expectation that any professional who becomes aware of a school aged child, will make enquiries concerning their educational status.**

In the event of a child not being on the roll of a School or Setting, or is Electively Home Educated, it is the responsibility of that professional to contact the **CME & Pupil Tracking Officer, Jen Simms**, email [jennifer.simms@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.simms@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk); Tel 01244 973333 to report the situation.

### **4 PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS**

Schools and Settings must promptly make “**reasonable enquiries**” as set out in the **DfE Statutory CME Guidance (Sept 2016)** to contact the parent or carer in instances where a child leaves or ceases to attend a CW&C education provision:

- without the school previously being advised by the parent/carer of an intended change of home address, or new school or setting at which the child is to attend.
- where the child has not returned from leave of absence from a holiday, within two weeks of the expected date of return.
- when a child fails to attend school after having accepted a place.

Following 10 days of non-school attendance **or** when the School or Setting have completed all reasonable checks, as set out in the DfE Statutory CME Guidance September 2016, (to include attempts to contact parents/carers, other emergency contacts etc), the School or Setting must refer to the Education Welfare Service (SAST) using the following link:

<https://earlyhelpandpreventiononline.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home>

The Education Welfare Service (School Attendance Support Team) will then undertake further enquiries to try to identify the child’s current whereabouts. This will include:

- complete a home visit within 5 working days of receipt of the referral, to make enquiries at home or with known contacts and neighbours, as appropriate.
- reference to local databases available within the Local Authority.

- contact with any other agencies or key partners known to be involved with the family.

If, at any point in this process, the child is located, school must complete a Pupil Tracking Notification form, submitting to [cmeandpupiltracking@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:cmeandpupiltracking@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) ensuring that all required mandatory forwarding information, is provided.

However, if after undertaking all “**reasonable enquiries**” and following completion of the CME process (previous **CME2 Referral** to EWS/SAST), where the child’s location remains unknown, following 20 consecutive school days of unauthorised absence, the school or setting may remove the pupil’s name from school roll, ensuring completed **CME3 Notification** is submitted securely to: [cmeandpupiltracking@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:cmeandpupiltracking@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)  
**Schools must subsequently upload the CTF via s2s in accordance with the DfE guidelines.**

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Upon receipt of the **CME3 Notification** form, the CME & Pupil Tracking Officer will investigate further with local and national key partner agencies. These enquiries may include liaison with and reference to:

- Health Agencies
- DfE data systems
- ESCR (social care) database
- CW&C Housing Benefits Agency and Council Tax
- Any other relevant government agencies
- Other Local Authorities where it is suspected the child may be living or have previously resided.

If the child’s whereabouts remain unknown after all enquiries have been exhausted, the CME & Pupil Tracking Officer will post a national missing children alert via the DfE s2s Missing Pupil database.

**Children missing education may raise potential safeguarding concerns. If Schools or Settings believe a child or family have gone missing, they should NOT remove that child’s name from their school roll without first following the CME Guidance and Procedures, ie ensuring all reasonable enquiries have been made as referred to on the CME1 Checklist, referring to the Education Welfare Service (SAST) using CME2 Referral form, and upon completion of the CME process, subsequent submission of CME 3 Notification form, which must be submitted securely to: [cmeandpupiltracking@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:cmeandpupiltracking@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)**

## **5 REMOVAL FROM SCHOOL ROLL**

Schools and Settings must notify the Local Authority CME & Pupil Tracking Officer when a pupil’s name is to be removed from the admissions register at a non-standard (In year) transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the regulations (**Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulation 2006**) and **Annex A** of the **DfE Statutory Children Missing Education Guidance (September 2016)**.

**Removal from school roll for any reason other than those specified above is illegal.**

Using the **Pupil Tracking Notification** form, Schools and Settings **must** notify the Local Authority via [cmeandpupiltracking@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:cmeandpupiltracking@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) **each time a pupil’s name is removed from school roll at both “in year” transfer and during primary transition to secondary education**, to report transfers to a non-maintained school (Independent); moves abroad or change of home address out of the Local Authority area; or withdrawal to be become Electively Home Educated.

**Notification form CME3 must only** be completed and submitted to report children and young people whose names have been removed from school roll, following 20 consecutive school days of unauthorised absence, where their current whereabouts are unknown, and when all “reasonable enquiries”, as clearly set out in the DfE Statutory CME Guidance (Sept 2016), have been undertaken by Schools or Settings, and the required Local Authority CME process has been completed ie CME2 Referral previously submitted to Education Welfare Service/School Attendance Support Team (SAST).

Additional advice can be sought from Education Welfare Service/School Attendance Support Team or CME & Pupil Tracking Officer.

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## 6 TRACKING AND CROSS BOUNDARY ARRANGEMENTS

CW&C have in place arrangements to enable joint working and information sharing with other local authorities and key partner agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (**Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023**).

If a child becomes missing from a CW&C school, but resides in another Local Authority, the CME & Pupil Tracking Officer will contact the Designated Lead in the child’s “home” Local Authority to alert them of any change in the pupil’s CME status, providing key information in a timely manner.

Similarly, if a child or young person leaves Cheshire West and Chester, the CME & Pupil Tracking Officer will notify the “receiving” Local Authority to report the transfer into area, and will request confirmation of arrival, to ensure appropriate safeguarding of the child or young person.

## 7 COMMON TRANSFER FILE (CTF)

There is a statutory requirement for all Schools and Settings to transfer specified information about a pupil moving School, to the “receiving” School. Since June 2002, this information has been transferred through the electronic common transfer file (CTF) via DfE’s s2s secure system.

### Common Transfer Form (CTF)

Schools and Settings are required to ensure that CTF data is sent to a pupil’s “new” maintained school by the former school within 15 days after the pupil ceases to be registered at the “former” school. The unique pupil number (UPN) must be included in the CTF as a unique identifier for the pupil and each UPN should only contain information regarding **only one pupil**.

Briefly, when uploading a CTF, if the current school is unaware of where a child has moved to (home address or new school), then a transfer file using XXXXXXXX as the destination must be created and uploaded to the secure s2s site.

When a pupil moves abroad (including to Scotland, Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland), becomes Electively Home Educated or transfers to a non maintained (Independent) school, code MMMMMMMM must be selected to upload the CTF. This enables the CTF to be stored securely and is available if the child returns to a maintained school in England or Wales.

**Files coded as XXXXXXXX and MMMMMMMM are uploaded to the DfE s2s in the same way as transferring files to other schools – these files must only contain the details of one pupil to enable individual pupil information to be stored or retrieved in compliance with GDPR.**

In the unlikely circumstance of a pupil joining a Cheshire West and Chester school without the school first receiving a CTF from the child's previous school, or where a parent/carer is unable or unwilling to provide information about the child's previous school, the "receiving" school can contact the Local Authority CME & Pupil Tracking Officer, at [jennifer.simms@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.simms@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) telephone 01244 973333 or mobile 07879 113 368, to request assistance with a view to identifying any previous education provision.

Further guidance regarding creating and transferring CTFs is available and can be found via the internet site "school to school service: how to transfer information - GOV.UK" via the following link: [Common Transfer File 20 Guide \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

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## ADDITIONAL PUPIL TRACKING NOTIFICATIONS

**Schools and Settings are not required to report in year transfer to other Local Authority Schools and Academies that are located within Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority area, as this information is collected via other systems and processes.**

However, Schools and Settings must complete the **Pupil Tracking Notification form** during "in year" transfer and at "**primary to secondary transition**" to report the following.

- admission to Independent Schools
- moves abroad or out of area (away from Cheshire West & Chester)
- withdrawal from school roll to become Electively Home Educated.

**CME3 forms** are only to be completed to report Children Missing from Education, where their current whereabouts are unknown, and must only be submitted following previous submission of **CME 2 Referral** to Education Welfare Service (School Attendance Support Team- SAST) and subsequent completion of the CME process.

The current DfE CME Statutory Guidance, which can be accessed via the following link, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>, makes it very clear that there is an expectation on all schools/settings to '**make reasonable enquiries**' to establish the whereabouts of a child, prior to referral to the Local Authority.

Notification of pupil transfers (PTNs) must include the name and contact details for **at least one** parent or carer with whom the child is expected to reside with, together with full details of the current and new home address, and where known, the name of the new school or education provision where the child is to attend, even for those children moving abroad.

Schools and Settings must ensure that CME and Pupil Tracking Notification forms are submitted securely to the Local Authority using the secure email addresses detailed on each of the respective CME and Pupil Tracking Notification forms, no longer than the agreed 20-day process.

**For further information and assistance, please contact Jen Simms, CME & Pupil Tracking Officer on telephone 01244 973333 or email [jennifer.simms@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.simms@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)**



## **What Legislation does this guidance refer to?**

- Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (added by section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- Education Act 1996 (section 7, 8, 14 and 19)
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 4 and 38)
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment)(England) Regulations 2016
- Section 10 of the Childrens Act 2004

## **Documents/Information Supporting Guidance Procedures Relating to Children Missing Education as follows:**

Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory Guidance 2023

[Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115690/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023.pdf)

Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024

[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115690/Keeping_Children_Safe_in_Education_September_2024.pdf)

Department for Education Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance September 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/792/contents/made>

Regulation 4 of the Education (Pupil Registration)(England)Regulations 2006

Regulation 12(3) of the Education (Pupil Registration)(England)Regulations 2006

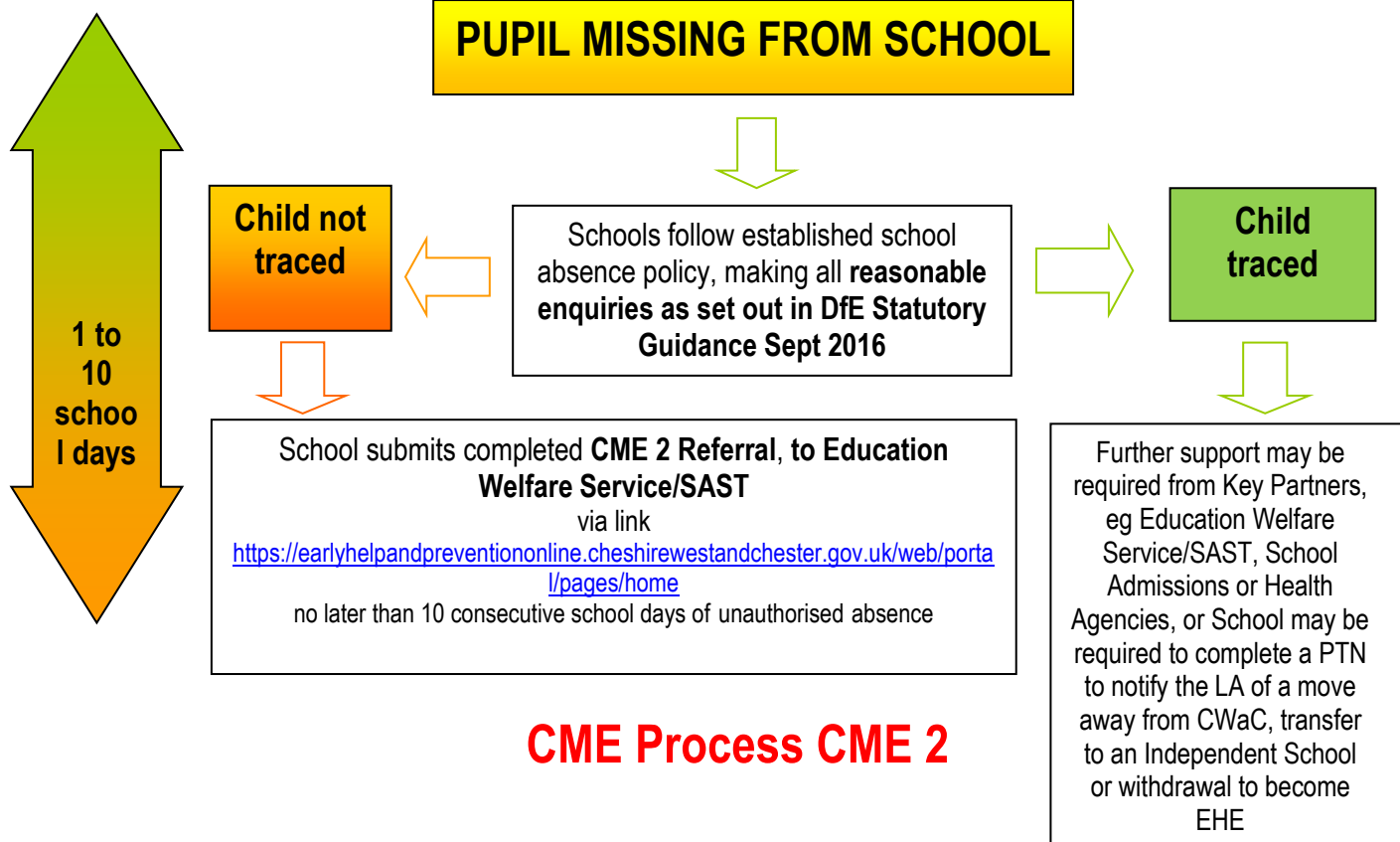
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/pdfs/uksi\\_20061751\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/pdfs/uksi_20061751_en.pdf)

The Prevent Duty - Departmental advice for schools and childcare providers – October 2023

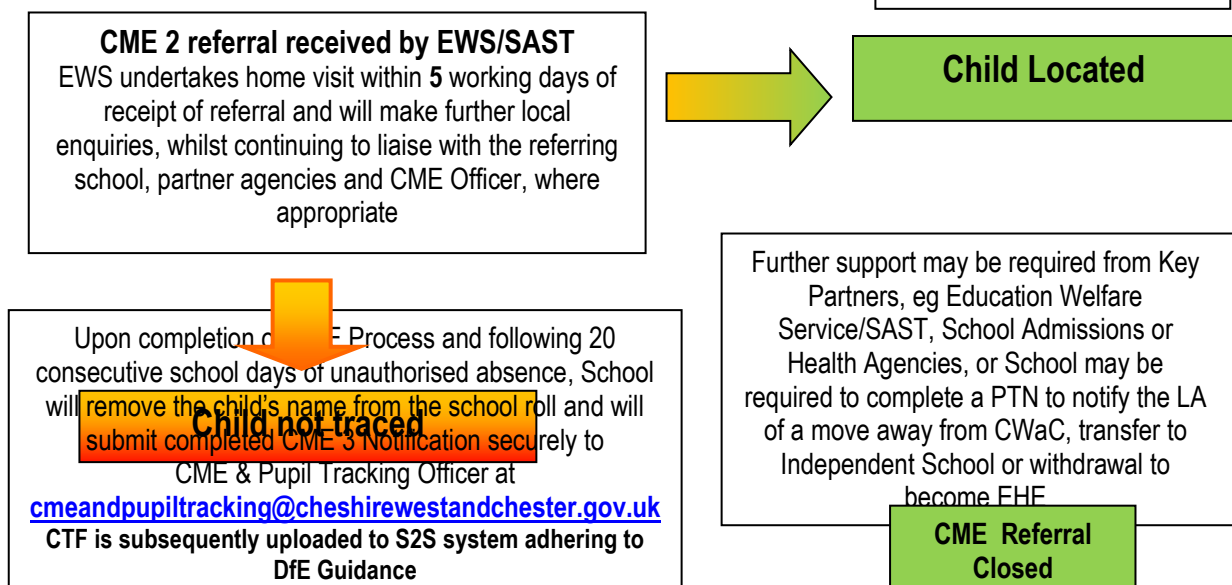
APPENDIX 1

## CME Process - CME1

### PUPIL MISSING FROM SCHOOL



## CME Process CME 2



10 to  
20  
school  
days



A child's name can only be removed from a school roll following 20 consecutive school days of unexplained absence following completion of CME process and submission of CME3 Notification to CME & Pupil Tracking Officer, in accordance with Reg 8 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) DfE revised CME Statutory Guidance Annex A

## CME Process CME 3



CME 3 Notification received by CME & Pupil Tracking Officer



CME & Pupil Tracking Officer will

- Review and confirm all information received is correct.
- Review all available data systems, to include ESCR/eTAF, CYPD, DfE GIAP, CTF etc
- Liaise and pursue enquiries with relevant Local and National Key Partner Agencies etc



If Child Located



CME & Pupil Tracking Officer will:

- Liaise with School and all relevant professionals to advise them with relevant information.
- Update appropriate systems with outcome of enquiries.
- Where applicable, liaise with a "receiving Local Authority to ensure "safe" arrival of pupil.
- Ensure school have uploaded CTF to appropriate destination.
- CME referral closed.



If Child Not Found



CME & Pupil Tracking Officer will:

- Discuss with relevant Local Senior Leads and if aware of any previous or current social care or safeguarding concerns, will liaise with Local Safeguarding Manager
- Update relevant systems with known information.
- Ensure CTF has been uploaded to Missing Pupil data system via DfE s2s system.

20  
School  
Days

