



4 - 18 yrs Co-educational Independent Day School

# Children Missing from Education, Collection and Failure to Collect Procedure

**Approved by:** Laura Sweetman, DSL

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**Last Reviewed:** August 2024

**Review Period:** Annually

**Next Review Due:** August 2025

## Context

This guidance sets out Arnold Lodge School's procedure and procedures for identifying, registering, tracking and locating children missing education as well as the procedure for failure to collect and collection. Please also see "Supervision of Pupils Procedure" as well as the core document for this suite of policies, 'ALS Child Protection Policy'.

We have a legal duty to identify children who are missing education (CME), taking action where necessary and ensuring children are receiving suitable education. This duty applies to all maintained schools, academies, free schools and independent schools.

Arnold Lodge School uses the Warwickshire CME service for referrals when a child is absent from school and their whereabouts is unknown for 10 consecutive days. Arnold Lodge School pledges to take all actions outlined in the CME referral form before submission to the CME team. This includes home visits.

## The School's Duties

- > ALS will hold at least two emergency contact numbers for each pupil on roll to contact if the pupil does not arrive at school.
- > ALS will contact parents by 10:00am each day if the pupil does not arrive at school or we have not had notice from the parents for the absence
- > ALS will notify the LA when any pupil joins or leaves the school at non-standard transition times
- > ALS will note the new education setting and when the pupil is due to begin at the school for pupils leaving ALS at non-standard transition times and notify the LA of this

## Persistent Absenteeism

Where a child is persistently absent Arnold Lodge School follows our attendance procedure and procedures. Children whose education is most vulnerable can include those who:

- are at risk of exploitation
- are affected by domestic violence
- live in temporary accommodation or are homeless
- have been permanently excluded from school
- are under the supervision of the youth justice system
- are affected by substance or alcohol misuse
- have been victims of bullying or discrimination
- are at risk of 'honour' based violence including forced marriage
- are at risk of female genital mutilation
- are unaccompanied asylum seekers
- are looked after
- are carers
- are teenage parents
- have long term health problems
- have parents with mental health problems
- are highly mobile, such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families or services families
- have parents with learning difficulties

At Arnold Lodge School, the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable children is paramount. If we have concerns about a child missing in education, we will use the following methods to contact the Warwickshire CME service straight away.

## The Role of the School

All schools (including academies, and independent schools) are expected to work jointly with the local authority to make enquires to find the whereabouts of a missing pupil. This will include taking **reasonable steps** to locate a child missing from education and could include:

- I. Telephone calls to all known contacts

2. Recorded delivery letters to the home
3. Contact with other schools where siblings are registered
4. A home visit where safe to do so
5. Enquiries through school contacts to neighbours, friends
6. Enquiries with any other agencies/services known to have involvement with the family
7. Exploring social media ie Facebook
8. Recording all actions undertaken

All schools have a duty to safeguard children and this includes unexplained absences. This protocol does not replace Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures in place at school. For any urgent concerns about a child’s safety or wellbeing which require immediate action, schools and professionals must contact the police or the Warwickshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub on 01926 414144.

### Referring a child

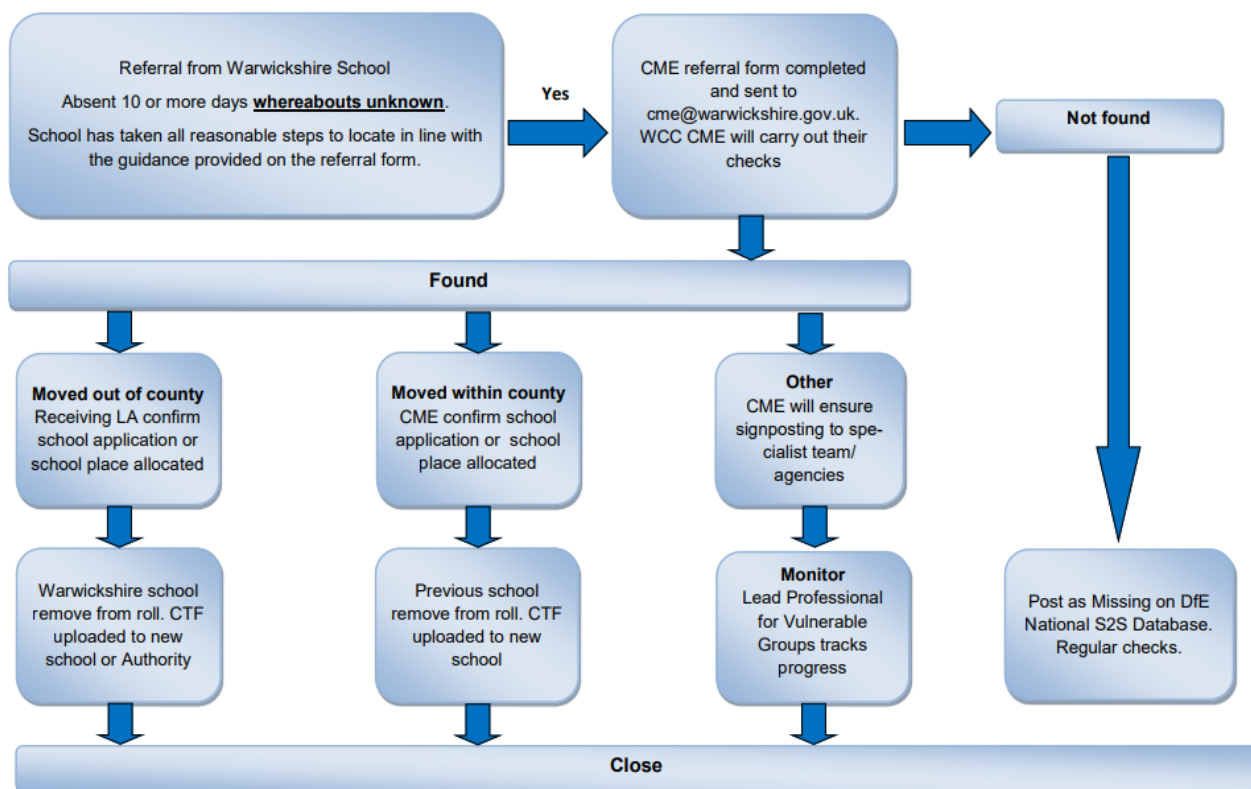
If a child is absent from school for 10 consecutive days with their whereabouts unknown, the Designated Safeguarding lead at Arnold Lodge School will complete the [Children Missing Education \(CME\) referral form \(DOCX, 72 KB\)](#) following the guidance within and send securely to [cme@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:cme@warwickshire.gov.uk). For urgent concerns about a child’s safety or well-being which requires immediate action, Arnold Lodge School call the [Warwickshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub \(MASH\)](#) (and police if appropriate) without delay on 01926 414144.

### Children Missing Education Protocol for Warwickshire Pupils

The flowchart below outlines the protocols that Arnold Lodge School will follow when we believe a child to be missing in education. We will work with the Local Authority to establish the whereabouts of the child.

[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrenmissingeducation](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrenmissingeducation) T. 01926 736323

#### Children Missing Education Protocol for Warwickshire Pupils



Please Note: Where it is identified that a child may have been off rolled, the previous school will be required to place this child back onto their roll immediately.

## Index of relevant information

Warwickshire Children Missing Education protocol:

<https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-1010-97>

DfE Children Missing Education guidance:

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

Warwickshire County Council information sharing protocol:

<https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-205639421-372>

## Missing Children, Collection and Failure to Collect

The safety and security of children in our care is absolutely paramount. Every care is taken to ensure that the children are accounted for at all times.

### Procedures:

- Registration through Reception and Key Stages one to five is taken in the morning between 8:30 and 8:45am.
- In the afternoon registration is taken between 1.15 and 1.25pm for Reception and Key Stage 1, between 1.40pm and 1:50pm for Key Stage 2 and at 2:10pm for Key Stage 3, 4 and 5.
- The staff maintain the appropriate high level of supervision throughout the day and are aware of the location of the children in their care at all times
- When on excursions outside the school premises, staff implement strategies to maximise the safety and security of the children in accordance with the school's Trip and Visits Procedure.
- Risk assessments are carried out prior to off-site trips to minimise the risk of children becoming lost.

### Missing Child

In the unlikely event that it is suspected that a child has gone missing, the following procedure will be followed:

#### In School:

- Staff will maintain the safety and well-being of other children
- A roll call will be taken
- A member of the Senior Leadership Team and at least one other member of staff will search the immediate vicinity, including checking external doors and gates to ensure that they are still either locked or attended by either an adult or a prefect.
- If the child is not found after approximately 15 minutes, when all checks have been done, the School will contact the parents and then the Police
- Once the Police arrive all relevant information about the child will be given. The police will then take over the search

#### Out of School:

- At least one teacher or accompanying adult, named on the trip paperwork, or teacher will remain with the group of children whilst the other teachers will search the immediate vicinity for the missing child. Help will be requested of the venue where the group is attending. If the child is not located within 10 minutes, parents then the Police will be notified
- When the child is found a full investigation will take place, which the Headteacher will chair. Recommendations of the investigation team will then be implemented into school procedure.

Following any incident of a missing child, the Head Teacher will report investigations and findings to the Directors.

## Collection and Failure to Collect Procedure

In the event that a child is not collected by an authorised adult at the end of a session, the School puts into practice agreed procedures. These ensure the child is cared for safely by an experienced and qualified practitioner who is known to the child.

In the event that a child is not collected by an authorised adult, we will ensure that the child receives a high standard of care in order to cause as little distress as possible. We inform parents/carers of our procedures so that, if they are unavoidably delayed, they will be reassured that their children will be properly cared for.

### Methods

Parents of children starting their education with Arnold Lodge School, at any EYFS or Key Stage point, are asked to provide specific information, which is recorded on admissions records, including:

- Home address and contact telephone numbers, including home and mobile numbers – if the parents do not have a telephone, an alternative number must be given, perhaps a neighbour or close relative;
- Place of work, address and telephone number (if applicable);
- Names, addresses, telephone numbers and signatures of adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting, for example a child minder or grandparent;
- Information about any person who does not have legal access to the child; and
- Who has parental responsibility for the child.

On occasions when parents are aware that they will not be at home or in their usual place of work, they must inform the school office of methods by which they can be contacted.

On occasions when parents or the persons normally authorised to collect the child are not able to collect the child, they should inform the school office of the name, address and telephone number of the person who will be collecting their child. We agree with parents how to verify the identity of the person who is to collect their child.

Parents are informed that if they are not able to collect the child as planned they must inform us so that we can begin to take back-up procedures. We provide parents with our contact telephone number. We also inform parents that – in the event that their children are not collected from setting by an authorised adult and the staff can no longer supervise the child on our premises – we apply our child protection procedures as set out in our Child Protection Procedure.

If a child is not collected at the end of the school day or afterschool activity, the School will follow the procedure below:

- The child will be cared for in the school's aftercare provision which is open until 6pm.
- The diary is checked for any information about changes to the normal collection routines.
- If no information is available, parents/carers are contacted at home or at work
- If this is unsuccessful, the adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting – and whose telephone numbers are recorded on the admissions records are contacted.
- All reasonable attempts are made to contact the parents or nominated carers.
- The child does not leave the premises with anyone other than those named on the admissions records and in the diary.
- If no one collects the child by 6pm and there is no one who can be contacted to collect the child, we apply the procedures for uncollected children.

### **Procedure for Uncollected Children**

- Contact our local authority Social Services Departments:
- The child stays at the setting in the care of two fully vetted workers until the child is safely collected either by the parents or by a social worker.
- Social services will aim to find the parent or relative if they are unable to do so, the child will be admitted into the care of the local authority.
- Under no circumstances are staff to go to look for the parent, nor do they take the child home with them.
- A full written report of the incident is recorded in the child's file.
- Depending on circumstances, we reserve the right to charge parents for the additional hours worked by our staff.

## Appendix I: Information from ALS child Protection Policy, pp17-19

The following text is taken from the core policy for our safeguarding suite

### Attendance

We recognise that full attendance at school is important to the well-being of all our pupils and enables them to access the opportunities made available to them at school. Attendance is monitored closely, and we address poor or irregular attendance without delay, working in partnership with the Warwickshire Attendance Service when patterns of absence give rise to concern. Early Help is recommended to support families with attendance concerns at the emergence of an issue to prevent escalation. Our attendance policy is set out in a separate document and is reviewed regularly by the Board of Directors.

### Children Missing from Education

Situation	Action
Child is missing education and their whereabouts is <b>known</b>	It is the school's responsibility to follow their attendance procedures. They can seek support from the Warwickshire Attendance Service
Child is missing education and their whereabouts is <b>unknown</b>	A referral must be made the Children Missing Education Team

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are legally entitled to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

For most children, including those that are vulnerable, attendance in school is a protective factor and is essential aspect of keeping them safe. Children who are missing education (CME) have increased vulnerability and can be at more risk of neglect, abuse, exploitation radicalisation and mental health problems. Staff will also be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Schools and colleges must have an attendance policy that outlines how they monitor:

- > Attendance
- > Unauthorised absences
- > Children who go missing during the school day

ALS follows the DfE legal requirements in respect of recording and reporting those children who leave the school with an unknown future destination. Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence, without permission and their whereabouts is unknown, we would take all reasonable steps<sup>1</sup> to establish their whereabouts. If unsuccessful, the school will make an immediate referral to Warwickshire County Council's Children Missing Education Team on 01926 736323 or via email [cme@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:cme@warwickshire.gov.uk).

If the Local Authority is able to contact the pupil with the child/children and their parents and carers, arrangements will be made with the school and family for a return to education. This may include a re-integration programme where necessary. If the pupil has registered at a new school, the previous school will delete the child's name from their roll and transfer the child's educational records to the new school in the normal way. Any child protection records will be transferred separately and securely for the attention of the DSL in the new school and a receipt secured.

Visit [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrenmissingeducation](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrenmissingeducation) for more information or to access the referral form.

The school operates in accordance with statutory guidance [Children Missing Education \(DfE 2016\)](#). The school is required by law to have an admission register and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, an attendance register. All pupils must be placed on both registers.

The school is required to inform the Local Authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register at non-standard transition points irrespective of the reason. The Local Authority may also require the school to provide information about pupils who are going to be removed from the register at standard transition points.

### **Non-standard transition point**

We will inform the local authority that we plan to take a child off roll when they leave school to be home educated; move away from the school's location; remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age; are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to school afterwards); or are permanently excluded.

If a parent has informed ALS of their intention to remove their child in order to elective home educate their child, the school should notify the Elective Home Education Team imminently by email ([ehe@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:ehe@warwickshire.gov.uk) / tel. 01926 736323). School and colleges are advised to allow the parent or carer a 2-week period of reflection prior to removing their child from the school roll as this is best practice.

The school will also notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. The Local Authority may also require the school to provide information about pupils added to the register at a standard transition point.

It is essential for the school to comply with this duty so that the Local Authority can, as part of its duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education, follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect. If no confirmation is received the above Children Missing Education procedures will apply.

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<sup>1</sup> Reasonable steps include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts. Parents and carers are asked to provide at least three emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergencies;
- Letters home (preferably by recorded delivery);
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered;
- Home visits where safe to do so;
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts;
- Enquiries with any other service known to be involved with the pupil/family;
- Consideration of information about the child in social media;
- All contacts and outcomes will be recorded on the pupil's file.

We will ensure that pupils who are expected to attend the school but fail to take up the place are referred to the Local Authority.

When a pupil leaves the school, we will record the name of the pupil's new school and their expected start date. Deletions from school roll in liaison with the Local Authority will normally be backdated to the first day of absence.

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

Pupils leaving ALS for known destinations outside the maintained sector in England and Wales will be updated to the School Database using MMMMMMM in the destination box. This includes private/independent schools, schools in other countries (including Scotland and Northern Ireland) and pupils moving into Elective Home Education. The latter will be formally notified to the Children Missing Education team by the school as soon as written confirmation is received from the parent(s). If no confirmation is received, the above Children Missing Education procedures will apply. ALS will ensure that pupils who are expected to attend the school but fail to take up the place are referred to the Local Authority. When a pupil leaves any of the Schools, the name of the pupil's new school is recorded with their expected start date.

### **Children who run away or go missing from home or care**

ALS recognises that children who run away or go missing (particularly repeatedly) and are thus absent from their normal residence are potentially vulnerable to abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It could also indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage.

*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022* highlights that '[Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care' \(DfE 2014\)](#) requires that every child or young person who runs away or goes missing must be offered a Return Home Interview (RHI). RHI's are intended to ascertain the factors that triggered the young person's absence. Those factors may include difficulties at home, in school and in the community. The short timescale is 72 hours which is imposed in order to ensure that the RHI remains relevant to the young person and enables any required action to be initiated at the earliest opportunity. When necessary and in conjunction with the Local Authority, ALS will facilitate Return Home Interviews, both in terms of releasing the young person from their normal timetable to participate in an interview and in providing an appropriate and safe space on ALS site for the interview to take place.

RHI's are undertaken by practitioners who are independent in order to facilitate a discussion with the young person that is as open as possible. As soon as the Local Authority receives notification that a young person has gone missing from home or care, a letter will be sent to parents/carers seeking their consent. If the Local Authority has been unable to secure consent from parents/carers, the school and college will contact the parent/carer and seek to secure their consent for the RHI.

Direct contact will then be made to make arrangements for the interview.

Young people aged 16 and 17 years old are generally considered to be able to consent and withhold consent to their own information being shared and therefore they can choose to participate or not in an RHI. With reference to the Fraser Guidelines, younger children may also be deemed able to give consent. However, if the child/young person is assessed as not being capable of giving their own consent (Fraser Guidelines) or they are withholding informed consent, ALS should seek consent from parents and carers for the RHI to go ahead. Schools and Colleges are advised to seek expert advice if they are unsure as to whether a child or young person has the necessary capacity to make such decisions for themselves.

Parents/carers may also choose to accompany their child/young person in interviews and ALS will facilitate that as appropriate.