

Missing from Education Policy (FE)

Excellence • Integrity • Supportiveness

Our Mission

Raising Aspirations, Unlocking Potential, Advancing Futures

Our Values

Excellence, Passion, Teamwork, Integrity, Innovation,
Sustainability, Valuing Others and Supportiveness

Sparsholt College Group

The Sparsholt College Group includes Sparsholt College, Andover College, University Centre Sparsholt, Sparsholt College Services, Westley Enterprises and Andover Town Football Club. Policies apply to each part of the Sparsholt College Group unless specified otherwise.

The Missing from Education Policy was approved by the Board of Governors in July 2024. This supersedes the previous publications.

Originator: Vice Principal Curriculum

Located: College Group Websites
College Group Intranet

Due for review: May (for July) 2027

MISSING FROM EDUCATION POLICY (FE)

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MISSING FROM EDUCATION POLICY (FE)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Department of Education (DfE) published statutory guidance in September 2016, entitled 'Children missing Education', primarily addressed to local authorities on children who run away or go missing from home or care.
- 1.2 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a key duty on Local Authorities and requires local authorities, agencies and partners to work together effectively.
- 1.3 A child missing from education is not in itself a child protection matter, and there may be an innocent explanation for this. However, unexplained non-attendance can be an early indicator of problems, risk and vulnerability. The DfE statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) has been updated to reflect that if a child deliberately fails to attend college this may be indicative of a wider safeguarding issue.
- 1.4 When a child is missing or runs away, they are at risk. Safeguarding children therefore includes protecting them from this and also includes planning to prevent children going missing and to protect them when they do.
- 1.4 Children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, neglect, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.
- 1.5 Some 16 and 17-year-olds have greater independence from their parents and carers and choose to leave home. However, when a 16- or 17-year-old runs away or goes missing they are no less vulnerable than younger children to sexual exploitation or involvement with gangs.
- 1.6 Effective information sharing between parents, schools/ colleges and local authorities is critical to ensure that all learners are safe and receiving suitable education.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy is designed to ensure an effective collaborative safeguarding response from all agencies involved, including the Sparsholt College Group (the College), when a FE student goes missing.
- 2.5 When responding to the needs of learners who go missing the key principles are:
 - The safety and welfare of the learner is paramount.
 - Locating and returning the learner to a safe environment is the main objective.
 - Child Protection Procedures will be initiated by Children's Social Care whenever there are concerns that a child who is missing may be at risk of significant harm and a strategy discussion and Section 47 enquiry initiated.
 - The Police will act on any report of a child missing in line with their definition:
 - **Missing:** *anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggest a person may be subject to a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another*

3. Background

3.1 The immediate risks associated with going missing include:

- no means of support or legitimate income
- involvement in criminal activities
- victim of crime
- victim of abuse
- alcohol/substance misuse
- deterioration of mental health
- missing schooling and education
- increased vulnerability

3.2 Longer-term risks include:

- long-term dependency/alcohol dependency
- crime
- homelessness
- disengagement from education
- child sexual exploitation
- poor physical and/or mental health

3.3 '**Push**' factors are things that push a young person away from home. They include:

- Not feeling accepted in the environment where they should be safe and happy.
- Not feeling safe in the environment where they should be safe and happy
- Neglect or exploitation
- Family breakdown and young people being drawn into their parents'/carers' conflicts are less likely to do well at school and more likely to truant or run away from home.
- Mental health problems
- Bullying (including issues of e-safety/sexting [youth produced sexual imagery] etc.)
- Drug and alcohol misuse by family members, and new stepfamilies moving in.
- Teenage pregnancy - some young women run away or are forced to leave home because they become (or fear that they may be) pregnant.
- Witnessing domestic abuse
- Fear of forced marriage or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

3.4 The factors that '**pull**' young people from home can include being pulled into activity outside of their home, it can vary from:

- Staying out with peers, boyfriends or girlfriends.
- Running to be near friends or family – especially when a young person is in care and there are problems with contact arrangements
- Becoming involved in risky behaviours such as substance or alcohol misuse, offending and anti-social behaviour
- Wanting freedom and independence
- Being made to feel special by grooming for potential sexual exploitation or child trafficking
- Fear of repercussion for self or family if they don't go

4. Children Missing Education

- 4.1 Due to the daily contact that the College has with learners, it is well placed to notice when a learner has gone missing.
- 4.2 The College will monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance using the procedures for managing conduct and performance. To support this task a daily report on absent learners will be sent to the progress coaches (and Assistant Principals) who are required to make reasonable enquiries as to the reason why the learner has not been at college. This is supplemented by parents and guardians receiving daily absence emails.
- 4.3 The College will take one or more of the following actions if a learner is absent from college:
- Contact the learner to ascertain the reason for the absence
 - Contact the parent and/or other relatives using known contact details (learner is under 18 or vulnerable adults)

Once the reason is known, this will be recorded on Promonitor along with any further actions required.

- 4.4 If unable to make contact and the learner does not return on their subsequent day, the College Wellbeing Team will follow local information sharing arrangements and where possible make enquiries via other local databases and agencies. This will include checking with agencies known to be involved with the family.
- 4.5 When a learner appears to have gone missing, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) must be informed who will make every effort to trace the learner as soon as it is apparent that the period of absence is unusual in any way.
- 4.6 A final audit check will be undertaken to ensure all avenues of communication have been explored with no success in establishing the reason for absence.
- 4.7 The DSL/DDSL will complete the 'Child at risk of missing education' tracking form and return to:
- CME Tracking Officer
cme@hants.gov.uk
Admissions Team
Hampshire County Council
Winchester
(01962) 843638
- 4.8 In the following circumstances a referral to Children's Services and/ or the police should be made immediately:
- The learner may be a victim of crime
 - The learner is subject to a Child Protection Plan
 - The learner is subject of Section 47 enquiries
 - The learner is a 'Child Looked After (CLA)'
 - There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household

- There is a history of the family moving frequently

5. Children subject to a Child Protection Plan who goes missing

- 5.1 The unexplained, continuous absence of any student who is subject to a Child Protection Plan must be treated as the highest priority and the College DSL/DDSL will immediately notify the learner's allocated social worker. It is the responsibility of the learner's social worker to ensure that a Strategy Meeting in line with local procedures is convened as soon as is practicably possible.

6. Children missing from home

- 6.1 There is an expectation that parents, carers and guardians will report to the Police if their child is missing. If a parent/ guardian/carer reports to the College that their child has gone missing, they should be advised to report this information to the police.

7. Information Sharing

- 7.1 When there are concerns about a child's safety it may be necessary to share information with other agencies. The safety and welfare of a child must be the first consideration when making decisions about sharing information about them. It is lawful to disclose confidential information if it appears necessary to do so to safeguard a child in the public interest i.e. the public interest in protecting children may override the public interest in maintaining confidentiality.
- 7.2 Agencies working with children and young people and their families and carers must use well established, comprehensive, transparent and consensual information sharing systems and processes that places the child at the centre of how their information is used.
- 7.3 This must be delivered in accordance with the:
- Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR)
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Children Act 1989 as amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2004

8. Locating the child and follow up actions

- 8.1 Once the learner has been located, it will be essential to assess their needs so that they can be referred to appropriate services including accessing the College's wellbeing services.