

CHILDREN
MISSING EDUCATION

GUIDANCE
FOR SCHOOLS
AND PARTNER AGENCIES

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Introduction

This Guidance sets out key principles to enable the Local Authority to implement its legal duty to locate, assess, monitor and track children missing from education in order for them to reach their true potential. It is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all children and young people. Bridgend County Borough Council aims to ensure the Local Authority meets its statutory duties relating to the provision of education and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

From 1st September 2009 the Welsh Government implemented Section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which requires Local Authorities to make arrangements which enables them to establish the identities of children residing in their area who are not registered pupils at a school receiving a 'suitable education' *otherwise than at a school*.

This guidance is intended to inform all Schools and partner agencies about the protocols and processes to be followed in order to:

- ensure that all children and young people have access to appropriate education.
- identify, maintain contact and re-engage children living in Bridgend who are missing education (or are at risk of missing education).
- track children that move out of Bridgend until such a time as they are in a known destination.

If a child or young person is receiving an education, not only do they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, they are also in an environment which enables local agencies to safeguard and promote their welfare. If a child goes missing from education they could be at risk of significant harm.

Moreover, if children are not receiving a suitable education they are more likely to be vulnerable and at risk of becoming NEET (Not In Education, Employment or Training) and possibly more prone to offending behaviour and at high risk of a negative outcome.

The Children's Act 2004 and Welsh Government's 'Safeguarding Children Working Together', places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information. As a result there is an expectation on all agencies that they will subscribe to the guidance in order to ensure children are safely on a school roll.

The key to Children Missing Education guidance is to ensure that children missing, or risk of missing education, are identified, tracked and re-engaged in appropriate education provision. This will ensure that children have the best possible chances in life, and also those children who move out of the County will be tracked, to ensure they are engaging in suitable education provision.

Legal Context

Who do we mean?

Children (child) missing from education in this document, refers to all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more). Relevant Legislation includes:

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, places a duty on local authorities to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Section 436a of the Education Act 1999, as amended by section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, places a duty on all local authorities to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered at a school and are not receiving a suitable education.
- Circular 06/10 statutory guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education.
- Circular 18/06 Educational Records, School reports and the Common Transfer System – the keeping, disposal, disclosure, and transfer of pupil information.
- SAO – School Attendance Order – Under Education Act 1996, Section 437-443. Where a parent of a compulsory school age pupil fails to prove that they are receiving a suitable education, and where the Local Authority believes that the child should attend school. A School Attendance Order will be used to direct a parent to send their child to the nominated school, and should be used when a child is not on role.
- The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on agencies to report a child or adult at risk.
- The Children Act 1989, Section 47, remains the key piece of legislation for investigating concerns that a child is at risk of harm. A child who goes missing from education may be considered, in some cases, to be at risk of harm. It is important that if a child who is already known to Social Services as a child in need of protection that this is reported to the child's social worker as early as possible. In addition if school have concerns that are heightened by a child going missing from education, even if there is no current Social Services involvement, this should be reported to the statutory authorities, Social Services and Police.
- The Children's Act 2004 and Welsh Assembly Government's Safeguarding Children Working Together under the Children's Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information.
- Keeping Learners Safe, Welsh Government circular 158/2015, gives additional guidance and information about Safeguarding children in specific circumstances and any of these may increase the risk to a child missing from education

Purpose

The Children Missing Education guidance enables the Local Authority to fulfil its statutory duty to provide education for all children of compulsory school age. This document will provide the process, tracking and monitoring procedures to ensure that all children attend suitable education provision. It includes processes for identifying those children most risk of becoming missing from education, and to re-engage them with suitable education. 'Suitable education' is defined as full time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs.

The guidance applies to children that are not on school roll, who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school (home, private or alternative provision) and who have been out of educational provision for a substantiated period of time, usually more than 4 weeks. Where children are not attending school regularly then this would involve Education Welfare Officers who are based in three locality hubs across the County Borough.

It does not apply where parents have chosen to electively home educate their children under 'The Education Act 1996', (section 7).

The Childrens Act 2004 expects all agencies to work together to promote the safeguarding and welfare of children, and to share information so that children and young people do not go missing from education. This guidance will therefore inform all agencies of their responsibilities in identifying children missing education, and to follow the notification process.

This guidance has been written in conjunction with Bridgend County Borough Council Attendance Strategy, All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008, School Admissions Policy, Early Help Document, Inclusion and Pupil Support 203/2016 and Keeping Learners Safe Welsh Government Circular 158/2015

What is the definition of children missing from education?

Definition of child missing education is:

'children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school (home, private, or alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time, usually agreed as four weeks or more'.

Vulnerable Groups

There are groups of vulnerable children who are more likely to be affected by the factors listed below and who have experienced certain life events that make them more at risk of going missing from education:

- young people within the criminal justice system;
- children living in women's refuges;
- children of homeless families perhaps living in temporary accommodation;
- families fleeing domestic violence;
- young carers;
- children with parents with mental health issues;
- children who are affected by substance or/and alcohol misuse;
- children with long term medical or emotional problems;
- children on the child protection register;
- children previously educated in the private sector
- parents who have withdrawn their children to elective home educate, but are not receiving suitable education
- Looked After Children; privately fostered, missing from care;
- children with a Gypsy/Traveller background;
- children from transient families;
- children who are taken on extended holidays or heritage visits by their family;
- children of parents that are in the armed forces and move on regular basis;
- teenage mothers;
- children who are permanently excluded from school;
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers or children of asylum seeking or economic migrants.

There will be times when the Local Authority or school will be unaware of children with complex issues; however they may come into contact with other agencies. Examples include:

- children at risk of forced marriage and honour based violence;
- children at risk of sexual exploitation; including children who have been trafficked to or within the UK;
- children involved in witness protection programmes, relocating without a forwarding address or explanation.
- migrant worker families may not be aware of the education system;
- where asylum has not been granted and families continue not to be traced;
- newly arrived immigrants
- families involved in fraud, crime and anti social behaviour.

It is often the case that another agency is aware of the arrival or existence of a family living in the Authority and whose children are missing from education. This guidance identifies the practical steps to be taken by all agencies to locate, register, monitor and track children and young people missing

from education; to assess their needs and allocate appropriate provision; and to monitor and track their progress.

How and why do children go missing from Education

Some children fail to engage in, or go missing from Education for a variety of reasons, for example:

- some families move and do not tell anyone including the Local Authority:
- some move area and do not register with a school, or some parents have lack of understanding of the enrolment process.
- some schools are full to capacity, with no spaces available for pupils at their preferred school. Therefore the family do not take a place at the alternative school provided.
- they may never be enrolled in the education system.
- parents may decide to elect to home educate.
- illegal deletion from school roll.
- fail to attend their transition school, primary to secondary, or from one school to an alternative.
- may enter the country and do not register in a school.
- maybe excluded or withdrawn from an independent school.
- they may cease to attend school due to parental disputes.
- they may wish not to be located, may change names and move quickly from place to place.

Reducing Risk

All agencies must work together closely to avoid children missing education. In order to reduce the risk the following procedures will need to be in place:

- monitor attendance to reduce the risk of children not having full education provision. Consistent with the duty to safeguard the welfare of children, and working together with safeguarding and admission teams.
- identify and locate children missing from education, truancy initiatives, attendance data. Working with Education Welfare colleagues across the country to ensure children are located.
- re-engage children missing from education, to ensure that referrals are received by the EWO's from schools, and other agencies including the general public.
- work collaboratively with partner agencies, early help teams and safeguarding teams.

Where an agency has a concern of a Child Missing Education the attached checklist must be completed. **(Appendix 1)**

If a Child Protection issue exists then the appropriate safeguarding team or the Assessment Team must be contacted immediately by the referrer.

Identification and Notification Processes.

Bridgend County Borough Council works collaboratively within a multi-disciplinary approach to ensure that all children are safe, and to ensure that all children missing education are located by following the procedures in this document.

If a child is missing education and is suspected to be in another Local Authority then a movement of children enquiry form (**Appendix 2**) will need to be submitted to the relevant CME officer in that Local Authority.

Referrals can be made to Michelle Hatcher Group Manager/CME officer, who will work closely with the Lead Education Welfare Officer to obtain more information from schools and other agencies. The child's name will be placed on the CME database.

Whether a pupil is on school roll or not, all Local Authority staff must be aware of these procedures and they must be followed. All staff has a level of responsibility to report any child missing education.

Bridgend County Borough Council CME enquiry form can be found in **Appendix 2**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Schools have a vital role to play when children go missing from the education system. Schools must undertake immediate actions to try and identify the whereabouts of child/children by utilising existing contact information for the family, siblings or extended family. If the schools initial enquiries fail to establish the whereabouts of the child/children a referral must be made to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to undertake further tracking.

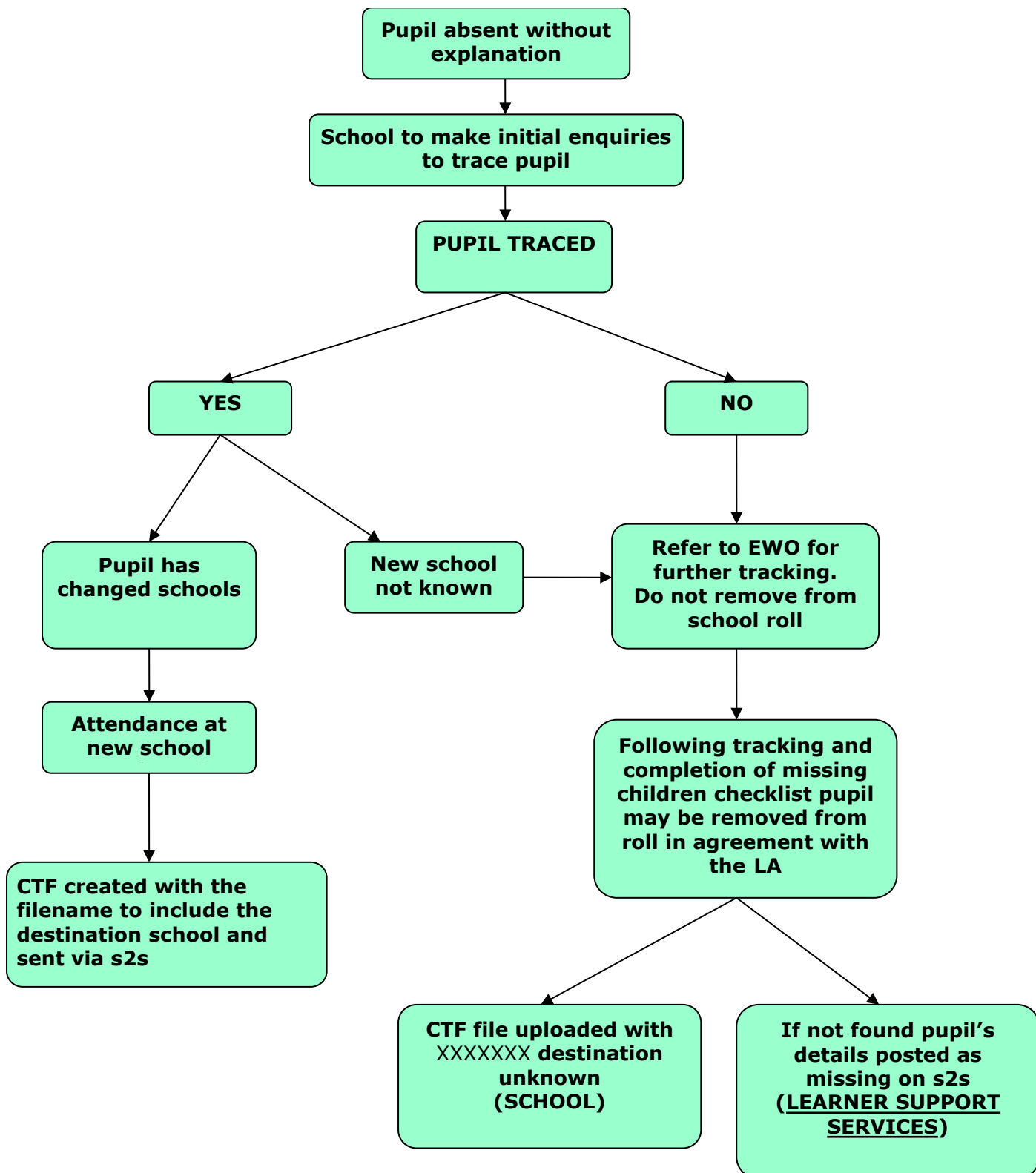
If the school has existing concerns of a child protection nature the matter must be immediately referred to the Safeguarding service and the police.

Schools must consider these regulations very carefully before deciding to remove a pupil from their roll. No pupil should be removed from a school roll until all reasonable efforts have been made to locate the family.

There are strict and clear guidelines regarding deregistration outlined in Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 and amendments. In the case of Elective Home Education, further guidance on deregistration is available from the Inclusion Service. Schools **must** discuss deregistration with their Education Welfare Officer **before** removing a pupil's name from the register.

The following diagram shows the process for tracking or reporting missing pupils:

Schools Tracking Process

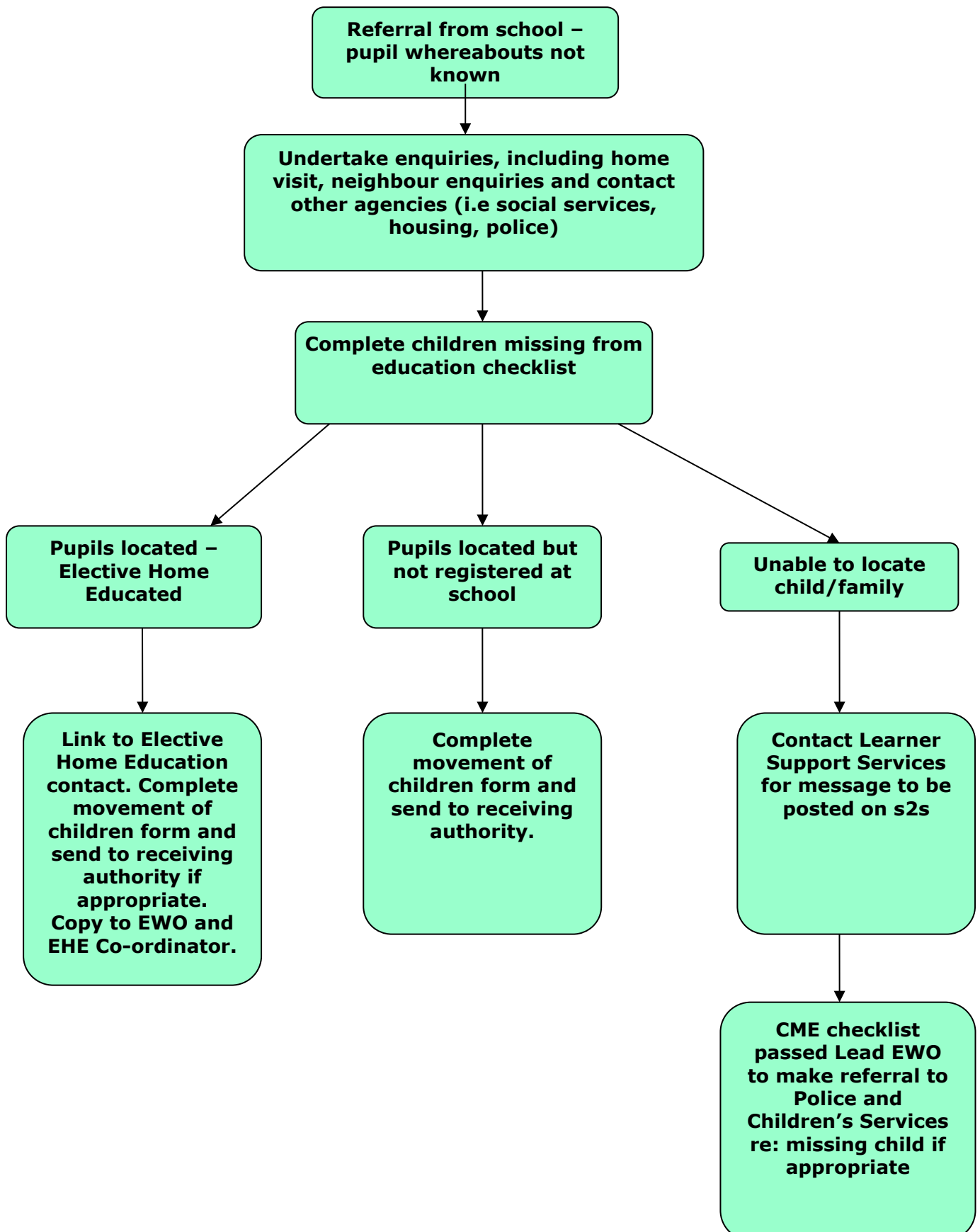


If information is received that establishes where the child/children have moved to but there is no clear information about whether they have registered at new schools, agencies should complete the **'Movement of children' form (Appendix 2)** and send to the receiving authority so that contact can be made to ensure a fast and smooth transition into local schools. (A copy of the form should be placed on the child's file as well updates on relevant database).

If all attempts to trace a child fail then the completed **'children missing from education'** checklist passed to the Local Authority's Learner Support Service. School will be advised to remove the child from roll and send a CTF to the Lost Pupil Database with the destination as XXXXXXXX. The referrer will contact Learner Support Services who will post a message on the lost pupil database (s2s).

If at any point during the checking process staff become aware of issues that may indicate issues of a safeguarding/child protection nature, Safeguarding services and the police should be notified.

Children Missing Education – EWS Tracking Process



Role of other Agencies

Social Services Departments, Housing Departments, Accident and Emergency, NHS Walk-in services, Police, Health Visitors, Careers Wales, Voluntary Agencies, Youth Offending Service, Housing Departments, Homeless Hostels, Women's Refuges, SEN caseworkers.

It is the responsibility of all agencies to report to the admission team within the Local Authority where they believe a child or young person is not receiving appropriate education, either by means of elective home education, by not being on roll at a school or by not attending school regularly. Agencies should complete the **Notification to the Local Authority of a Child Missing Education Form (Appendix 3)**.

Checks will be made on the information systems for any details held about the child or siblings. If there is no evidence of education being provided, an Education Welfare Officer will visit the home jointly. The Education Welfare Officer can support for parents to make an application to school via Learner Support Services or link them with the authority's elective home education contact.

The Local Authority can intervene if they have reason to believe that parents are not providing a suitable education and may issue a School Attendance Order (SAO) (under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996). The Local Authority may apply to court for a child assessment order under s.43 of the Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to do so (which will only be where there is a risk of significant harm to the child). The Lead Education Welfare Officer will need to be notified of this, with a view to issuing a School Attendance Order.

The Role of the School Admissions Service

The Learner Support Service (Admissions) is key in ensuring all pupils are on a school roll and attending school.

Children may not be on a school roll where a parent has not accepted a school place at phase transfer, unable to secure a place in their preferred school and fails to take up another offer or failed to follow up an application after moving into the LA. When this occurs the Learner Support Services will inform the Education Welfare Service who will then follow the checking process detailed above.

The Learner Support Service will work with the Inclusion Service and the Lead Education Welfare Officer to ensure that advice about admissions and support with the application procedure is readily available for families recently arrived from abroad who may have language difficulties.

The use of School to School Data Transfer Website (s2s)

To minimise the chances of pupils falling into the category of being missing from education, currently, in Wales, there is a requirement under the Education (Pupil Information) Wales Regulations 2004 and the Education (School Records) Regulations 1989 for schools to maintain data on pupils who are on their roll and to pass that data to the receiving school when a child leaves.

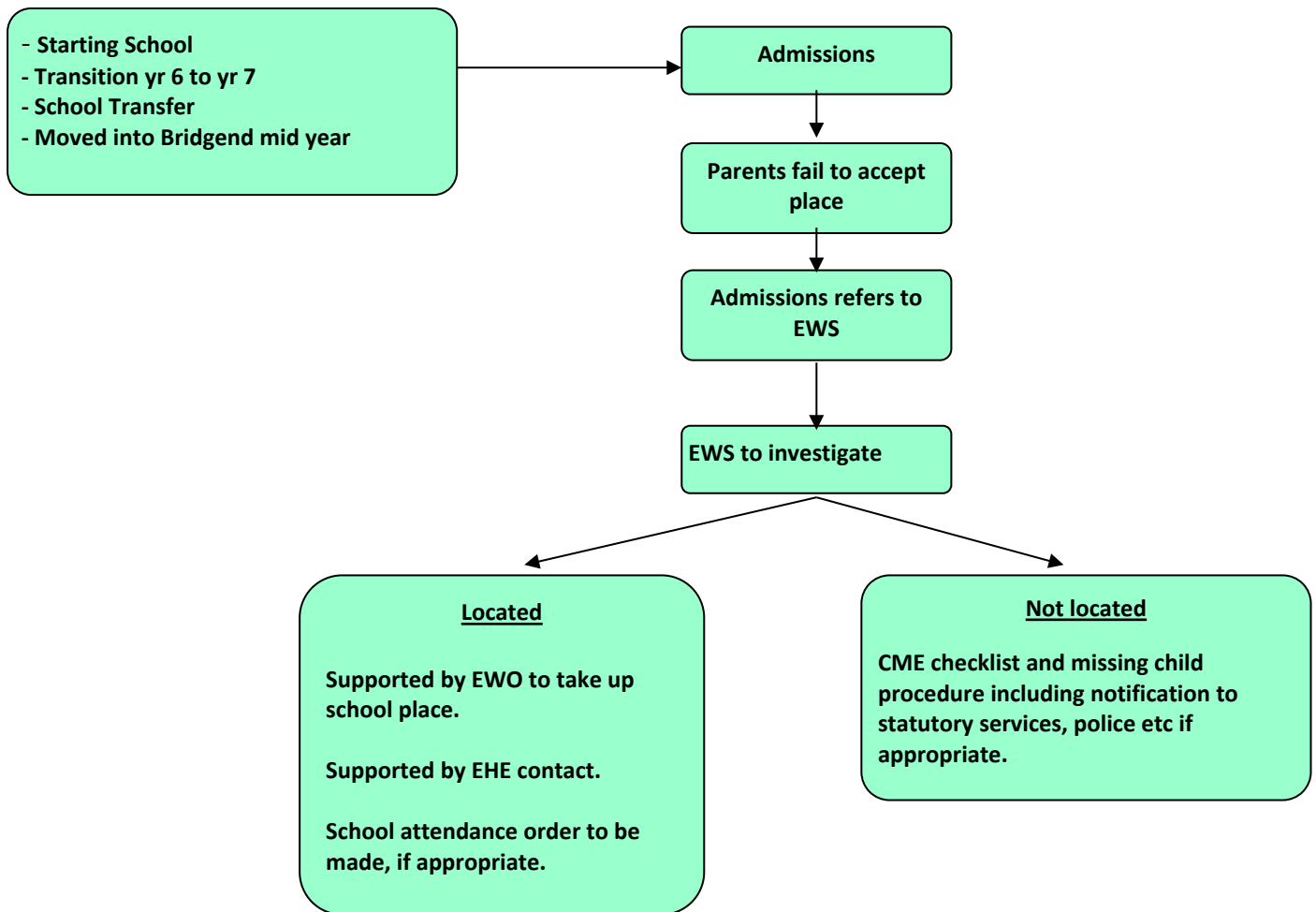
All maintained schools in Wales have a statutory responsibility to use the Common Transfer System (CTS) for England and Wales to transfer specific information electronically, via the 'school2school – s2s' website when a pupil joins or leaves a school.

Procedures for Schools

The following procedures should apply:

- if the destination school is known then an electronic Common Transfer File (CTF) **must** be sent to the receiving school via s2s within fifteen school days of the pupil being removed from the school register. Similarly, if the head teacher of the previous school receives a request for a pupil's CTF it must be sent within fifteen school days of receiving the request.
- when a child leaves a Bridgend school without notice being given by the parent or without the school being advised by the parent the school should promptly notify the Education Welfare Service. Should the child be on the Child Protection Register or the school have particular child protection concerns about the child the school should immediately notify Safeguarding and Family Support Services.
- if efforts to identify the child's whereabouts prove unsuccessful then the school, in consultation with the LA, should remove the child's name from its roll and create a "lost pupil" common transfer file (CTF) with **XXXXXXX** as the destination. This lost CTF should be immediately uploaded onto the s2s secure site where it will be held in the Lost Pupils Database.
- when a pupil joins a Bridgend school without that school receiving a CTF from the child's previous school then the receiving school should contact Learner Support Services on 01656 642656 or pupilservices@bridgend.gov.uk and request that a search be made of the Lost Pupils Database for a matching record using names or former names, date of birth or gender.
- should a Bridgend school which has sent a lost child CTF to the Lost Pupils Database be contacted by a school at which the child has subsequently registered, they should direct them to the Lost Pupil area where their LA can download the original CTF from the Lost Pupils Database. They **should not** create a new CTF and send it directly to the new school.
- when a Bridgend pupil leaves a school and it is confirmed as being in the independent sector, electively home educated or at a destination incapable of receiving a CTF then the school should place on the s2s website with the code **MMMMMMMM** as the destination.

Children Missing Education at Start of Education/ School Transfer/Transition KS2 to KS3



Elective Home Education

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive a suitable full time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996). Some parents choose to educate their children at home.

Parents **must inform the school in writing** of their decision and it is the duty of school to inform the Local Authority immediately. Notification should be sent to:

**Learner Support Services
Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridgend
CF31 4WB** and copied to the **Elective Home Education, Inclusion Service, Bridgend.**

The child's name should then be removed from the school roll and recorded as home educated. A CTF should be created by the school using **MMMMMMMM** as the destination.

Summary of Actions

The Local Authority will:

- raise awareness of the Children Missing Education protocols and processes by:
 - contacting Senior Managers in all agencies, to explain roles and responsibilities.
 - disseminating the CME guidance via the Local Authority website, and to schools and in other form of notification if needed.
- ensure that all Bridgend schools are properly supported to meet these responsibilities.
- oversee the audit of school compliance with legislation relating to maintenance of registers.
- implement a range of preventative measures to ensure the reduction of the likelihood of children and young people missing their education which will also support the National Behaviour and Attendance Review recommendations regarding early intervention and appropriate support.

Schools will:

- ensure that they are meeting their statutory responsibilities by using the Common Transfer System to transfer specific information electronically, via the 'school2school – s2s' website when a pupil joins or leaves a school.
- ensure that when a pupil moves that destinations are recorded on their SIMS database and if unknown confirm that the Education Welfare Officer has been notified.
- work with their Education Welfare Officer to ensure more consistent referral processes for those children missing education and those at risk through their non-attendance.

Tracking and Cross Border Working

If a child goes missing from a Bridgend school, but lives in another authority, and the school fails to locate the pupil, the school will contact the EWO to contact their counterparts in other Local Authorities. If a child is missing, and there are child protection concerns then the appropriate safeguarding team or the Assessment team must be contacted.

Information and Data Sharing.

Sharing information is vital for early intervention to ensure that all children receive the necessary services to protect them from harm, abuse or neglect and offending behaviour. All professionals have a duty of a responsibility and duty of care to share information, particularly where there are child protection concerns. There should not be any barriers to exchanging information when this is apparent.

Information sharing falls under the Fair Processing Notice (Privacy Notice) and Education (Pupils Information Wales) Regulations 2004 as amended in 2007. Secure systems are used to share personal information, and if further information is needed, the S2S system would be used.

Contact List

Officer and Department	Telephone	Email Address
CME Officer Group Manager – Inclusion Service/School Improvement Michelle Hatcher	01656 815258	Michelle.Hatcher@bridgend.gov.uk
Lead EWO Charlotte Williams	01656 815276	Charlotte.williams@bridgend.gov.uk
Group Manager Integrated working and Family Support Mark Lewis	01656 642679	Mark.lewis@bridgend.gov.uk
Group Manager - School Improvement Sue Roberts/Paul Wolstenholme	01656 754892	Susan.Roberts2@bridgend.gov.uk Paul.Wolstenholme@bridgend.gov.uk
Group Manager – Youth Offending Team Caroline Dyer	01656 815655	Caroline.dyer@bridgend.gov.uk
Group Manager – Knowledge Management Robin Davies	01656 754881	Robin.davies@bridgend.gov.uk
Group Manager – 14-19 John Fabes	01656 642663	John.fabes@bridgend.gov.uk jfabes@cardiff.gov.uk
LAC Co-ordinator Bev Jones	01656 815395	Susan.b.jones@bridgend.gov.uk
EHE Co-ordinator Virginia Richards	01656 815227	Virginia.richards@bridgend.gov.uk
Child Protection Coordinator for Education Sam Jones	01656 815270	Samantha.jones@bridgend.gov.uk
Karen Ferri Specialist Teacher/ Travellers	01656 815236	Karen.ferri@bridgend.gov.uk

**Movement of Children/Young People
Referral Form**

Please return to: Learner Support Services, Level 2 Civic Offices CF31 4WB

Dear Colleague

The children/young people below are reported to be missing from education. I would be grateful if you would make enquiries to establish if they are now residing within your area and advise me accordingly.

Name	d.o.b.	Last school Attended	Previous Address
Parent/Primary Carer			
New Address (if known)			

Name:

Agency:

Date:

Appendix 2

Notification to the Local Authority of a Child Missing Education

This form should be completed by any professional or agency undertaking an assessment or being aware of a child of compulsory school age who does not appear to be attending a school

PART 1 CHILD(REN)'S DETAILS

Name	DOB	Gender	Ethnicity

Address:

Tel

Postcode

Parent/Carer Name:

Relationship to child:

Previous address
(if new to area)

To the best of your knowledge is the child: (please ✓)

On the Child Protection Register

Refugee/Asylum Seeker

Looked After

Reason for referral:

Child(ren) not registered at school

Children(ren) registered but not attending

Any additional information about the child's previous educational provision: (*past or present:*

e.g. date of last education provision, known attendance difficulties etc)

Are any other agencies known to be involved with the child concerned? *Please give details:*

Referrer's Name:

Designation

Address:

Tel No:

Email:

Reason for involvement of professional making the referral and any other relevant information:

Date that child became known to agency as missing education:

Please return this form to: **Learner Support Services, Level 2 Civic Offices CF31 4WB**
(01656) 642629

Tel:

Date received.....

Appendix 3

<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150114-keeping-learners-safe.pdf>