

Children's Services

Guidance on

Children Missing from Education (CME)

3rd Edition

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Section 1 - Introduction and Purpose of this document

1.1 Definition of Children Missing from Education:

- known to have resided in Barking and Dagenham, or attended a school here, who have moved away from their last known address, and their whereabouts are unconfirmed, or unknown (including those children reported to have moved abroad either to live, or study) or,
- known to be residing in Barking and Dagenham's boundary and are believed not to be in receipt of education or,
- whose parents claim to be providing elective home education but, as a result of the local authority's informal enquiries, are believed not to be in receipt of suitable and efficient education.

Children missing from education may not have normal access to services, safeguarding procedures and health care. They are more likely than others to suffer harm, or neglect because they may lack the routines and disciplines of school and home life and because they do not receive supervision and monitoring from professionals. They are likely to have diminished life opportunities because of missing positive educational and social experiences.

The purpose of this document is to:

- 1) limit the possibilities of children becoming missing from education and,
- 2) ensure agencies work together, sharing information to identify, locate, safeguard children missing from education.
- 3) ensure procedures are in place for children not in education to access an education provision as soon as possible.

This guidance document:

- defines 'children missing from education' and the terminology that is used;
- brings together, for Barking and Dagenham practitioners, the law; government guidance and procedures on children missing from education;
- explains the role and responsibilities of the Children Missing Education Officer, and of other agencies involved;
- explain the governance of this area of work, including how information on children missing from education is collected and disseminated.

1.2 The legal requirement for children to be in education:

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 sets out the duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable —*

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and*
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,*
either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

*the term "parent" includes carers and legal guardians.

Children are of compulsory school from the term after their fifth birthday until the last Friday before the last Monday in June of the academic year in which they achieve the age of 16. This guidance document is for children of compulsory school age.

Section 2 – Clarifying who is not CME

The following groups are **not** included in the definition of **Children Missing from Education**:

2.1 Irregular, or non-attendance at school

Schools and education provisions are primarily responsible for managing the attendance of children at their establishments. They must have a published attendance policy that sets out how they will manage the attendance of children who are registered at the school, especially procedures for those whose attendance is irregular, or have stopped attending completely.

When school-based interventions are unsuccessful in bringing about an improvement, schools are required to escalate the matter, either for social care support for the family or legal proceedings.

2.2 Non-school attendance caused by long term illness or injury (and the involvement of the Home Tuition Service)

If a child is absent from school, due to a long-term illness or injury, the school must ask the parent to provide documentary medical information that states that the child is unfit to attend school. The school may consider asking their School Nurse to provide advice.

If the absence is authorised, the school must consider how the child will be educated. This can be achieved by referring the child to the borough's Home Tuition Service.

Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 requires Local Authorities to provide education to children who are prevented from attending school due to illness or **unavoidable cause**.

The Home Tuition Service is not to be confused with Elective Home Education (also known as Education Otherwise than at School)

2.3 Elective Home Education (EHE)

Parents may, by law, choose to home educate, either through privately provided services, or (more usually) by themselves. The local authority may undertake informal enquiries to satisfy itself that suitable and efficient education is being provided. If it is, then the child is not considered to be missing from education.

Also see the borough's webpages and policy on Elective Home Education:

<https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/residents/schools-and-learning/home-education/home-education-and-the-local-authority/>

2.4 Pupils not in full time education

These are children who are on roll at a school but are not receiving full time education on site.

Since the spring term 2014, Ofsted has required local authorities to maintain a central database of children not in full time education. This database is held within the borough's Education Inclusion Team and holds information on children who are:

- on a reduced timetable. This may be part of a short-term integration plan, or respite for the child;
- attending supervised off-site education for part of the school week;
- attending supervised off-site education full time (but remain on the school roll).

All off-site education must be properly organised and supervised by qualified staff.

2.5 Raise in Participation Age (RPA)

From 1 September 2014, all children must now (after they have finished compulsory education) continue in full time education, training, or employment (with a training element attached to that employment) until the end of the academic year in which they attain the age of 18. RPA is not a form of compulsory school age and legal measures for irregular school attendance do not apply.

2.6 Excluded Pupils

Fixed term

Children who are given a fixed term exclusion, remain on the school roll and, if the exclusion lasts for more than five days, will receive education off site until their exclusion period is over and they return to their school.

Permanent Exclusion

Children who are permanently excluded are provided with education by Mayesbrook Park School.

2.7 Alternative Education Provisions (AEPs)

For some children, school is not the best setting for their education. Instead, they are referred to an AEP.

AEPs include:

Mayesbrook Park Campus	For children who are excluded from school permanently or for a fixed term of more than 5 days (Day 6 Provision).
Erkenwald Campus	For children of a timid nature who may have experienced bullying or have a fear of attending school.
Seabrook Campus (Positive Returns)	For children identified as requiring respite from the school they attend. This is a 6-week placement.
Barking and Dagenham College	Accessed by referral from a school or the Flexi-Learning Programme
Flexi-Learning Programme	Accessed by referral from the Admissions Team; Fair Access Panel or from a school

Schools can refer children, on their roll, direct to AEPs.

The Fair Access Panel (FAP) will decide if a child, who is not already on roll at an LBBD school, should be referred to an AEP.

Section 3 – Children being removed from the roll of a school

3.1 Children being removed from roll with no known education destination

The vast majority of children leaving school have a known education destination. Such a movement is known as a transfer. Schools use the School to School (S2S) system to notify each other of, and to track, transfers.

However, some children leave school with no known education destination. These children are at very high risk of becoming lost to the education system.

Some children have an increased risk of becoming missing from education in certain circumstances. They are children:

- who live in Barking and Dagenham but have left, or stopped attending, a school in another Local Authority;
- returning from secure accommodation with no school place;
- living in temporary accommodation;
- in families that move home frequently;
- in families that leave the country for long periods of time.

At transition points in their lives:

- who fail to access a school place when moving to a new area;
- who fail to transfer at the cohort stage i.e. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Year 1; Year 2 to Year 3; Year 6 to Year 7.
- who have been withdrawn from school by the parent/carer from the education system who are not providing suitable and efficient home education.

Or when they belong to certain social groups:

- from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller backgrounds;
- from asylum seeking, or refugee families

The CME Officer must be diligent when tracking children, to ensure that no child is lost to the system.

It is necessary for the CME Officer to establish and maintain good contacts with key staff in many agencies and across many authorities in the country.

Appendix 1: Child leaving school with no Education Destination flowchart

It is imperative that all agencies ask the key question of the families they are working with: "Where do the children receive education"? Any queries or concerns should be discussed with:

Vanessa Radke, the CME Officer
Email: accessattendance@lbbd.gov.uk
Phone: 020 8227 2151

3.2 Removing a child's name from the roll of a school

This is a key moment when children can become missing from education. It is essential that the correct procedures are followed when removing a child from the roll of a school. Not only can there be legal ramifications for incorrectly removing a child's name from the school roll, there are also significant safeguarding issues.

Important: Children on roll at Barking and Dagenham schools can only be removed from the roll by following the:

“Legal and borough procedures for adding or removing a child's name from the roll of a school. A technical guidance document for schools in Barking and Dagenham”.

Section 4 - Role of the CME Officer

4.1 Tracking and locating

The guidance on Information Sharing to Improve Services for Children 2003 (formerly DCSF now DfE) states that all local authorities must have 'a named individual responsible for receiving information about children of compulsory school age who may not be receiving a suitable education at school or otherwise, and for brokering support for them through the most appropriate agencies'.

All Local Authorities have a named person who is responsible for locating children who are missing from education. The DfE maintains a list of CME officers.

Section 436A of the 1996 Education Act places a duty on local authorities to have in place arrangements to enable them to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school.

All CME enquiries are recorded on databases held within the Education Statutory Services Team.

4.2 Partner agencies and systems used to locate children missing from education

The table below shows the main agencies, and LBBB services, used by the CME Officer to track and locate children:

Databases	Maintained by
Synergy	Admissions
Key to Success	Department for Education
Rio	Health
LiquidLogic	Social Care
LBBB agencies	
School staff and the school attendance officers they employ	
Tenancy Audit Team	
Admissions	
National Agencies	
United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA): Child protection cases only.	
HMRC (Child Benefit)	

4.3 Children residing in this borough who appear to be missing from education

When a child, resident in Barking and Dagenham, is believed to be missing from education any agency or individual in contact with the child is expected to inform the CME Officer. The CME Officer will then seek to establish the child's educational status:

- If the child is on roll at a school, but not attending, the CME Officer will inform the school, or the school's attendance officer, of the enquiry.
- If the child requires a school place, then the CME Officer will assist the family in making an application to Admissions.
- If the child is being home educated, then the CME Officer will inform the EHE Officer.
- If the CME Officer is unable to establish if the child is being educated, the nearest school to the home address with a vacancy in the child's year group will be allocated and the parent(s) will be invited to enrol their child.
- If the child is not enrolled a notice will be sent, by the Local Authority, asking the parent(s) to enrol the child or provide information that the child is receiving suitable education elsewhere.
- If the child remains out of education, a School Attendance Order (SAO) will be instituted against the parent(s).

See Appendix 2: Child in borough and missing from education flowchart

4.4 CME and the Admissions Team

It is essential that there is close work between the CME Officer and the Admissions Team to ensure children are not lost to the education system at two key points:

- 1) Applying for a school place. The CME Officer will provide advice and assistance to parents of children missing from education to help them apply to Admissions for a school place.
- 2) Enrolling at the allocated school. It is imperative that Admissions and B&D schools work together to ensure that children allocated to a school are correctly enrolled. The process is captured in **Appendix 3: Ensuring attendance of children allocated to a school flowchart**

Schools must inform the Admissions Team, within 5 days, of every child they enrol. (*Section 5, The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016*)

4.5 CME and children who have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)

The CME Officer will work closely with the Education Health Care Team (EHCT) regarding any children with an EHCP who is not in education.

It is important for the EHCT to inform the Admissions Team of any child moving into the borough that has an EHCP.

Here is the link to the Local Offer: <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/local-offer>

Section 5 – Safeguarding and Children Missing from Education

Children missing from education are at risk of all forms of child abuse. They are also at risk of underachieving, educationally, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). The longer children remain ‘hidden’ the greater chance they will be at risk of being exposed to criminal activity, antisocial behaviour, trafficking and/or sexual exploitation and other dangers. It is crucial that all agencies work together to quickly establish the whereabouts of these children.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities in relation to their education functions; the governing bodies of maintained schools and the governing bodies of further education institutions (which include sixth-form colleges) to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are either pupils at a school or who are students under 18 years of age attending further education institutions. The same duty applies to independent schools (which include Academies/free schools) by virtue of regulations made under section 157 of this Act.

If any person is concerned that a child is at risk of significant harm, they must inform Social Care by contacting either contacting the allocated social worker for the child, or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to discuss submitting a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF):

<https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/report-a-serious-concern-about-a-child-marf-for-professionals>

5.1 Children in local authority care

The education of children in the care of this Local Authority, is managed by the Virtual School and Social Care. All children of compulsory school age will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP).

The Virtual School contacts:

Kathleen Adams (Monday to Wednesday)

Kathleen.Adams@lbbd.gov.uk

020 8227 2691

Tricia Butler (Monday, Tuesday and Thursday)

Tricia.Butler@lbbd.gov.uk

020 8227 2075

5.2 Police and Children Missing from Education

If a police officer investigates any incident involving a child, this will generate a ‘Merlin’ report that is sent to the MASH. The MASH will then contact the Children Missing Education Officer if it becomes apparent that the child is missing from education.

The police will be informed if a parent refuses to, or avoids, providing information regarding the child’s whereabouts.

5.3 Child Exploitation

If anyone is concerned that a child may be at risk of exploitation then they must contact Social Care to find out if that child has an allocated social worker to liaise with.

If the child is not known to Social Care then the MASH should be contacted (see 5.0 above) to discuss the concern and, if necessary, a MARF should be submitted detailing the

concerns, including the names of any children who the child associates with as they may also be at risk.

5.4 Radicalisation

Parents, schools and professionals must be vigilant about children being radicalised, which could lead to them planning to leave this country. Any such concerns should be reported to the Police, by telephoning 101 (999 in an emergency) and a Multi-Agency Referral Form should be submitted immediately to the MASH.

Government guidance on preventing radicalisation can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty>

5.5 Forced marriage

Forced marriage may be associated with Children Missing Education. It is where someone is forced to marry another against his/her will. This is different from an arranged marriage where both bride and groom (who are of the legal age to marry) are part of the decision-making process and consent freely to marriage.

Forced marriage is a violation of a person's Human Rights and is regarded in the UK as a form of domestic violence and, in the case of a child, child abuse.

If a young person in Barking and Dagenham discloses that they are, or fear, being forced into marriage their concerns should be taken seriously and the police should be alerted. A Multi-Agency Referral Form should be submitted immediately to Social Care.

Here is a link to government advice on Forced Marriages:

<https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage>

5.6 Children who may have been trafficked

Trafficking of children is a form of human trafficking. It is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receiving of children for the purpose of all types of exploitation. Such children are unlikely to be in receipt of education and may well be moved from place to place, so presenting as 'missing' at a number of levels.

Below is the link to government advice on Child Trafficking:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-who-may-have-been-trafficked-practice-guidance>

The NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC) can be contacted for advice between 9.30am and 4.30pm - Monday to Friday on 0808 800 5000.

5.7 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is any procedure that's designed to alter or injure a girl's (or woman's) genital organs for non-medical reasons. It's sometimes known as 'female circumcision' or 'female genital cutting'. It's mostly carried out on young girls. FGM is illegal in the UK. It's also illegal to take a British national or permanent resident abroad for FGM or to help someone trying to do this.

If you know or think someone may be in immediate danger contact the Police on 999. You should also contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office if she's already been taken abroad:

Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

Telephone: 020 7008 1500 From overseas: +44 (0)20 7008 1500

Here is the link to government advice on FGM: <https://www.gov.uk/search?q=FGM>

5.8 Missing Children

When children go missing from home or local authority care, they must be reported to the police.

Children who are at risk of exploitation or radicalisation are more at risk of going missing.

Missing children are unlikely to attend their education provision. Therefore, schools and attendance officers must explore further when a child is absent from school without notification by the parent or carer, as s/he may also have gone missing.

Sometimes, parents do not report to the police that their child missing, so it is imperative that schools undertake robust enquiries to try and confirm the reason for the absence.

Children at risk of forced marriage or FGM are not going to be reported missing to the police but may stop attending school for a while. Schools should be especially vigilant about absences linked to children leaving the country (including children being returned to the country of their parents' origin to be treated for medical or mental health reasons).

CME cases will be referred to MASH if the family are considered to have gone missing and this constitutes a safeguarding concern.

Any safeguarding concerns, linked to children being absent from school, should be discussed with the MASH team.

Section 6 – Governance of CME

6.1 Performance indicators (P.Is)

These are held within the Education Statutory Services Team and relate to the number of open and closed CME cases per month of children residing in, and for those that have left, this authority. These P.Is are reviewed by managers each month.

6.2 *Archiving of long-term CME cases

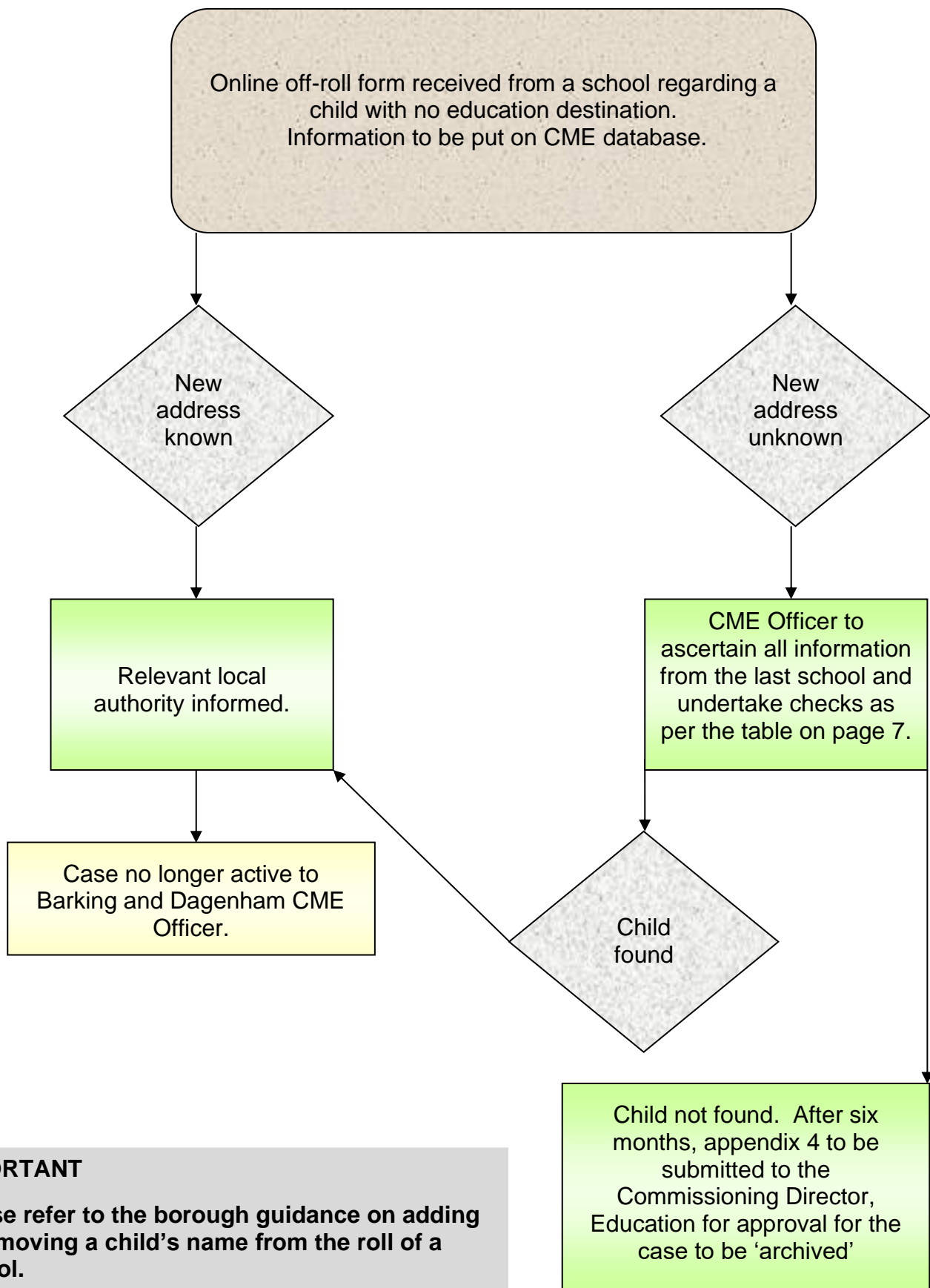
Cases that are open for 6 months or more are classed as long-term CME.

When the CME Officer has exhausted all avenues of investigation, these cases are presented to the Commissioning Director, Education using the **Long-term CME case – ‘archiving’ form** ([Appendix 4](#))

*Cases remain open but dormant, as new information about the child may come to our attention in the future.

Appendix 1

Child leaving school with no education destination

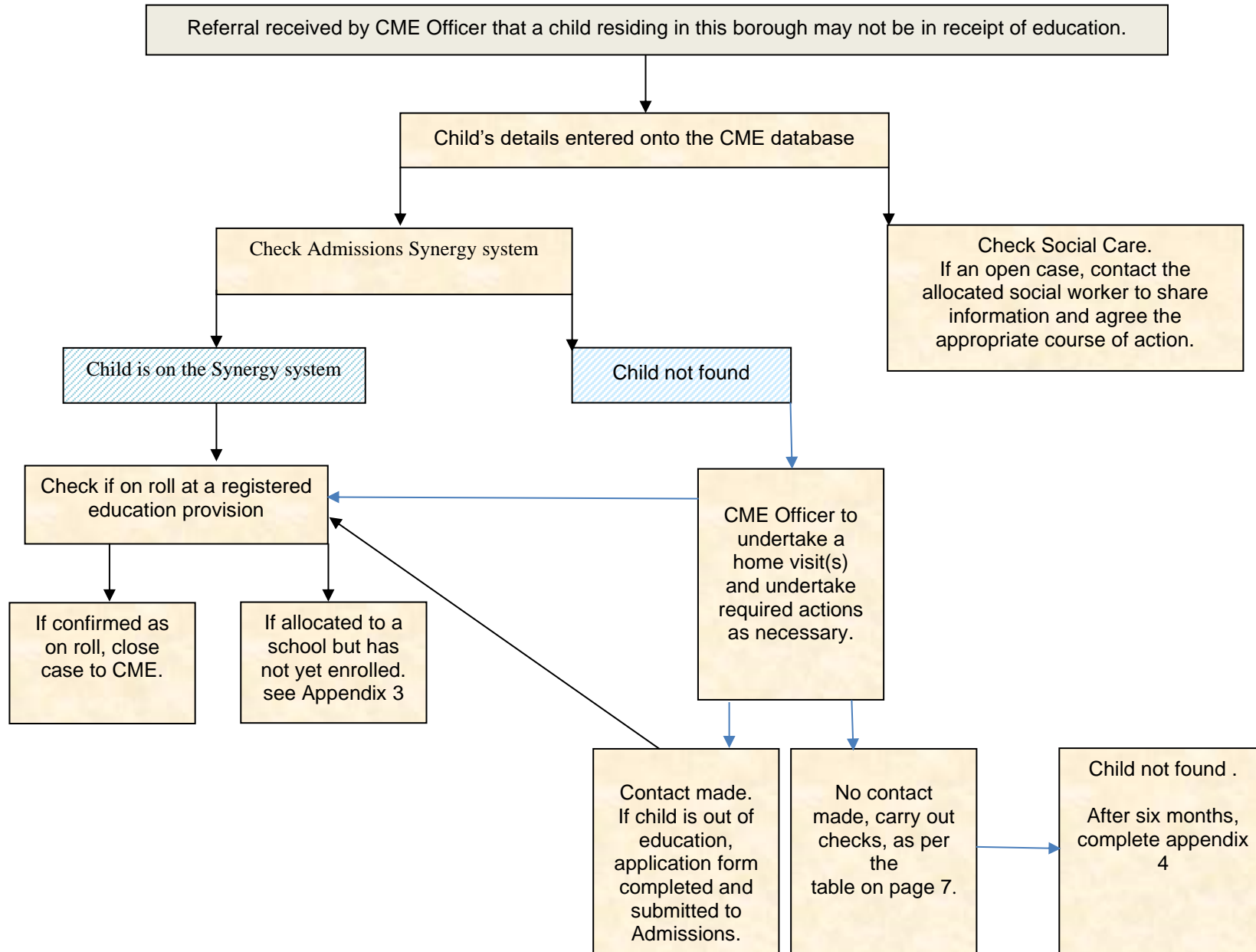


IMPORTANT

Please refer to the borough guidance on adding or removing a child's name from the roll of a school.

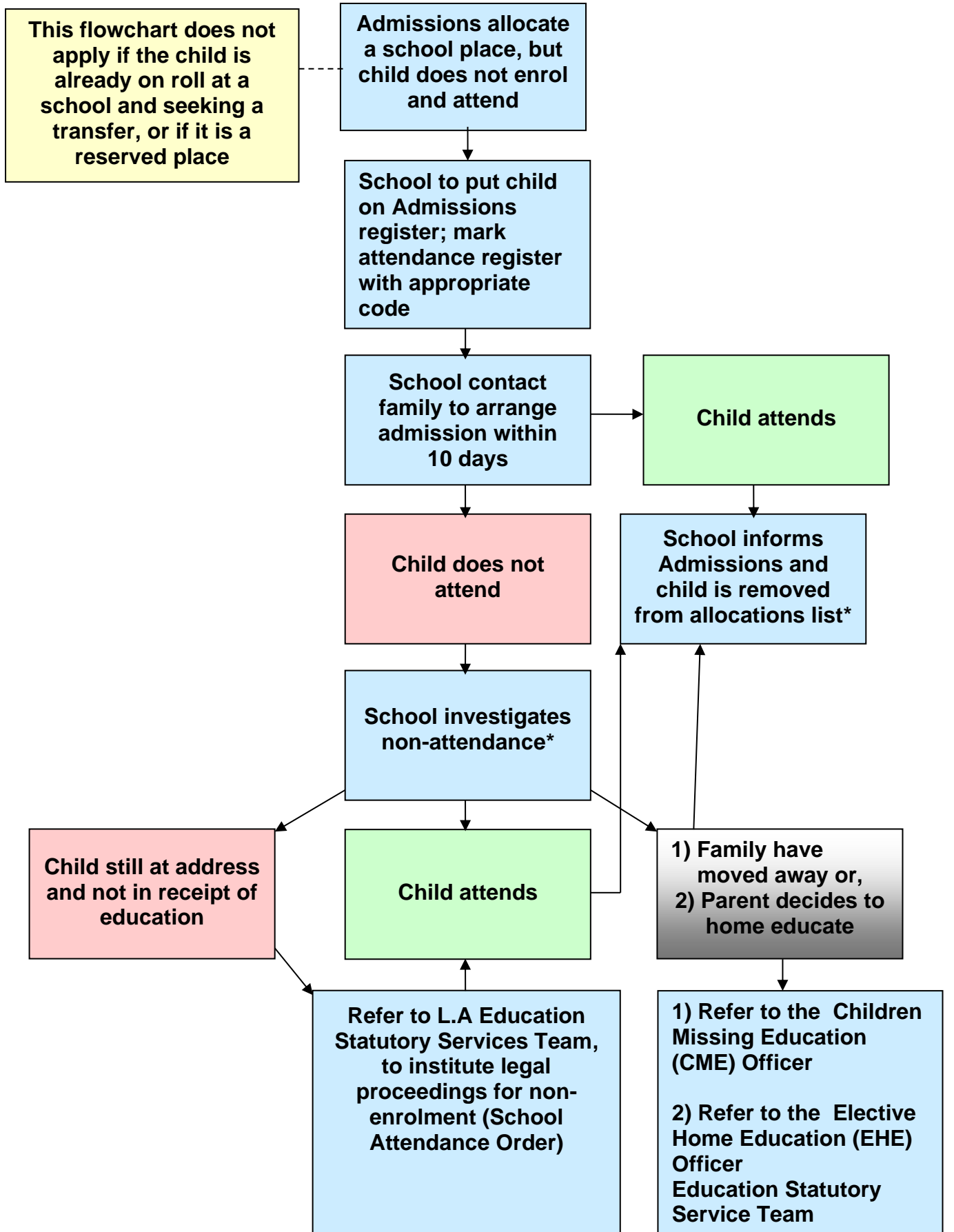
Appendix 2

Child in borough and missing from education flowchart



Appendix 3

Ensuring Attendance of Children Allocated to a School



*Child stays on Admissions' allocation list until on roll at a school or confirmed as CME or EHE. If child is on list for 20 days – Admissions Officer to escalate to Admissions Manager for investigation.

Appendix 4 – Long-term CME case - ‘archiving’ form

Name of child:.....

DOB:.....Year group.....

Last known address:.....

Residency status:.....

School last attended.....Date last attended:.....

Date case opened to CME:.....Referred from:.....

Databases	Date last checked	Outcome
Synergy (Admissions)		
Key to Success (DfE)		
Liquid Logic (Social Care)		
LBBB agencies		
Tenancy Audit Team		
Early Years and Foundation Service (transfer to Reception).		
National Agencies		
United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA): Child protection cases only		
Child Benefit Agency		
National Health Service (NHS) Rio system		
Check with last school attended (if applicable)		
Date of CME Officer’s last visit (if in-borough address)		

Summary of CME Officer intervention:

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CME officer: Vanessa Radke. Signature.....Date:.....

Line manager: Greg Vaughan. Signature.....Date:.....

Commissioning Director Education: Jane Hargreaves.

SignatureDate:.....