

CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

Guidance for Schools and Support Services

This policy relates to Children Missing Education (CME) who are defined as: children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at a school.

**Education Participation Advisory Service (EPAS)
Attendance and EHE Advisory Team
Solihull MBC**

Reviewed October 2024

Children Missing Education Guidance for Schools and Professionals

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Children Missing Education (CME)

1. Introduction

For the purposes of this policy Children Missing Education (CME) are defined as children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at a school. Children who are receiving education otherwise, i.e. Elective Home Education (EHE) are not CME.

“All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local Authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School and college staff should follow the school’s or college’s procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.” [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education)

Going missing from education is damaging to the well-being of a child and potentially puts the child at increased risk of harm. This guidance should be used in conjunction with appropriate safeguarding best practice. When a child’s safety is deemed to be at risk of harm then actions should be taken without delay.

Schools should, work with the Attendance and EHE Advisory Team to establish the whereabouts of a child before removing them from roll. Every school has a named officer to support with this role.

Persistent Absence or poor attendance of a child is a school matter and is not covered by this guidance. Refer to [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) for matters pertaining to attendance.

Definition of ‘schools’ within this guidance

The definition of a school, for the purposes of this guidance relates to all Schools, Academies, UTCs, Free Schools and Independent Schools.

National Standards

The Children Act 2004 placed a duty on local authorities to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving education. The purpose of this duty is to make sure that children missing from education are quickly identified and effective tracking systems are put in place to ensure that action is taken. Statutory guidance for local authorities can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education. This document reflects the new duties on Schools and Local Authorities.

“Suitable education” in relation to a child means efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2024 set out the grounds on which a pupil of compulsory school age may be deleted from the attendance register. [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/1000/contents/part-2)

Schools in Solihull should refer to Solihull’s Local Authority “Removing Pupils from Roll Guidance for Schools/ Academies October 2024” document to ensure the correct procedure is followed.

Schools should note that a Head Teacher can be prosecuted for removing a child from roll without complying with the pupil registration regulations (see Section 434(6) Education Act, 1996). <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/434>

2. Children at Risk of Going Missing From Education

Some children and young people, often the most vulnerable, are at greater risk of going missing from education. These include:

- looked after children / children who are privately fostered
- children moving out of independent schools
- children living in women's refuges
- young runaways
- young carers
- children from transient families
- teenage mothers
- young offenders
- children permanently excluded from school
- children of homeless families, including those living in temporary accommodation
- children with long term medical or emotional problems
- unaccompanied asylum seekers / children of refugees or asylum-seeking families
- children from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller background

Children missing from education are at much greater risk of:

- physical harm
- neglect
- sexual exploitation
- becoming involved in crime
- demonstrating anti-social behaviour
- abusing drugs and alcohol
- being illegally employed
- forced marriages
- honour based violence
- radicalisation
- modern day slavery/trafficking
- female genital mutilation

3. Education Participation Advisory Service (EPAS) in Solihull

CME and Pupil tracking are overseen by the EPAS. The Service can be contacted in the following ways:

CME Referrals -

Email: cme@solihull.gov.uk

Telephone: 0121 704 6191

Pupil tracking enquiries -

Email: pupiltracking@solihull.gov.uk

Telephone: 0121 704 6171 or 6131

EPAS officers will work with schools to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear, appropriate checks are undertaken and advice is adhered to in relation to deletions from the school roll.

4. The Role of the Attendance and EHE Advisory Team for CME

The role of the Attendance and EHE Advisory Team in Solihull is to ensure all children have access to a suitable full-time education. In carrying out this function they will seek to identify children without provision (CME), make enquiries to locate the child and if the child is still in Solihull, seek to engage the family in the process of getting the child back onto a school roll and attending school.

Where they do not have an address for the child and investigations suggest that the child is living in another local authority, the Attendance and EHE Advisory Team will inform the appropriate team in the new local authority so that they can try to locate and engage the family.

When the whereabouts of the child is known and the family are living in Solihull at the point of referral, the Attendance and EHE Advisory Team will focus on getting the child back onto a school roll. If the family are living in another town or city, that local authority will take on this responsibility.

If it seems that the family have left the UK they will aim to obtain some independent verification of this from a school or similar professional agency in the new country if this is possible.

The Attendance and EHE Advisory Team track children by carrying out home visits, consulting various search engines and making telephone enquiries to; neighbours, relatives, partner agencies, new schools, other local authorities, other countries, benefits agencies and the border agency.

When another local authority believes that a child has moved to Solihull and may be missing from education, they contact our Attendance and EHE Advisory Team and the team will investigate further.

Pupils who have stopped attending but have not moved are non-attenders NOT CME; they must remain on the school roll and be dealt with through school attendance processes. If you are concerned you can contact your named EPAS officer to obtain advice and guidance.

5. Identification of a Child Missing Education (CME) in Solihull

Over the course of any academic year many children will move into Solihull and schools may be approached for a place by the parent. Schools should direct the family to the School Admissions Team to complete an application form.

Schools should also take the following information from parents as part of this process:

- Name of the child
- DOB
- Current and last known address
- Telephone contacts
- Names of parents or carers
- Names of any known siblings
- Name of prior school

This information should then be passed to the Attendance and EHE Advisory Team using a Notification of a CME in Solihull Form (Appendix A) so that these children can be tracked. Checks are routinely carried out before contacting parents or carers, so it is always better to advise us if you are in any doubt.

Schools should ensure that relevant office staff are fully aware of this guidance and the information that they need to gather from parents.

Anyone who knows or suspects a child is missing from education, who is residing in Solihull and is not on a school roll or educated otherwise, should let the Attendance and EHE Advisory Team know straight away by completing a Notification of a CME in Solihull Form (Appendix A).

The Attendance and EHE Advisory Team will liaise with schools, other Local Authorities, other council services and use council data to identify, monitor and track children into education.

6. Reporting a child that has gone missing from education and is on a school roll.

All Schools have the same responsibilities in regard to locating and reporting children missing education.

If there are concerns about the welfare or safety of a pupil, who is leaving or has left a school, the schools designated safeguarding lead person should discuss/ refer to the MASH Team on:

- Tel: 0121 788 4333 (Monday to Thursday 8.45am - 5.20pm, Friday 8.45am - 4.30pm).
- Tel: 0121 605 6060 (If you are calling out of working hours, evenings, weekends or bank holidays)
- In an emergency always call 999.
- www.safeguardingsolihull.org.uk/lscp/multi-agency-procedures-and-practice-guidance/
- If the child is subject to Child in Need or Child Protection, the Social Worker should be informed immediately.

For a Child Looked After (CLA) the Solihull Virtual School for Looked After Children should be contacted on 0121 704 8622.

In addition to making contact with the above services, schools should be making reasonable enquiries to establish the child's location at the same time.

During the first 10 days of absence, you must make reasonable attempts to locate the child and facilitate his/her safe return to school.

School's Reasonable Enquiries to find the child can include:

- Checking with all members of staff who the child/young person may have had contact with
- Checking with the pupil's friends, siblings, and known relatives
- Making telephone calls to any numbers held/identified including emergency contacts
- Sending a letter to the last known address
- Carrying out home visits at different times to check who is at the home address and other known addresses, and check with neighbours and known friends.
- Asking for the address the family is moving to.
- Checking which school a child is expected to attend.
- Requesting copies of flight information.

This list is a guide and is not an exhaustive list.

If any child is absent for 10 consecutive school days, no reasonable explanation has been provided and the child's whereabouts are still unknown the school should make a referral to the Attendance and EHE Advisory Team to request assistance in tracking the pupil. Schools must complete the 'School Request for Support with Reasonable Enquiries' form (Appendix B). This referral should detail the efforts already made by the school.

Completing the School Request for Support with Reasonable Enquiries Form (Appendix B)

This form should be completed by a member of staff with access to the following information:

- Pupil details
- Attendance information
- Information provided by the family
- Information about all enquiries made

It is vitally important that as much information as possible is included so that the Attendance and EHE Advisory team can make appropriate enquiries. If you have letters or emails of communication from the family you must send copies with the referral.

The Attendance and EHE Advisory team will, on receipt of a completed School Request for Support with Reasonable Enquiries Form:

- Try all known telephone numbers.
- Carry out a home visit.
- If applicable, check council tax, contact Housing, Health, Social Care, Welfare Benefits or Police, requesting any information they may have as to the child's whereabouts
- Contact partner agencies where concerns regarding the child's welfare and safety exist e.g. the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Contact other Local Authorities if there is information as to the potential whereabouts of the child, asking them to make reasonable enquiries
- Contact the Local Authority admissions team to establish if a further school application has been made

Outcome of the Reasonable Enquiries Made by School and the Attendance and EHE Advisory team:

- If the location of the child is established and the parent wishes the child to remain at their current school, it should be dealt with as a normal attendance issue.
- If the parent wishes to transfer to another school, and they still reside within reasonable distance, the child should remain on roll and attend until a new place is secured and confirmed.
- If after, and no less than, 20 continuous school days the School **and** the Attendance and EHE Advisory team has not been able to establish the whereabouts of the child and their family, the School and the Attendance and EHE Advisory team need to agree whether the child can be removed from roll.

If the child is removed from the school roll, the school must upload the Child's Common Transfer File (CTF) to the DfE School to School (S2S) Lost Pupil Database and submit a Removal from Roll form to pupiltracking@solihull.gov.uk immediately (refer to Removal from Roll Guidance October 2024, for the form).

When deleting a pupil from the school roll, schools should write to the last known address to inform parents of the decision, signposting them to their home local authority's school admissions team and advising them that they must reapply for a school place.

Child removed from roll, whereabouts still unknown:

Once it has been agreed that the child is removed from the school roll, the child will then be added to the CME database.

The Attendance and EHE Advisory team will continue to undertake further, reasonable enquiries until the child's whereabouts are identified and will close the case once this process is completed. A record of these cases will be kept.

Following further enquiries, if the child's whereabouts remain unknown **and** there are no concerns, the case will be closed to the Attendance and EHE Advisory team. A record of these cases will be kept and reviewed annually.

Annual checks can include:

- Revisiting Local Authority databases
- Check the DFE School to School (S2S) Lost Children Database to see if the CTF has been downloaded by another school
- Check the 'Key to Success' national pupil database

Where there are concerns the case will remain open to the EIS.

If at any time after the child has been removed from the roll the school receive information regarding the child's whereabouts or are contacted by a receiving school, the Attendance and EHE Advisory team must be informed.

7. New School Admissions

Any child resident in Solihull, applying for a school place **must** complete a school admissions application form. This will be processed by the School Admissions Team. If your school admits a new pupil at any time, you should make a telephone call to the child's former school to inform them of the admission as the child may have been reported missing. The child's common transfer file should be downloaded from DFE School to School (S2S) Missing Children database or from the last school the child attended.

If you are informed by another school of a child they have admitted onto their roll and you believe this child may be on the CME database, you should contact the EIS with full details.

The EIS may receive enquiries from other Local Authorities or agencies seeking to locate a child and check they are in education. The EIS will check information held on the LA pupil database and check the Social Care database and feedback the results to the referrer. If there is evidence to indicate that the child is in Solihull but not in a school the EIS will contact the family to facilitate engagement with education.

8. Extended Leave/Temporary return to home country

Head Teachers may only authorise request for a leave of absence (LOA) in term time in exceptional circumstances. The same advice applies in regard to requests to return to home countries or extended travel abroad. It is the school's decision to grant or not any extended leave period.

If a school is informed and can establish written evidence that the child will be attending another educational establishment whilst away from the country, they may consider the use of a B (Alternative

provision) or D (Dual register) code. Written evidence should be received from the provider directly. The school will need to satisfy itself that the circumstances meet the requirements for these codes by accurately monitoring the provision.

If a school chooses not to grant term time leave but are aware that parents may still take unauthorised leave, the school should still try to establish the expected return date of the pupil.

Schools can only remove pupils from roll who fail to return from extended leave after an additional 10 school days following the agreed date for return. However, the school must check that the pupil does not have a good reason for their absence, such as disrupted travel arrangements or illness. If the school is unable to contact the parents or has any concerns about the pupil and his/her welfare, they should make an immediate referral to Social Services (0121 788 4300) or MASH (0121 788 4333).

If the school has made all reasonable enquiries and they cannot locate the child/family the school must refer to the Attendance and EHE Advisory team by completing a School Request for Support with Reasonable Enquiries form (Appendix B) so that further checks can be carried out before a decision to remove the pupil from roll can be made. Note that the proposed changes from the government stress that the school and the LA should make enquiries collaboratively, as detailed in section 6 of this guidance and referring to the Removal from Roll Guidance October 2024.

School must not remove a child from roll without first consulting the Attendance and EHE Advisory team.

If the child has been removed from the school roll and they wish to return to the school they must apply via the School Admissions Team (0121 704 6693) or admissions@solihull.gov.uk.

9. Permanent move out of the country

Where a parent informs a school that they intend to leave the country permanently, the school should establish information in writing from the parent to include:

- New address
- Details of new school
- Dates of move
- Contact numbers of family remaining in the country

The school should establish with the new school that the child has been offered a place and has started. This can be done via email. If the child is confirmed as starting at a new school, they should be removed from the school roll, as with any other child changing school.

If the school is unable to establish that the child has started at a new school, a School Request for Support with Reasonable Enquiries Form (Appendix B) should be completed with all details for the EIS to make further investigations. The child should not be removed from the school roll until reasonable efforts have been made and the Local Authority is satisfied at placing the child on the CME register.

10. Gypsy, Roma and Travellers

Schools should ensure that they work with travelling families to establish if they are travelling or being withdrawn from a school. If the family informs that they will not be returning to the school, the school should make all reasonable efforts to establish where they will be residing and where they will be going to school. If they are unable to establish the location of the family they should make a referral to the Attendance and EHE Advisory team once school have carried out their reasonable enquiries, as detailed in section 6.

11. Elective Home Education (EHE)

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation, parents have the right to educate their children outside the school system. Where this happens, the child's name will not appear on a school

roll. The local authority where the pupil lives has a responsibility for providing the appropriate advice and guidance to parents in their efforts to educate their child. The council are not expected to provide financial support to home educators but must ensure that the pupil is receiving a suitable, efficient full-time education. This monitoring role is also carried out by the Attendance and EHE Advisory team.

If a family chooses to home educate their child they must provide in writing, to the school, that they wish to withdraw their child from the school roll to take responsibility for their child's education by educating them otherwise than a school. This letter must be forwarded to pupiltracking@solihull.gov.uk with a completed Removal from Roll form (Refer to the Removal from Roll Guidance October 2024) and School Exit Form.

Schools must not, under any circumstances, encourage parents to choose EHE as a way to avoid exclusion or to resolve attendance issues. Where the school has concern that the parent is choosing EHE in an attempt to solve a problem with the school, the school should contact the Attendance and EHE Advisory team as soon as possible so that there can be a conversation with the family. The local authority will investigate where the parent states the school suggested or recommended the idea to them.

12. School Transition

The School Admissions Team and EPAS work closely together to ensure that all families of pupils who may start or transfer school have made an application. This includes at age 5 (entry to reception), transition from Infant to Junior school, where appropriate, and transition at Year 6.

Where no application has been returned for a place in Reception, Infant to Junior transition or Secondary transfer the School Admissions Team will notify the EPAS and they will follow this up.

All pupils allocated to a School will be deemed to be on roll there from the first day that they are expected to attend the school. (Pupil Registration Regulations, 2006, amended September 2016).

Children may fail to attend their new school for a number of reasons:

- A school place has been found for the child in another LA
- The family have opted to place their child in private education
- The family have elected to educate their child at home
- The family are unhappy with the place that has been allocated and are refusing to send their child to that school
- If a child has moved address and not informed their present school

If a new pupil has failed to start at the school, the school should make urgent reasonable enquiries to establish the location of the child by contacting the parents, the Attendance and EHE Advisory team and the School Admission Team. Enquiries should also include contacting any new school that is identified and confirming that the child is on roll and attending.

In those cases where the school is unable to establish if the child is attending an alternative school or provision, a referral should be made to the Attendance and EHE Advisory team once school have made their reasonable enquiries (see Appendix B). The Attendance and EHE Advisory team will investigate the circumstances of the child not starting at the school. While this investigation is being carried out, the child should remain on the roll of the school in line with the provisions set out by The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2024.

The child should not be removed from the school roll until it has been established beyond reasonable doubt that he/she is on a roll and attending another school or they have been placed on the CME database.

Reception starters

Although many of these children are non-statutory school age the processes outlined above should be followed as safeguarding considerations must be given the highest priority. It may be that schools become aware/ concerned about children offered places that do not engage or attend induction sessions. In these cases, where contact cannot be made with families, the Early Years Team, Attendance and EHE Advisory team or Admissions team should be contacted as early as possible.

13. Children not of statutory school age

If a school or provider is aware of a child not of statutory school age who goes missing from education provision without notice, for example from a pre-school or nursery placement, the provider must still act to establish the location of the child. Although there is no statutory responsibility to attend educational provision, the school or provision should satisfy itself that there are no safeguarding concerns related to the removal from provision.

Solihull MBC guidance is that the provider should carry out reasonable enquiries to establish the location of the child, as detailed in section 6 of this guidance.

After making reasonable enquiries, if the location of the child cannot be established, the provider should consider if there is cause to believe the child is at risk of harm. If they believe the child is at risk of harm a referral should be made to MASH on 0121 788 4333.

14. Advice for Support Services and other Agencies

Children at risk of harm are everybody's responsibility. Those children who go missing from education or fail to start or make a transition are at greater risk of harm. Where an agency or professional is working with a child and becomes aware of them not attending education provision they should contact any known school or provider in the first instance to raise their concerns.

Where a support service is working directly with a family and is aware that the child does not have a school place they should look to support the family in making an application for a school place. The School Admissions Team can provide advice and guidance in regards to appropriate schools and the application process.

If the support service is unable to establish the current education provision or believes that a child has gone missing they should contact the Attendance and EHE Advisory team directly for advice.

15. Deleting a Child from School Roll

Schools must act in accordance with the Education Pupil Registration Regulations, 2024 at all times. This means that the Local Authority must be advised before removing a child from school roll in order to allow them to undertake their statutory duty and carry out 'reasonable enquiry' as to the child's location, if their whereabouts are unknown.

Schools must also be aware of the safeguarding concerns in relation to removing a child from the school roll and their responsibility to act on any safeguarding concerns. If in doubt schools should make a referral to MASH on 0121 788 4333. Schools should also be aware that if a child goes missing who has siblings who are not of statutory school age, these children may also be at risk and they should consider safeguarding concerns.

If a child does not attend but is located and known to still be in the area, school should pursue as a case of unauthorised absence, utilising Notice to Improve, Penalty Notices, and parental prosecution as appropriate.

If a child moves out of the area, or wishes to transfer school, the school should not remove from roll until they have established the future whereabouts of the child and a new school place has been agreed.

The Attendance and EHE Advisory team is able to support schools at all times with advice and guidance in relation to children missing education. Schools are advised to contact the service before proceeding if they are in any doubt.

Schools **MUST** notify the EPAS **within 5 days** of deleting a child from their school roll by completing the Removal from School Roll Form and sending to pupiltracking@solihull.gov.uk

Refer to Solihull's Local Authority "Removal from Roll Guidance for Schools/ Academies October 2024"

16. Contact Information

If you require further information or wish to make a referral please contact:

Attendance and EHE Advisory team

Tel: 0121 704 6191

Email: cme@solihull.gov.uk

Off roll forms – pupiltracking@solihull.gov.uk

School request for support with reasonable enquiries

Referral to Attendance and EHE Advisory Team to enable the Local Authority to undertake Reasonable Enquiries on a child and their family's whereabouts.

When schools should use this form

- Where the pupil has stopped attending, school have made reasonable attempts to make contact during the first 10 days (see CME Policy, section 5 for checks), and where the destination of the child remains unknown.
- Pupil should remain on the school roll whilst the school AND the local authority make reasonable enquiries jointly.
- The pupil must not be removed from the school roll until no less than 20 continuous unauthorised school days absence, after both the school and local authority have tried to locate the pupil and Reasonable Enquiry has been undertaken.

When schools should **NOT** use this form

- Pupils who have stopped attending but have not moved are non-attenders NOT CME or requests for reasonable enquiries; they must remain on the school roll and be dealt with as non-attenders.

| Child's Details: | | | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Full Name | <input type="text"/> | Date of Birth: | <input type="text"/> |
| Address: | <input type="text"/> | School Year: | <input type="text"/> |
| | | Gender: | <input type="text"/> |
| | | First Language: | <input type="text"/> |
| | | Is an interpreter required? | <input type="text"/> |
| Family Relationships/Siblings: | | | |
| Name of Parent (s): | <input type="text"/> | | |
| Home Telephone: | <input type="text"/> | Mobile: | <input type="text"/> |
| Email address: | <input type="text"/> | | |
| Any emergency contacts: | <input type="text"/> | | |
| Have parent/Carers been informed of this referral? | <input type="text"/> | | <input type="text"/> |

| School Details: | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Name of School: | <input type="text"/> | Current % attendance: | <input type="text"/> |
| Name of Referrer: | <input type="text"/> | | |
| Referrer Role: | <input type="text"/> | | |
| Referrer Telephone Number: | <input type="text"/> | | |
| Referrer Email address: | <input type="text"/> | | |

| What is the primary reason for referring this child to EIS? |
|---|
| <input type="text"/> |

| | |
|--|----------|
| Are there any known reason for not visiting the home alone? If Yes please give reasons below? | Yes / No |
|--|----------|

Details of enquiries school have made:

| | | |
|---|--------|-----------|
| Phone calls: | Dates: | Outcomes: |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Home Visits: | Dates: | Outcomes: |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Correspondence | Dates: | Outcomes: |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Friends and Family contacts/ Social Media: | Dates: | Outcomes: |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Any other relevant information:

If the referral is accepted the school must continue with their reasonable enquiries, whilst jointly working with Attendance and EHE Advisory Team. The pupil must not be removed from roll.

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Signed by Referrer: | Date form completed: |
|---------------------|----------------------|

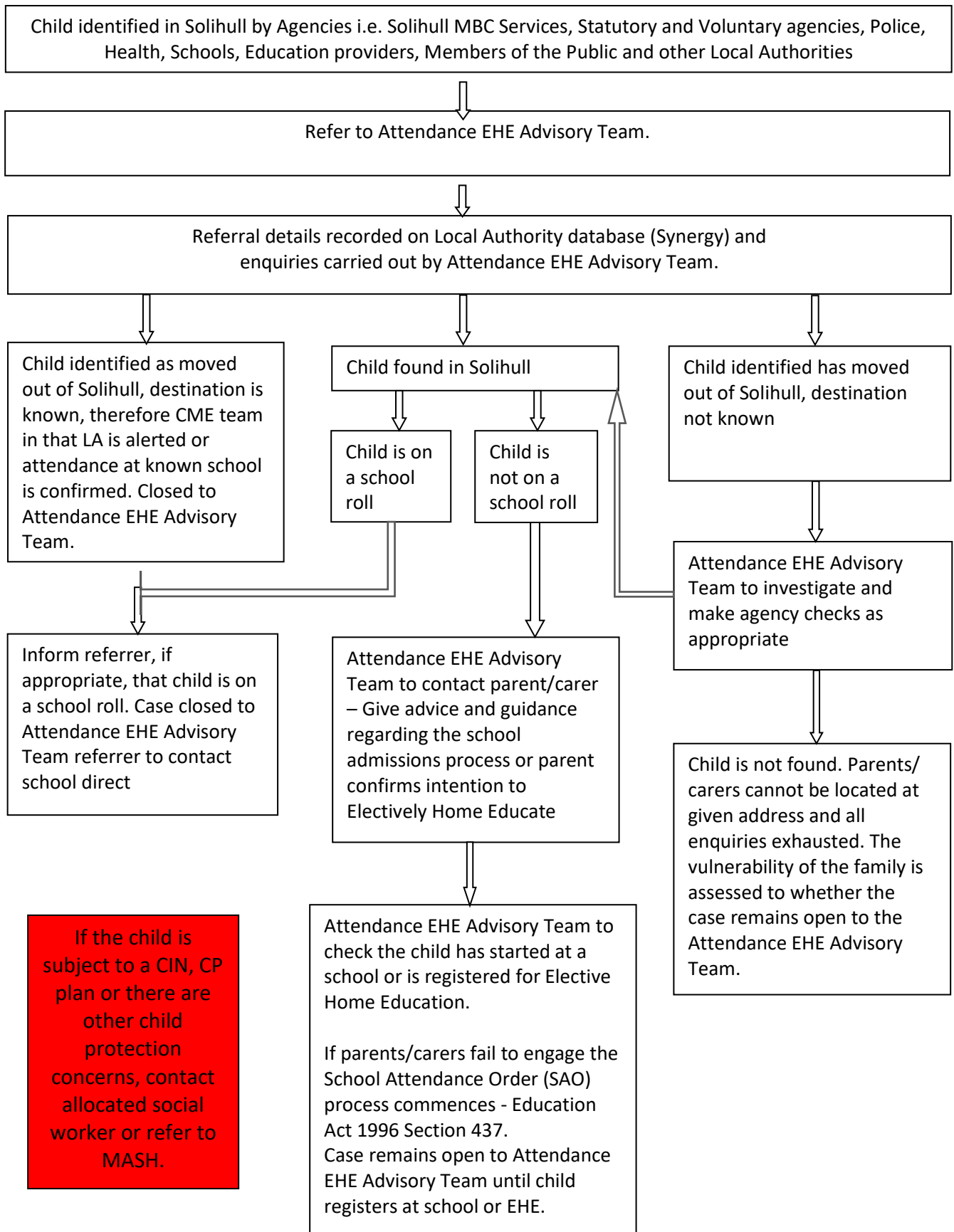
| | |
|--|--|
| | |
|--|--|

Completed forms should be sent to the Attendance and EHE Advisory Team:

Email: attendanceenquiries@solihull.gov.uk

Tel: 0121 704 6191

Sources of Referral and CME Process



Children Missing Education Flowchart School Process

