

Whipman Woods Flying High Academy



Children Missing in Education (CME) Policy

2026-2027

Reviewed: September 2026

Next Review: September 2027

1. Introduction

Whipman Woods Flying High Academy is committed to ensuring that every child has access to suitable, full-time education and is safeguarded from harm.

Children missing education (CME) and children who are absent from education can be at increased risk of harm. Absence from education, particularly where it is repeated or prolonged, can be a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns including abuse, neglect, child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, county lines involvement, mental health difficulties, forced marriage, radicalisation and other forms of harm.

The school therefore treats concerns about a child's attendance, engagement in education or whereabouts as both an educational and potential safeguarding matter and will respond promptly and proportionately.

Whipman Woods Flying High Academy adopts a relational and supportive approach to attendance. We recognise that attendance difficulties can reflect unmet needs, barriers or vulnerabilities. School leaders work closely with children and families to understand the causes of absence and provide appropriate support, challenge and intervention at the earliest opportunity.

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Elective Home Education procedures
- Alternative Provision procedures
- Exclusions/Suspensions procedures

This policy has regard to:

- Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools (DfE, September 2025)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education Act 1996, including section 436A
- Nottinghamshire County Council Children Missing Education and Fair Access procedures.

2. Definition of Children Missing Education

A Child Missing Education (CME) is a child of compulsory school age who:

- is not a registered pupil at a school; and
- is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.

It is important to distinguish CME from absence from school.

A child who remains registered at Whipman Woods Flying High Academy is not, by definition, a Child Missing Education solely because they are persistently or severely absent.

However, children being absent from education, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, can be a vital safeguarding warning sign. Poor or deteriorating attendance may also increase the risk of a child subsequently becoming missing from education.

The school will therefore act promptly in relation to both:

- children who are absent from education; and
- children who are, or may be at risk of becoming, missing from education.

The fact that a child does not yet meet the formal definition of CME will never prevent the school from taking appropriate safeguarding, attendance or welfare action.

3. Aims and Objectives

- ensure that all children have access to appropriate and suitable education;
- identify children who are, or may be at risk of becoming, missing from education promptly;
- recognise absence from education as a potential safeguarding concern;
- identify and address barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity;
- undertake timely and reasonable enquiries when a child's whereabouts or educational destination is unclear;
- work collaboratively with children, families, Nottinghamshire County Council and other agencies;
- comply with statutory requirements relating to the admission register and removal from roll;
- prevent unlawful or inappropriate removal of children from the school roll;
- maintain accurate records of CME concerns, enquiries, referrals, actions and outcomes; and
- ensure that safeguarding action is taken immediately where there is reason to believe a child may be at risk of harm.

4. Children at Increased Risk of Missing Education

All children can become missing from education. However, particular vigilance will be given to children whose circumstances may increase their vulnerability, including:

- children with SEND;
- disadvantaged pupils;
- children with a social worker;
- looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- young carers;
- children experiencing mental or physical health difficulties;
- children subject to Child Protection or Child in Need plans;
- children experiencing persistent or severe absence;
- children who have experienced significant family change, instability or repeated changes of address;

- children moving between local authority areas;
- children moving into or out of the UK;
- children living in temporary accommodation;
- children awaiting a school place;
- children who have been allocated or offered a school place but fail to start;
- children at risk of exploitation, including criminal or sexual exploitation;
- children affected by domestic abuse;
- children at risk of forced marriage, honour-based abuse or radicalisation;
- children whose home education may be unsuitable; and
- children experiencing significant transitions between schools or phases of education.

The presence of one or more risk factors does not mean that a child will become CME. However, leaders will consider children's individual circumstances and vulnerabilities when responding to absence or concerns about their access to education.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that appropriate systems are in place to identify, safeguard and support children who are missing, or at risk of becoming missing, from education.

Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy DSLs

The DSL and Deputy DSLs will ensure that absence and CME concerns are considered within the school's wider safeguarding arrangements.

Where a child's absence or unknown whereabouts raises a safeguarding concern, the DSL will consider whether an immediate referral to Children's Social Care and/or the police is required.

A CME referral must never delay necessary safeguarding action.

Designated CME Lead

The school's designated CME Lead is Mrs Nicola Green.

The CME Lead will:

- oversee CME procedures;
- monitor relevant attendance and safeguarding information;
- coordinate reasonable enquiries;
- liaise with Nottinghamshire County Council's Fair Access/CME service;
- ensure referrals are made promptly;
- oversee statutory notifications relating to the admission register; and
- ensure that appropriate records are maintained.

Attendance Team

The Attendance Team will monitor attendance, identify emerging concerns and vulnerable pupils, coordinate early intervention and escalate concerns appropriately.

All Staff

All staff must be alert to children who are absent from education and recognise that repeated or prolonged absence can be a safeguarding warning sign.

Staff must report concerns promptly in accordance with the school's attendance and safeguarding procedures.

6. Prevention and Early Identification

Whipman Woods Flying High Academy seeks to prevent children becoming missing from education through:

- daily attendance monitoring;
- robust first-day response procedures;
- immediate follow-up of unexplained absence;
- weekly Attendance Team meetings;
- attendance as a standing safeguarding consideration within DSL supervision;
- identification and monitoring of persistent and severe absence;
- implementation of the ATTEND Framework where appropriate;
- strong pastoral support;
- Early Help and multi-agency intervention;
- positive relationships with children and families;
- monitoring of vulnerable groups;
- robust safeguarding systems;
- appropriate home visits and welfare checks;
- careful monitoring of transitions between schools and phases;
- monitoring of reduced timetables and alternative provision; and
- prompt escalation where a child's whereabouts or educational destination becomes unclear.

The views of children and families are central to attendance support planning. School leaders will seek to understand the barriers affecting a child's education and work collaboratively with families and relevant professionals to identify practical solutions.

7. Responding to Unexplained Absence

Where a pupil does not attend school as expected, the school's first-day response and attendance procedures will be followed.

Where contact cannot be established, concerns will be considered in the context of the child's known circumstances and vulnerabilities.

The school will not wait for a prescribed number of days before taking safeguarding action where concerns exist.

Where a child's whereabouts become unknown, or there is reason to believe that the child will no longer attend the school and no confirmed educational destination is known, the school will undertake reasonable enquiries and liaise with Nottinghamshire County Council as appropriate.

8. Reasonable Enquiries

Where a child's whereabouts or educational destination is unknown, reasonable enquiries will be undertaken promptly.

Depending upon the circumstances, these may include:

- contacting parents/carers using all available telephone numbers;
- sending text messages and emails;
- contacting all recorded emergency contacts;
- considering information held about relatives or extended family;
- checking information already held by the school;
- speaking with siblings and/or liaising appropriately with schools attended by siblings;
- checking whether other professionals or agencies working with the family hold relevant information;
- making appropriate enquiries about a reported new school or educational destination;
- undertaking a home visit or welfare check where appropriate;
- liaising with the Local Authority;
- consulting the DSL where safeguarding concerns are identified; and
- involving Children's Social Care and/or the police where necessary.

All enquiries, attempted contacts, information received, decisions and actions will be recorded.

Reasonable enquiries will continue as appropriate in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council.

9. Referral to Nottinghamshire County Council

Where enquiries indicate that a child may be missing education, the school will liaise with and, where appropriate, refer to Nottinghamshire County Council's Fair Access/Children Missing Education service.

The school will not regard ten school days as a waiting period before making a referral.

Where reasonable enquiries have been completed, safeguarding concerns exist, or circumstances indicate that the child may be CME, referral will be made earlier as appropriate.

Where a child's whereabouts remain unknown, Nottinghamshire procedures will be followed and the school will ensure that the matter is escalated promptly and within required timescales.

Nottinghamshire County Council Fair Access Team

Email: fairaccess@nottscc.gov.uk

Telephone: 0115 977 3225

The school will continue to cooperate with reasonable enquiries after referral and will provide information required by the Local Authority.

10. Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

CME is fundamentally connected to safeguarding.

When responding to unexplained or prolonged absence, staff will consider what the absence may indicate about the child's safety and welfare rather than viewing attendance information in isolation.

Where there is reason to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, harm, safeguarding procedures will be followed immediately.

Where there is reason to believe that a child is in immediate danger, appropriate emergency action will be taken, including contacting the police and/or Children's Social Care.

A child being known to Children's Social Care, Early Help, the Fair Access Team or another service must never lead staff to assume that somebody else is addressing the concern.

New or escalating safeguarding information will always be reported in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

11. Pupils Who Fail to Arrive at the School

Particular attention will be given to children who have been offered or allocated a place at Whipman Woods Flying High Academy but fail to arrive on the agreed admission date.

The school will not assume that the child has remained at their previous school or has entered another educational setting.

Appropriate enquiries will be made to establish the child's whereabouts and educational provision, and the school will liaise with the previous school, Nottinghamshire County Council and other relevant agencies as appropriate.

Any safeguarding concerns identified through this process will be escalated immediately.

12. Admission Register and Removal from Roll

The school will maintain its admission register in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

A child will only be removed from the admission register where one of the statutory grounds for deletion applies.

The school will not remove a child from roll simply because:

- they have stopped attending;
- their whereabouts are unknown;
- contact with their family has been lost; or
- it is believed, without sufficient confirmation, that they have moved to another school or area.

Where legislation requires the school and Local Authority to undertake joint reasonable enquiries before a pupil can be removed from roll, those enquiries will be completed and appropriately recorded.

This includes relevant circumstances involving prolonged unauthorised absence and failure to return following authorised leave.

Children will not be retrospectively deleted from the admission register.

The school will make all required returns to the Local Authority when a pupil is added to or removed from the admission register, within statutory timescales.

Where a pupil leaves the school, the school will seek to establish and record the child's destination and new educational provision and will transfer records securely in accordance with statutory requirements.

13. Elective Home Education

Parents have a legal right to educate their child at home, subject to statutory requirements.

Where a parent informs the school that they intend to withdraw their child to provide elective home education (EHE), the school will follow the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and Nottinghamshire County Council procedures.

The school will:

- ensure that the parent's intention is clear;
- notify the Local Authority as required;
- provide relevant information to support the Local Authority in carrying out its responsibilities;
- consider any existing safeguarding concerns or vulnerabilities;
- ensure appropriate transfer of records; and
- continue to follow safeguarding procedures where concerns about a child's welfare exist.

The school will never seek to persuade, pressure or encourage a parent to electively home educate their child as a means of addressing attendance, behaviour, SEND, attainment or other difficulties.

Where the school has concerns about the suitability of proposed or existing home education, these will be shared appropriately with Nottinghamshire County Council.

14. Off-Rolling

Whipman Woods Flying High Academy does not tolerate off-rolling.

No child will be removed from the school roll unlawfully or primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the child.

The school will not encourage a family to remove a child from the school roll in order to avoid:

- attendance concerns;
- behavioural difficulties;
- suspension or permanent exclusion;
- SEND responsibilities;
- poor academic outcomes; or
- other challenges associated with meeting the child's needs.

All decisions regarding removal from the admission register will comply with statutory requirements and will be appropriately recorded.

15. Reduced Timetables

A reduced timetable will only be used in exceptional circumstances where it is considered to be in the child's best interests and in accordance with Nottinghamshire County Council guidance.

Any reduced timetable will:

- be temporary;
- have a clearly defined purpose;
- be agreed with parents/carers;
- take account of safeguarding and SEND considerations;
- be appropriately risk assessed;
- include a clear plan for increasing the child's hours and reintegration into full-time education;
- be regularly reviewed; and
- be recorded and notified in accordance with Nottinghamshire County Council requirements.

Reduced timetables will not be used as a behaviour-management strategy or as an alternative to providing appropriate support.

The school will work with Nottinghamshire's Fair Access Team where advice or support is required.

16. Children Unable to Attend Because of Health Needs

Where a child is unable to attend school because of physical or mental health needs, the school will work collaboratively with the family, health professionals and Nottinghamshire County Council as appropriate to minimise disruption to the child's education.

Prolonged absence resulting from health needs will be considered in accordance with the school's Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy and relevant statutory and Nottinghamshire guidance.

The school will consider whether Local Authority support or alternative educational arrangements may be required where a child is unable to access school for a prolonged period.

Safeguarding concerns will continue to be considered throughout any period of absence.

17. Alternative Provision

Where a pupil receives education away from the school through alternative provision, the school remains responsible for safeguarding the pupil and monitoring their attendance, welfare and educational engagement in accordance with statutory guidance.

Robust arrangements will be in place for the provider to report attendance and unexplained absence promptly.

Where a child fails to attend alternative provision as expected, the school will respond promptly and consider whether safeguarding action is required.

18. Transitions

Particular attention will be given to periods of transition, including:

- entry into Reception;
- transfer between schools;
- in-year admissions;
- children moving between local authority areas;
- children arriving from or moving overseas; and
- transition to secondary education.

The school will work proactively with families, previous and receiving settings and relevant agencies to ensure that children remain visible, their educational destination is known and appropriate information is transferred.

Where a child is expected to transfer to another setting but their destination cannot be confirmed, this will be treated as a potential CME concern and appropriate enquiries will be undertaken.

19. Information Sharing, Records and Tracking

The school will maintain accurate, secure records of:

- attendance concerns;
- reasonable enquiries undertaken;
- contact with parents/carers and emergency contacts;
- home visits and welfare checks;
- safeguarding concerns;
- liaison with other schools, agencies and professionals;
- CME referrals;
- Local Authority communication;
- decisions relating to the admission register; and
- outcomes.

Information will be shared lawfully, proportionately and securely with Nottinghamshire County Council and other relevant agencies where this is necessary to establish a child's whereabouts, ensure access to education or safeguard and promote their welfare.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.

Concerns about data protection must never result in necessary safeguarding information being withheld.

20. Re-engagement and Support

Where a child has been missing from education or has experienced a significant period of absence, the school will work with the child, family, Local Authority and other professionals to support successful re-engagement.

Support may include:

- pastoral support;

- identification of barriers to attendance;
- reasonable adjustments;
- SEND support;
- academic support;
- Early Help;
- liaison with external professionals;
- carefully planned reintegration; and
- regular review of progress.

The child's voice will be sought and taken into account when planning support.

The aim will be not simply to return the child to education but to understand and address the factors which contributed to their absence.

21. Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of the school's arrangements for children absent from and missing education will be evaluated through:

- daily attendance monitoring;
- weekly Attendance Team reviews;
- DSL supervision;
- analysis of persistent and severe absence;
- monitoring of vulnerable groups;
- review of CME referrals and outcomes;
- monitoring of reduced timetables;
- review of pupils accessing alternative provision;
- scrutiny of children joining and leaving the school;
- governor safeguarding and attendance reports; and
- attendance and safeguarding audits and Local Authority reviews where applicable.

Leaders will consider patterns and themes as well as individual cases to identify whether school systems, curriculum, SEND provision, safeguarding practice or other factors may be contributing to absence or disengagement.

Findings will be used to inform future attendance, safeguarding, inclusion and Early Help strategies.

The Headteacher and governing body will seek assurance that statutory requirements relating to CME, safeguarding, attendance and the admission register are being met.

22. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are changes to statutory guidance, legislation or Nottinghamshire County Council procedures.