LOCHINVER HOUSE

Children Absent from Education Policy

Children absent from school are those who are registered but are not in regular attendance.

Staff are aware that children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign for a range of safeguarding concerns. This may include neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation. It may also indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage.

The School is aware that the response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing educate in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging, but also where pupils are already known to their relevant Local Authority's Children's Social Care and require a social worker given being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community. The School is conscious of essential early intervention to identify any underlying safeguarding risks and to mitigate against a child going missing in future. Staff are aware of the School's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing from education procedures. (Keeping Children Safe in Education, KCSIE).

Safeguarding
The School has a safeguarding duty in respect of all pupils and will investigate any unexplained absences. Where there are safeguarding concerns about any child, the School will always follow its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, which includes reporting to the Local Authority. Any absence of a pupil who is currently subject to a child protection or child in need plan will be immediately referred to their social worker.

Children Missing from Education
Children missing from education are those of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving a suitable education other than at a school. The definition also includes children who are receiving an education, but one that is not suitable; this could include children who are not receiving full-time education suitable to their needs, e.g. age, ability, aptitude, special educational needs, and disabilities (SEND).

Children go missing from education for a number of reasons. These may include the following:
- they do not start school at the appropriate time and so they do not enter the educational system
- they are removed by their parents
- they may have behaviour and/or attendance difficulties
- they cease to attend, due to exclusion, illness or bullying
- they fail to find a suitable school place after moving to a new area
- the family move home regularly
- problems at home.

The law requires all children from the term after their fifth birthday to the age of 16 to be in full time education.

Children missing from education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

The School follows the statutory guidance 'Children Missing Education, 2024. Guidance on school attendance is sought from 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance, effective 19 August 2024' which includes information on how schools should work with local authority children's services where school absence indicates safeguarding concerns.

School requirements
The School enters pupils on the Admissions Register at the beginning of the first day on which the School has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the School. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the School will undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity.

The School monitors pupils' attendance through their daily register. The School will inform Hertfordshire Local Authority of the details of any pupils who fail to attend regularly, persistent absences, or have missed ten consecutive school days or more without authorisation. The School monitors attendance closely and will address poor or irregular attendance. Any pupil whose absence is causing concern and where it has not been possible to make contact with a parent/carer, will be reported using Hertfordshire protocol.

Elective Home Education (EHE)
Many home-educated pupils have an overwhelmingly positive learning experience. We would expect the parents' decision to home education to be made with their child's best education at the heart of the decision. However, this is not the case for all, and a home education can mean some children are less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported in line with their needs. From September 2016 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended so that schools must inform their Local Authority of all deletions from their admission register when a pupil is taken off roll.

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove their child from Lochinver House School with a view to educating them at home, we will work with Hertfordshire Local Authority and other professionals to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers where possible. Ideally this will be before a final decision has been made, thus ensuring parents/carers have considered the best interests of their child. This is particularly significant where a pupil has SEND, is vulnerable, and/or has a social worker. The DfE guidance for local authorities of Elective Home Education (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education) sets out the role and responsibilities of Local Authorities and their powers to engage with parents in relation to EHE. Although this is primarily aimed at Local Authorities, the School is aware of this guidance.

Approaches from Local Authorities
Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to identify pupils of compulsory school age who are not in education. Lochinver House School cooperates with the Local Authority, should it enquire about whether they are educating a specific pupil. For further guidance reference should be made to http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml which is the Local Authority Policy on School Attendance, and to https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance . Additional advice is obtainable from the Hertfordshire Attendance Team on https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/education-support/get-help-to-access-learning/attendance-team.aspx.

ISI inspections will observe a sample of registration sessions and scrutinise the attendance and admissions registers, thus ensuring regulations are met.

Accountability for attendance sits with the Senior Leadership Team; with the Head, having overall responsibility.

Reviewed By	Director of Marketing & Admissions
Approval Body/ Committee	Education
Last Review	Autumn 2025
Next Review	Autumn 2027
Policies Linked To	Admissions and Attendance Policy, Behaviour Policy, Biometrics Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure (incorporating Staff Behaviour and Code of Conduct), Curriculum Policy, Data Protection Policy, Equality Act 2010, Missing Child Policy, Privacy Notice, Pupil Collection Policy

Any data held in relation to the content of this policy will be managed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice.