

Clayton St John
Children Missing Education (CME) Policy 2025-26

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Table of Contents

Item	Page(s)
1. Trust Policy Statement	3
2. Aims and Scope of the Policy	3
3. Definition	3-4
4. Roles and Responsibilities	4
4.1 Local Governing Body	4
4.2 Headteacher	4
4.3 Staff	4
4.4 Parents	4-5
4.5 Local Authority	5
5. Preventing Children Missing Education	5-6
6. Responding to Concerns About Children Missing Education	6
6.1 Children who are not on a School Roll	6
6.2 Children who are on our School Roll	6-7
6.3 Joint Reasonable Enquiries	7
6.4 Transition to Secondary School	7-8
7. Recording and Reporting	8
7.1 Recording	8
7.2 Reporting	8
8. Links with Guidance and Other Policies	8-9
9. Monitoring and Review	9
Appendix One: Useful Contacts	10
Appendix Two: Flowchart for Suspected Child Missing Education	11-12
Appendix Three: Grounds for Deleting a Pupil from the School Roll	12-13

1. Trust Policy Statement

Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT) considers the safeguarding of pupils in all of our schools as the highest priority in our organisation. The Trust is committed to ensuring that everyone working in our schools understands their safeguarding responsibilities.

As part of our focus on diversity and inclusion, BDAT pledges that our policies will seek to promote equality, fairness, and respect for all staff and pupils. Our policies reflect the BDAT values of inclusion, compassion, aspiration, resilience, and excellence. By working closely with a range of stakeholders, such as our school, union, and HR colleagues, we have ensured that BDAT's policies do not unlawfully discriminate against anybody.

For the purpose of this policy, the term Trust refers to BDAT. The term school and the term academy are interchangeable. The term pupil and the term student are interchangeable.

2. Aims and Scope of the Policy

We understand that all children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Children missing education (CME) 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.

This policy sets out the criteria for when a child may be considered missing in education, highlights where there may be an increased risk, the roles and responsibilities within school, and the procedures that should be followed where there is a CME concern.

The policy applies to all children of compulsory school age, i.e. from the school term beginning after their 5th birthday until the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have their 16th birthday.

3. Definition

Children missing education are defined by the Department for Education as, '*children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school*'.

Many of the children who fall under this criteria are not on the roll of a school. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority as per the Education Act 1996 s436A to make arrangements to identify these children and work with parents to enrol or return them to a suitable full time education.

There are also circumstances in which pupils who are on our school roll can become children missing education. For example, children who do not arrive despite an agreed start date being in place for them or children who have prolonged unexplained absence where their location is unknown.

It is important to note that a pupil with poor attendance does not necessarily equate to them being a child missing education. Where a pupil is persistently absent (attendance less than 90%) or even severely absent (attendance less than 50%), we generally know the whereabouts of the child and are in communication with the family. In these cases, the normal Attendance Policy applies.

The DfE's Children Missing Education Guidance highlights several circumstances in which children may be more likely to be missing from education. These are:

- Children at risk of harm or neglect
- Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families
- Children of military service personnel
- Children who go missing or runaway
- Children who are in the Youth Justice System
- Children who cease to attend a school
- Children of new migrant families

In all cases where were are concerned about the welfare of a child, we will implement our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, making referrals to Children's Social Care and the Police as necessary.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

This section outlines the responsibilities of a range of stakeholders in ensuring that this policy is applied consistently and effectively.

4.1 Local Governing Body (LGB)

The LGB is responsible for approving this policy and holding the Headteacher to account for its effective implementation. The LGB are provided with regular information relating to pupil attendance, pupil mobility and safeguarding data which includes the number of children for whom there are CME concerns.

4.2 Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy in school, which may involve delegating some of the responsibilities to their wider leadership and staff teams. These responsibilities include:

- Entering pupils onto the admission register on the first day that the school and parents have agreed they will begin attending. School must also notify the local authority within five days of doing this if this is an admission at a non-standard transition point.
- Applying the daily attendance procedures outlined within the Attendance Policy. This includes accurate recording of registers, rigorous absence follow-up, monitoring and tracking of pupil attendance and working proactively to support when there are attendance concerns.
- Undertaking joint enquiries with the local authority in circumstances where there is a concern a pupil may be CME.
- Deleting pupils from the admission register where one of the grounds in The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies, including notifying the local authority within five days of doing this (unless it is a standard end of phase transition).

4.3 Staff

All staff will be vigilant in fulfilling their responsibilities under both the Attendance and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies, which underpin the effective implementation of this CME policy. Staff receive face to face safeguarding training on an annual basis, with further inputs throughout the academic year.

Staff responsibilities include ensuring that registers are completed accurately in a timely fashion, exploring the reasons for unexplained absences with pupils, and using CPOMS to share any concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and record information about the conversations they have with pupils and parents.

4.4 Parents

At Clayton St John, we believe that excellent attendance at school is the part of their child's education that parents have the most impact upon. This is why Parental Responsibility Measures are clear that it is a parent's responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly. Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that:

"*If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, their parent is guilty of an offence*".

The following are some ways in which parents can support their child's attendance:

- Be aware of their legal responsibilities in ensuring their child attends school regularly
- Ensure that their child arrives to school punctually every day
- Reinforce to their children the importance of education and how attending regularly leads to higher achievement
- Contact school in a timely manner (before 8.30am) in the event that their child is going to be absent that day
- Ensure that any medical appointments are booked outside of school hours wherever possible
- Ensure that any leave of absence request is only made in the most exceptional of circumstances
- Support their child's attendance (and therefore achievement) by not taking holidays during term time
- Notify school immediately if there are any changes to details of named contacts for their child
- Work in partnership with school staff to support any improvement plans for their child's attendance

4.5 Local Authority

Bradford Local Authority have a range of responsibilities relating to children missing education, many of which do not affect our school as they relate to children who are not on a school roll. In regard to CME concerns about our pupils, the local authority will:

- Provide a responsive Education Access Team who will receive referrals from schools where joint enquiries are required.
- Support us in undertaking joint enquiries where there are concerns a pupil may be CME, utilising their access to wider systems to ascertain the whereabouts of the child.
- Provide staff training, support and guidance relating to all elements of the process. For example, via the Bradford Local Authority Attendance Network.
- Ensure that Bradford Schools Online is kept up to date with clear processes for schools to follow.

5. Preventing Children Missing Education

It is a key priority at Clayton St John to create a culture that promotes excellent school attendance for all of our pupils and the ways in which we go about that are outlined in our Attendance Policy.

When pupils become children missing education it can often be outside of our control as a school, however, there are some measures that we can take to prevent this or at least make managing the process more simple when it happens. These measures include, but are not limited to:

- Creating a culture of transparency and honesty with families so they are open with school about any changes to their family circumstances or potential leaves of absence
- Being equally transparent with families about the guidance relating to children missing education and the potential ramifications of extended unauthorised and unexplained absence

- Actively forging positive relationships with families to build this culture
- Regularly reminding families to update us with their emergency contact details and holding multiple contacts on file wherever possible
- Maintaining accurate attendance registers according to DfE guidance on attendance coding
- Having clear accessible procedures for families to notify us about any day-to-day absences for their children
- Having clear accessible procedures for families to request any leaves of absence for their children
- Implementing absence procedures consistently, swiftly and robustly, each and every day
- Using professional curiosity to ascertain the reasons behind any unexplained absences
- Monitoring and tracking patterns of absence to identify any early warning signs

6. Responding to Concerns About Children Missing Education

Anyone can make a report to Bradford Local Authority if they believe a child of compulsory school age to be missing education. Reports can be made to the Education Access Team via phone call to 0127443887 or email to CME@bradford.gov.uk.

Where it is believed that a child is missing education, the response differs depending on whether they are on a school roll.

6.1 Children who are not on a School Roll

It is the responsibility of Bradford Local Authority to identify children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and support them to access a suitable full-time education. For example, when a family is new to the district.

Many families are able to apply for a school place without additional support, but for anyone that does require help, they can contact the Education Access Team via phone call to 01274439393 or email to education.access@bradford.gov.uk.

Any families wishing to apply for a school place at Clayton St John should submit an application through Bradford School Admissions. If you would like to visit and look around prior to submitting an application, please contact us by email to office@claytonce.bdat-academies.org to arrange this.

6.2 Children who are on our School Roll

There are a range of circumstances in which pupils can be lawfully deleted from the school roll, but which do not require children missing education procedures to be followed. For example, where a child moves out of area and registers at a new school, where they have moved beyond a reasonable distance away from the school but their whereabouts are known, or where they are electively home educated. The full range of grounds for removal are outlined in Appendix Three.

In all cases where a pupil is deleted from the school roll, Bradford Local Authority will be informed within five days via the Pupil Deletion Form and the school will update their Management Information System and Pupil Mobility Record accordingly.

There are two main circumstances in which we may be concerned that a pupil on our roll becomes a child missing education. These are:

1. A pupil has not attended for 10 school days following their known return date after a leave of absence
2. A pupil has had a continuous period of 20 school days of unauthorised absence

In both these circumstances, the child will only be considered for removal from the school roll if the following stipulations are all met:

- The absences are unauthorised and not reasonably believed to be due to illness or an unavoidable cause
- Both school and the local authority have undertaken joint reasonable enquiries to locate the pupil
- School and the local authority are in agreement that their enquiries have been unsuccessful in locating the child

Schools must not wait until the 10 or 20 days of unauthorised absence have passed before asking the local authority to begin joint enquiries. Referrals must be made within five school days of the child last attending or their whereabouts being known but can be made as soon as schools have done their enquiries.

Referrals should be made using the Joint Enquiries Referral Form, which must be fully completed and securely sent by email to CME@bradford.gov.uk.

A flowchart outlining these procedures can be found in Appendix Two.

6.3 Joint Reasonable Enquiries

In undertaking reasonable enquiries to find the whereabouts of a child, we will follow our Attendance Policy and the Bradford Local Authority expectations of schools which include, but are not limited to, the following measures:

- Contacting families, relatives, neighbours, landlords (where appropriate) and other significant adults or contacts
- Making enquiries within school with class teachers and friends (where appropriate)
- Liaising with schools attended by any siblings
- Conducting home visits within the period that the child is believed to be missing education, including within the last five school days before submitting a joint enquiries referral
- Attempting to contact parents by phone call, letter, text message and any other means (e.g. WhatsApp)
- Checking with previous schools
- Checking with any other agencies known to be working with the family
- Contacting the local authority of any forwarding address that has been provided

When we have made a joint enquiries referral to Bradford Local Authority, they will support efforts to locate the child through means such as checking data transfer systems, checking other databases and sharing information with other agencies (e.g. UK Border Force).

If at any point there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral will be made to Children's Social Care (and the Police if appropriate).

6.4 Transition to Secondary School

The majority of children in the UK are allocated a place at one of their preferred secondary schools when they finish Year 6 and make a smooth transition to Secondary school.

For some children, however, this is not the case, and they may have been allocated an unchosen school by the local authority, either due to their preferred choices being full or them not having applied for a school place at all. This has the potential to increase risk of them becoming children missing education by not attending their allocated school.

In Bradford, the following process should be followed by all schools when admitting their new Year 7 cohort:

1. All pupils who arrive as planned should be admitted onto the school roll on their first day
2. All pupils who do not arrive, but whose parents have accepted the school place, should be admitted onto the school roll on their scheduled first day. The Attendance Policy should then be applied.
3. All pupils who do not arrive AND whose parents have not notified the school that they wish to accept a place should not be placed on roll until either:

    a. The school follows its attendance procedures and makes reasonable enquiries which lead to the child attending the school. They should then be placed on roll from their first date of attendance.

    b. The school follows its attendance procedures and makes reasonable enquiries, which lead to them being informed that the family are refusing to send the child to them as the allocated school.

    In this case, school should inform the Local Authority Prosecution Team via email to attlegal@bradford.gov.uk and hold the place whilst enquiries are undertaken and a School Attendance Order considered.

    c. The school follows its attendance procedures and makes reasonable enquiries but cannot locate the child. At this point, a joint enquires referral should be submitted to the local authority using the Joint Enquiries Referral Form, which must be fully completed and securely sent by email to CME@bradford.gov.uk. Once these joint enquiries have been undertaken and the pupil has not been found, it can be agreed between school and the local authority that the place is no longer needed.

    d. The school follows it attendance procedures and makes reasonable enquiries, which lead to them being informed that the family are electively home educating the child. School should refer this back to admissions by notifying the Elective Home Education team by email to electiveheducation@bradford.gov.uk. Once this has been acknowledged, they no longer need to hold the place.

7. Recording and Reporting

7.1 Recording

It is vital that comprehensive records are maintained regarding pupil mobility and cases of children missing education. At Clayton St John, we use the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) to maintain a chronology of actions taken in respect of each pupil where there are concerns.

Records will include details of enquiries undertaken by us as a school, copies of any referrals made to the local authority for joint enquiries, and any further correspondence throughout these enquiries.

Where a decision is taken to remove a pupil from the school roll following joint enquiries, we will record the rationale for that decision and the grounds on which they are being removed.

7.2 Reporting

Data on safeguarding is provided to the Local Governing Body on a half-termly basis. This includes pupil mobility and any concerns regarding pupils who may be children missing education.

This provides governors with strategic oversight in this area and, whilst not their remit to consider at an operational level, enables them to assure themselves that we are following all required processes as a school.

8. Links with Guidance and Other Policies

The Clayton St John CME Policy has due regard to the law and should be read in conjunction with guidance including:

- DFE Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance
- DFE Summary Table of Responsibilities to Improve School Attendance
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- DFE Guidance on Children Missing Education
- DFE Guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education
- DFE Guidance on Children who Run Away from Home or Care
- DFE Guidance on Transferring Information from School to School
- The School Admissions Code
- The Children Act 2004
- The Education Act 1996
- The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)
- The Equality Act 2010
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

This policy should also be read in line with the following Clayton St John policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Attendance

9. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Local Governing Body who receive Safeguarding Reports (including pupil mobility and CME cases) at each LGB meeting.

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if there are updates to Department for Education Guidance.

Appendix One: Useful Contacts

Children's Social Care
Integrated Front Door: 01274 433999 (Monday to Friday – 8.30 to 17.00)
Emergency Duty Team: 01274 431010 (all other times)

Website: https://www.bradfordcft.org.uk/

West Yorkshire Police
Emergency Telephone: 999
Non-Emergency Telephone: 101
Website: www.westyorkshire.police.uk/report-it

Team	Email	Telephone
Access Team	Education.Access@bradford.gov.uk	01274 439393
Attendance Support Team	Attendance@bradford.gov.uk	01274 435743
CE Hub	Child.Exploitation@bradford.gov.uk	01274 435080
Child Employment/Entertainment	cee@bradford.gov.uk	01274 437607
Children Missing Education	CME@bradford.gov.uk	01274 438877
Council Main Switchboard		01274 431000
Elective Home Education	electiveheducation@bradford.gov.uk	01274 439340
Gypsy Roma Traveller Support	BSO - Gypsy Roma Traveller Support Info	
Holidays in Term Time Fines	PN@bradford.gov.uk	01274 439651
Housing	housingoptions@bradford.gov.uk	01274 435999
Ministry of Defence Children's Education Advisory Service	RC-DCS-HQ-CEAS@mod.gov.uk	01980 618244
Missing Team	Childrens.enquiries@bradford.gov.uk	01274 439999
Prosecution/Penalty Notice	Attlegal@bradford.gov.uk	01274 439651
Safeguarding Complaints, Compliance & Advice	EdSafeTeam@bradford.gov.uk	01274 437043
School Admissions Team	schooladmissions@bradford.gov.uk	01274 439200

Appendix Two: Flowchart for Suspected Child Missing Education

This process applies where a pupil is absent for a period of 20 school days, or has not returned for 10 school days after a leave of absence, and their absence is unexplained, unauthorised and, upon school doing their enquiries as part of attendance procedures, the child's whereabouts remains unknown. The Local Authority expects that enquiries undertaken as part of a school's attendance procedures include:

- Contacting parents, relatives, neighbours, and other significant adults or contacts
- Making enquiries within school such as speaking with teachers and the child's friends
- Liaising with schools attended by siblings or schools attended previously by the child
- Conducting home visits within the timescale the child is believed to be missing education
- Sending letters, emails, text messages and/or WhatsApp messages
- Liaising with other agencies known to be working with the family
- Where a forwarding address in the UK is known, liaising with that Local Authority to establish that the family is present there.

Details of these enquiries should be recorded on CPOMS. If at any point there is reason to believe a child is in danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and the Police as appropriate.

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Where these enquiries are being undertaken and the whereabouts of the child has still not been established, the school should fully complete a 'Joint Enquiries Referral Form' (available on Bradford Schools Online) and send it to CME@bradford.gov.uk. This must be done within 10 days of the child last attending school or their whereabouts being known. **Schools do not need to wait until the 10 or 20 days have passed before referring into the Local Authority to begin joint enquiries.** A copy of this completed form should be added as an action on CPOMS. School should continue to follow the procedures within their Attendance Policy whilst the Local Authority undertakes its enquiries.

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Where joint enquiries establish the whereabouts of the child and they are still within 'reasonable travelling distance of school', the normal Attendance Policy should applied in order to support the child in returning to school. Reasonable distance is not defined by the DFE as it depends on the family situation, the geography of the area, the parents' ability to get the child to school, a safe walking route and the accessibility of local transport. A copy of any correspondence from the Local Authority as well as any actions taken to support the child in returning to school should be added to CPOMS.

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Where joint enquiries do not establish the whereabouts of the child, the Local Authority will notify the school that they have also been unable to establish the child's location. Details of this correspondence should be recorded on CPOMS. From here, the school will need to consider whether the pupil can be removed from the school roll if one of the criteria in Regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 are met (see Appendix Four). School should never consider removing a child from the school roll unless they have been informed of the outcome of the Local Authority's enquiries.

Where it is thought that there are grounds to remove the child from roll, the nominated senior member of staff (usually Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead) who has authority to remove a pupil from the school roll should be informed by email with details as to which criteria the situation meets along with supporting evidence. They should review the situation, the actions taken by the school and make a decision whether it meets one of the criteria (see Appendix Four). If they decide that the child can be removed from roll then they will send permission by email to the Data Manager for the pupil to be removed from the school roll and ensure that the reason for this decision (linked to the Regulations) is recorded as an action on CPOMS.

Where it is decided that the child can be removed from roll, ensure that the following steps are taken to formalize the pupil's removal from the school roll:

- Data Manager to update relevant section on SIMS to show that pupil is a leaver, their leaving date and that the reason for them leaving is XXX.
- Attendance Officer to complete the 'Off Roll Notification Form' on Bradford Schools Online within five days (https://bso.bradford.gov.uk/Secure/PupilRegistration/) and add a copy of this as a further action on the CPOMS log.
- Data Manager to update the school's pupil mobility spreadsheet.

Appendix Three: Grounds for Removing a Pupil from the School Roll

The following criteria are taken or paraphrased from Regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and detail the legal grounds for 'Deletions from the Admissions Register'. A pupil should never be removed from the school roll unless one of these criteria is met and evidenced:

(a) The pupil has been registered at another school and they have confirmed this with us. This cannot be used as a ground for removal if there is an active School Attendance Order in place that names us or the pupil is dual registered and we are the 'Main School'.

(b) The pupil has been with us for Nursery education and there is no reason to believe that they will be joining us in Reception

(c) The pupil is also registered at one or more other schools, we do not have reasonable grounds to believe they will attend our school again, there is no active School Attendance Order in place naming us, and the proprietors of the other school(s) agree to us deleting them from our admissions register. For example, when a pupil moves via a Managed Move.

(d) The Local Authority ceases to name us on a School Attendance Order and names another school instead.

(e) The Local Authority ceases to name us on a School Attendance Order on the grounds that the pupil will receive a suitable education other than at school.

(f) Parents have notified the school in writing that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school. The pupil can be deleted after the date specified by parents has passed providing no School Attendance Order is in force. This would be the ground for deletion when a pupil is electively home educated.

Please note that schools must inform the Local Authority when a parent indicates they may wish to electively home educate, so they can receive appropriate advice and guidance from the Elective Home Education Team.

(g) The pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school, and we do not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again.

Reasonable distance is not defined by the DFE as it depends on the family situation, the geography of the area, the parents' ability to get the child to school, a safe walking route and the accessibility of local transport.

If the child has moved into a new local authority, schools should make all reasonable attempts to inform them that they have moved into their area, as well as completing the Lost Pupil Database return at the point of deletion from roll.

Where the child has moved out of the country, school should make efforts to inform the parents that their child has been removed from the school roll and they would need to reapply for a school place via Admissions should they return to Bradford. School must also complete the Lost Pupil Database return at the point of deletion from roll.

(h) Where a known leave of absence takes place and the below are also all true, then a pupil can be removed from roll under this criterion:

1. The pupil does not return to school within 10 school days of their agreed return date
2. There is no reasonable explanation for this (e.g. illness or unavoidable cause)
3. Reasonable joint enquiries from school and the Local Authority have been unable to establish their whereabouts, or they have established the child's whereabouts but agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe they will attend the school, regardless of any reasonable steps that could be taken to support them.

It is important that a parent provides the school with a date at which the pupil will return to school, and that parents are made aware as part of the requesting leave process of the consequences of not returning from a period of leave on time.

In cases where a child's whereabouts are unknown, schools must follow the process in Appendix Three and await confirmation from the Local Authority that they have completed their joint enquiries and been unable to locate the child before removing them from the school roll.

(i) The pupil has been continuously absent for at least 20 school days and:

1. The absence has been unauthorised throughout (i.e. using codes 'G', 'O' or 'N')
2. There is no reasonable explanation for this (e.g. illness or unavoidable cause)
3. Reasonable joint enquiries from school and the Local Authority have been unable to establish their whereabouts, or they have established the child's whereabouts but agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe they will attend the school, regardless of any reasonable steps that could be taken to support them.

In cases where a child's whereabouts are unknown, schools must follow the process in Appendix Three and await confirmation from the Local Authority that they have completed their joint enquiries and been unable to locate the child before removing them from the school roll.

(j) The pupil is detained under a sentence of detention and there are no reasonable grounds to believe that they will attend school again after they are released.

(k) The pupil has died

(l) The pupil will be over compulsory school age by the next time the school meets (i.e. they have reached the end of Year 11) and there are no reasonable grounds to believe they will attend the school again (e.g. because there is no 6th form provision at the school). In these circumstances, pupils can be removed from the school roll from the last Friday in June. The Local Authority do not need to be notified with this criteria.

(m) This only applies to boarding schools.

(n) Where a pupil leaves a Private/Independent school.

(o) Where a pupil has been permanently excluded from school. This involves a separate process which is detailed within the school's Exclusions Policy.