

School Attendance

**Temporary Guidance for Schools
for use during academic year 2020 / 2021
or until further notice**

revised January 2021

CHILDREN'S & ADULTS' SERVICES

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Temporary guidance for absence management for re-opening of schools from September 2020 - This guidance will be kept under review and updated as necessary during academic year 2020/2021.

This temporary guidance has been produced to help schools maintain high levels of school attendance. It explains and illustrates changes made to regulations governing school attendance registers in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) from 24 August 2020 for use in academic year 2020/2021. It should be read in conjunction with the wider DfE guidance documents linked below, which give advice on other usual attendance duties and processes and absence coding that remain in force.

DfE Actions for school for full opening September 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

DfE School attendance: main guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf

***DfE Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19):**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

It would be helpful to read this guidance alongside the **statutory guidance** on parental measures for **school attendance and behaviour**:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/581539/School_attendance_parental_responsibility_measures_statutory_guidance.pdf

Attendance expectations

It continues to be the aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full-time. However, for as long as coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community and local restrictions apply, judgments will need to be made at a school level about how to balance minimising risks from coronavirus (COVID-19), by maximising control measures, with providing a full educational experience for children and young people. Schools should:

- **Continue to communicate clearly and consistently the expectations around school attendance to families (and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate).**
- **Identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about attending or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with the school regularly during the pandemic.**
- **Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and, act early to address patterns of absence.**
- **Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.**
- **Families should notify their school as normal if a child is unable to attend on any given day and provide regular updates for on-going absence.**

View further [Advice for schools and local authorities to support them to improve school attendance](#)

Measures for arriving at and leaving school

Schools should consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave school. This should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time. Schools should consider how to communicate this to parents and remind them about the process that has been agreed for drop off and collection, **including that gathering at the school gates and otherwise coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed.**

Referrals to the School Attendance Service

Where pupils do not return to school at the beginning of each new term or where attendance is irregular, please follow normal absence procedures to contact the family; phone calls, emails, letters of concern etc and refer to the School Attendance Service for us to make additional checks and enquiries and to contact the family. **(This offer also applies where virtual learning is not being accessed regularly)** This service will continue to offer welfare home visits and supportive communications with parents to remind them of their parental responsibility, rather than issuing warnings and fines routinely. However, we will consider more pressing cases individually. Where appropriate, we will sign post to other support agencies and work in partnership with those and with school to build confidence and maximise attendance. This interim measure is dependent on Covid prevalence. We will review this position regularly in line with Public Health England (PHE), Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) guidance.

- Your Attendance Link Officer will be in touch with you in January to make a virtual appointment to discuss these temporary arrangements or the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for 2020/2021. Until further notice, all planned appointments with schools and parents will be held virtually and your Link Officer will discuss these arrangements with you.

January 2021 temporary school closure - Attendance recording in schools

As vulnerable children are still expected to attend school full time, they should not be marked as Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). Schools and colleges should encourage vulnerable children to attend but if the parent of a vulnerable child wishes their child to be absent from school, the parent should let the school know that the pupil will not be attending. The Department for Education expects schools and colleges to grant such applications for leave given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable. As with vulnerable children, critical worker parents and carers should let schools know if their child will not be attending and, if not, schools should grant a leave of absence (code C) given the exceptional circumstances.

All pupils who are not expected to be in school should be marked as Code X. They are not attending because they are following public health advice.

New absence code for 2020 to 2021 – not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

There are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19). A new category of non-attendance has been created – **‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’ Code X** (*schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak*)

This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with the Secretary of State’s expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes. 2

***Attendance codes (please see full guidance link at top of document)**

Schools should return to using the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak in addition to the new category of 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)':

- Pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be recorded using code X
- Schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak

Examples in which 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' could apply

Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) view [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) view [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#) and [NHS test and trace](#) guidance.

- Pupils may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to [self-isolate](#) if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Pupils who have symptoms should [self-isolate](#) and get a test.

Who can be tested?

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests can be booked online through the NHS [testing and tracing for coronavirus](#) website, or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet. Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to testing.

Test kits for schools: Further information is provided at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): test kits for schools and FE providers](#).

If a pupil tests negative

- and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school.
- If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I – illness, as would usually be the case.
- Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result.
- Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.
- The only exception to return following a negative test result is where an individual is separately identified as a close contact of a confirmed case, when they will need to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of that contact.

If a pupil tests positive,

- they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and they should follow the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)

- The 10-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should continue to self-isolate until their temperature returns to normal
- They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone.
- Other members of their household should all self-isolate for the full 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive.
- Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test.
- After the pupil tests positive they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms,

- the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test.

If the member of the household tests negative,

- the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school.
- Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result when the pupil can return to school.

If the household member tests positive,

- the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms.
- Code X should be used during this period.

In all cases of self-isolation,

- Schools should ask parents to inform them immediately about the outcome of a test.
- Schools should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

NHS test and trace self-isolation,

- [NHS test and trace](#) guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 14 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).
- In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious.
- Code X should be used for these pupils during this period.

Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine,

- View guidance on [how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK](#).
- If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, code X should be used in the register.

Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only,

- View [guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable persons from Covid-19](#).
- Schools should have their own measures in place to limit the risk of transmission – view [guidance on reopening of schools](#).
- The advice for pupils in local restriction tiers 1 to 3 who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group is that they should continue to attend school unless they are one of the very small number of pupils or students under paediatric or NHS care (such as recent transplant or very immunosuppressed children) and have been advised specifically by their GP or clinician not to attend an education setting.
- Shielding advice is currently in place in tier 4 areas, and so all children still deemed clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school. Schools should make appropriate arrangements for education at home.
- Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with, this activity but this does not need to be formally recorded in the attendance register.
- For pupils who are self-isolating, or shielding and are within the definition of vulnerable, it is important that schools put systems in place to keep in contact with them, offer pastoral support, and check they are able to access education support.
- Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from Public Health England (PHE) or the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) should be recorded as code X.
- Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.
- England (PHE) or the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) should be recorded as code X.
- Schools should contact parents of pupils who are shielding when measures in the local area are lifted and shielding is paused again, to set out the expectation that they can return to school.
- Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X - should be used for pupils who are asked not to attend.
- Code X should not be used for sessions after the pupil has been advised to return to school.
- View guidance [Local restriction tiers: what you need to know](#)

Remote education (access to education at home resources)

- If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), we ask schools to provide access to remote education.
- primary: 3 hours a day, on average, across the school cohort
- secondary: 4 hours a day, with more for pupils working towards formal qualifications this year
- Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement at least weekly with this activity, and inform parents where there is a concern. (for reporting purposes, suggest using SIMS comments to record engagement with learning or use the assessment module; we understand SIMS are producing an assessment attendance mark sheet).
- Code X should be used for these pupils during this period

View guidance [get help with remote education](#)

Exceptional circumstances

- As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. View link [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, International Travel\) \(England\) Regulations 2020](#)
- As you know, there is no entitlement to leave during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Each Headteacher can determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance and can authorise leave based on individual cases. This year, because of the pandemic and restrictions on travel, schools will need to consider some additional factors when assessing requests for **exceptional leave**. Whilst we expect every child to attend school, please treat all requests for exceptional leave sensitively and continue to ask for supporting evidence as necessary. You may want to put some information on your website to remind parents to keep holidays within school holiday breaks.

Sanctions (absence and lateness)

- General Absences should be challenged as usual and authorised **only** where satisfactory evidence has been provided. **However, schools should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.**
- Sanctions for unauthorised absence referred to the School Attendance Service will be considered individually and prioritised as necessary; please discuss cases of concern with the School Attendance Service (your Link Officer). **Whilst we understand that each school will want to move forward with Sanctions at their own pace, the key consideration in deciding whether to issue a penalty notice at this time will be whether it is reasonable and will be effective in helping to get the pupil who is not attending, back into school.**

Existing PA's and vulnerable pupils – Attendance concerns

- PA's and those pupils who are vulnerable or reluctant or anxious to attend and have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic; please refer these to the School Attendance Service for early help, additional support and encouragement and for us to remind parents of their parental responsibility. We will continue to carry out door-step home visits and will develop plans with you to re-engaging families and maximise attendance. These cases can be discussed individually with your Link Officer.

Reception and year 7 No-Shows September 2020

- Schools must enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly. Please remember to follow the **Reasonable Enquiry** guidelines for Pupils on a pre-admission list/register for Reception and year 7 children who do not arrive on the expected start date.

Any child not attending

Day 1 of non-attendance

- Telephone/email/text parents and all named contacts to establish child's whereabouts.

Day 3

- Contact Link Attendance Officer and begin completing '**Reasonable Enquiry Form**', documenting contact attempts. The Attendance Officer will make agency checks and discuss carrying out a home visit.
- Send 'where are you' letter to home address.
- Continue to telephone/email/text parents and all named contacts

Day 10

- If no contact is established by day 10, despite preliminary checks/home visit having been carried out by Link Attendance Officer for Primary Schools and In-house Attendance Officers or Safer School's Officer for High Schools, send completed '**Reasonable Enquiry Form**' to the Children Missing Education Officer; CME@ealing.gov.uk and await further instruction. **Do not remove from role until agreed with CME Officer.** (Absence for whatever reason cannot be back dated)

SEND

Please make all necessary adjustments to allow for SEN pupils to attend full time. Where individual plans and risk assessments require a phased return, continue to **offer Remote education (access to education at home resources)**. Schools should contact parents and the SEN caseworker and involve them in planning for the child's return to their school.

Absence coding

- Coding of absence remains as usual with the addition of a new category of 'X' – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' 'X'
- *schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak*
- Families should notify their school as normal if a child is unable to attend on any given day and provide regular updates for on-going absence.
- Please follow normal procedures for absence and request verification as normal and code accordingly. However, schools should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

Children missing Education (CME)

- If a child fails to return to school in September and you cannot locate them, please follow CME procedure as usual.
- If a family is 'stuck' abroad due to lock down, parents must provide schools with detailed information of their whereabouts, reason for travel and estimated return date. (this will determine how absence is coded; authorised or unauthorised) If information is not provided please follow CME process.
- **3-day no contact**; please contact **School Attendance Link Officer** to make enquiries/home visit (High Schools to carry out own home visit where possible) Send 3-day absence letter and try ALL contact numbers.
- **10-day no contact**; please send 10-day absence letter to parent and submit Reasonable Enquiry form to CME@ealing.gov.uk. Please keep child on roll until advised by CME Officer to remove. Absence for whatever reason cannot be back dated.

Children Missing Out Education (CMOE - those attending part time)

- Please notify the Data Team or your Link Officer/SEN case worker of all children who attend your school on part time hours/are on dual registration.

Electively Home Educated Children (EHE)

- On receipt of written notification to home educate, schools must inform the pupil's local authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. **Schools should not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding the pupil or because the pupil has a poor attendance record.**
- Elective home education should always be a positive choice taken by parents without pressure from their school. Schools should not seek to prevent parents from educating their children outside the school system. There is no requirement for parents to obtain the school or local authority's agreement to educate their child at home.
- Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full-time education, but this does not have to be at a school.
- If you do have concerns about a parent's commitment and or capacity to EHE please contact Sinead Galbraith sgalbraith@ealing.gov.uk If the child has an EHCP please contact Rosita Caspersz CasperszR@ealing.gov.uk If you do have a safeguarding concern and wish to make a referral please contact ECIRS ecirs@ealing.gov.uk

Exclusions

- Permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort. Where a child with a social worker is at risk of exclusion, their social worker should be informed and involved in relevant conversations.

Leavers and attendance back-dating

- Where the parent of a pupil notifies the school that the pupil will live at another address, schools must record in the admission register: (a) the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live, (b) the new address, and (c) the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.
- Where a parent notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, schools must record in the admission register: (a) the name of the other school, and (b) the date of when the pupil first attended, or is due to start attending, that school.

- **(Absence for whatever reason cannot be back dated)** Refer to DfE guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education> and in SLA 20/21. Or, contact Lucinda to discuss lpoole@ealing.gov.uk.

Ealing Off-rolling guidance7- there is additional guidance on EGFL alongside this document

Punctuality

- Please record lateness as normal; inform parents that frequent/significant lateness (on their given start time if staggered) will be unauthorised (code U) and referred to School Attendance.

Amendments to the Admission Register and Attendance Register

- Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register

- Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Data collection

- Collection of school attendance data as part of the school census will resume in January 2021, collecting data for the autumn term 2020. Subject to the necessary legislation being made, from January 2021, the census will collect attendance codes in addition to absence codes.

DfE Daily return required; to be submitted by mid-day

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-attendance-recording-for-educational-settings/educational-settings-self-reporting-online-form-frequently-asked-questions-faq>
- Further information will follow on what, if any, additional attendance data will be required during the 2020 to 2021 academic year to monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and support the government's planning.

Ofsted

- COVID note: Routine section 5 & 8 OFSTED inspections are suspended during Autumn Term 2020. Safeguarding inspections will continue as usual. **Update: January 2021: phased return to inspection. We are not planning to carry out graded inspections of education or social care providers before the summer term.**

Maintained schools and academies

- From January, Ofsted will resume monitoring inspections of schools judged inadequate at their previous inspection and some schools graded as requires improvement. These will not result in a grade. Emergency inspections of schools will continue as they have done throughout the pandemic, in response to any serious concerns raised with Ofsted.
- Routine inspections, which result in a school being awarded a new grade or being confirmed in its current grade, will resume in the summer term.

View details at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofsted-coronavirus-covid-19-rolling-update>

This guidance summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents.

These requirements are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4) &(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

DfE guidance: What parents and carers need to know

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>