

# **School Attendance**

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

revised March 2021

**CHILDREN'S & ADULTS' SERVICES**

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**Temporary guidance for absence management for re-opening of schools from September 2020 (reviewed March 2021) - 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 (reviewed March 2021)**

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

**Systems of control**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/964351/Schools coronavirus operational guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964351/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf)

## **Attendance expectations**

School attendance will be mandatory for all pupils from 8 March 2021.

The usual rules on school attendance apply:

- schools are responsible for recording attendance, following up absence and reporting Children Missing Education to the Local Authority.
- parents' duty to secure their child's regular attendance at school (where the child is a registered pupil at school, and they are of compulsory school age)
- 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.
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct. However, please note that whilst this temporary guidance is in place (and at least for the first half of the Spring term) Ealing will continue to consider FPN's or other legal action on a case by case basis as the focus should continue to be on engaging with the family. We will require more detailed information than usual from schools relating to absence when fines are requested/court action is considered.

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

## **Testing**

During the week commencing 8 March, pupils will be offered asymptomatic testing on site in **secondary schools**. Pupils who consent to testing should return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result. Pupils not undergoing testing should attend school in line with your school's phased return arrangements. Vulnerable children and children of critical workers in secondary schools should continue to attend school throughout unless they receive a positive test result.

Testing is voluntary, but strongly encouraged.

**Primary age pupils** will not be tested. Public Health England have advised there are currently limited public health benefits attached to testing primary pupils with lateral flow devices. Primary age pupils may find the LFD testing process unpleasant and are unable to self-swab. The DfE will review this approach in the light of any emerging evidence. **Further guidance is anticipated.**

All primary school pupils are expected to return to school on 8 March.

Schools should not plan for rotas as there is no requirement to reduce occupancy in schools. Instead, everyone must follow the **system of controls**. View at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/964351/Schools\\_coronavirus\\_operational\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964351/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf)

## **Pupils and families who are anxious about attending school**

It is likely that some pupils, parents, and households may be reluctant or anxious about attending school. This may include pupils who:

- have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised they no longer need to shield
- live in a household where someone is clinically vulnerable (CV) or CEV (including young carers)
- are concerned about the possible increased risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) such as those who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes

In such cases, schools should:

- Discuss any concerns with parents and provide reassurance on the measures you are putting in place to reduce any risks.
- Remind parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies.

**Advice for schools to improve school attendance is available at:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/framework-for-securing-full-attendance-actions-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

## **Encouraging regular school attendance**

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.

Schools should also identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about attending or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. You may want to put particular emphasis on:

- disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people
- pupils who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic
- pupils who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic

To support families who will need additional help to secure pupils' regular attendance, schools can use the additional catch-up funding that has been provided, as well as existing pastoral and support services, their LA link Attendance Officer and pupil premium funding.

Schools should also work closely with other professionals across the education and health systems, where appropriate, to support school attendance. Please do continue to notify the pupil's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance. Please also contact the SEN caseworker for additional support where the child has an EHCP.

EHAP's should be considered where services and or support is needed by a family. Contact: EHAP [EHAP@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:EHAP@ealing.gov.uk)

## **Safeguarding**

As usual, safeguarding concerns should be referred to **Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (ECIRS) on 020 8825 8000. Or,**

Contact ECIRS consultation line: 020 8825 5236 - Open: Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5pm

## **Private fostering**

During the period of pandemic, additional stresses can be placed on families; please be alert to signs that a child might be in a private fostering situation. **Private Fostering** is when a child or young person under the age of 16 (or under 18 if they are disabled) is living away from home full time for 28 days or more with an adult who is not there:

- Parent, stepparent, or legal guardian
- Grandparent
- Brother or sister
- Aunt or Uncle.

If you are aware of a private fostering arrangement, please contact Ealing Children's Integrated Response

Service (ECIRS) on 020 8825 8000 who will make the necessary checks and offer support as necessary.

Further information can be found on EGFL.

**View link at:** <https://www.egfl.org.uk/services-children/safeguarding-and-child-protection/safeguarding-specific-issues/private-fostering>

## **Vulnerable children**

**View link at:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision#vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

Where pupils who are self-isolating are within the definition of vulnerable, it is important that schools put systems in place to keep in contact with them; schools should:

- notify their social worker (if they have one)
- notify their SEN caseworker (if they have one)
- agree with the social worker/SEN caseworker the best way to maintain contact and offer support

### **schools should have procedures in place to:**

- check if a vulnerable pupil is able to access remote education support
- support them to access it (as far as possible)
- regularly check if they are accessing remote education

## **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.**

## **Admitting children back to school**

Pupil who have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) can return to their normal routine and stop self-isolating after they have finished their isolation period and their symptoms have gone or if they continue to have only a residual cough or anosmia. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. If they still have a high temperature after 10 days or are otherwise unwell, schools should advise them to stay at home and seek medical advice.

Schools should **not request evidence of negative test** results or other medical evidence before admitting pupils or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation. In the vast majority of cases, parents and carers will be in agreement that a pupil with symptoms should not attend the school, given the potential risk to others. In the event that a parent or carer insists on a pupil attending your school, you can take the decision to refuse the pupil if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect your pupils and staff from possible infection with coronavirus (COVID-19). Your decision would need to be carefully considered in the light of all the circumstances and current public health advice.

## **Referrals to the School Attendance Service**

Where pupils do not return to school at the beginning of each new term (or a date specified by school) or where attendance is irregular, please follow normal absence procedures to contact the family; phone calls, emergency contacts, 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 remote learning is not being accessed regularly)** This service will continue to offer welfare door-stop home visits and supportive communications with parents to remind them of their parental responsibility, rather than issuing warnings and fines in line with our usual escalation processes. 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 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 keep in touch with you in and make virtual appointments to discuss cases of concern and these temporary arrangements which sit alongside our 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 any changes to these arrangements with you in line with any lockdown easing.

## **Recording attendance and absence**

You should record attendance in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended) for all pupils.

During the week commencing 8 March, **secondary school** pupils will be offered asymptomatic testing on site. Schools should use code Y for secondary pupils not expected to be attending school for lessons during this week due to the asymptomatic testing programme.

Schools should use code X if a child is self-isolating or quarantining because of coronavirus (COVID-19) in accordance with relevant legislation or guidance published by PHE or the DHSC.

- 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
- 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 from parents as normal and code accordingly.

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

## **Self-isolation and shielding**

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend from 8 March in line with public health advice to self-isolate because they:

- have symptoms or have had a positive test result
- live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

There is growing evidence that many children identified at the start of the pandemic as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are not at increased risk of serious outcomes from coronavirus (COVID-19) and children are gradually being removed from the shielding patient list (SPL) as appropriate, following review with a clinician. The advice for pupils who have been confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable is to shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice. They are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally. All 16 to 18-year olds with underlying health conditions, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality will be offered a vaccine in priority group 6 of the vaccination programme. At present, these children should continue to shield, and self-isolate if they have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a positive case, even if they have been vaccinated.

Schools can request from parents a copy of the shielding letter sent to CEV children, to confirm that they are advised not to attend school or other educational settings whilst shielding guidance is in place.

If evidence of absence is required, it can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, text, or email confirmation of appointments, etc. As usual, input from GPs should only be sought where there are complex health needs or persistent absence issues. [School attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/school-attendance-guidance-for-schools)

Schools are required to provide remote education to pupils who are unable to attend school because they are complying with government guidance or legislation around coronavirus (COVID-19), in the circumstances provided for in the Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction. Schools should keep a record of this activity but do not need to record it in the attendance register.

**You should offer pastoral support to pupils who are:**

- self-isolating
- shielding
- vulnerable

Where pupils are not able to attend school, as they are following clinical or public health advice related to coronavirus (COVID-19), the absence will not be penalised.

### **NHS test and trace self-isolation,**

Staff members, parents and carers will need to:

- book a test if they or their child has symptoms - the main symptoms are:
- a high temperature
- a new continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- self-isolate immediately and not come to school if:
- they develop symptoms or they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) 24
- anyone in their household or support or childcare bubble develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- they are required to do so having recently travelled from certain other countries or they have been advised to isolate by NHS test and trace or the PHE local health protection team, which is a legal obligation
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with, if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by [NHS test and trace](#)
- **Code X should be used for these pupils during this period.**

## **Remote education (access to education at home resources)**

- If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), schools should 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).
- Code X should be used for these pupils during this period

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

## **Leave in term time - 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.
- 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 might want to consider some additional factors when assessing requests for **exceptional leave**, such as 'who is asking', 'what is their occupation/are you a key worker' and 'why'? 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 review your Application for Leave Form and 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 proportionate and will be effective in helping to get the pupil who is not attending, back into school.**

## **Escalation process- 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](mailto: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.

## **Children missing Education (CME)**

- If a child fails to return to school at the beginning of a new term/half term 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](mailto: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](mailto:sgalbraith@ealing.gov.uk) If the child has an EHCP please contact Rosita Caspersz [CasperszR@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:CasperszR@ealing.gov.uk) If you do have a safeguarding concern and wish to make a referral please contact ECIRS [ecirs@ealing.gov.uk](mailto: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 [lpool@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:lpool@ealing.gov.uk) .

**Ealing Off-rolling guidance-** there is additional guidance on EGFL alongside this document or ask your Link Officer or CME

## **Registers and Data Collection**

### **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**

this will continue from 8 March; 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>

## **Ofsted**

### **State-funded school inspection**

Routine, graded Ofsted inspections remain suspended for the spring term. It is intended that these inspections will resume in the summer term. The DfE will continue to keep the inspection arrangements under review.

In the spring term, Ofsted is conducting non-graded monitoring inspections of:

- inadequate schools
- schools judged as requires improvement at their last 2 (or more) consecutive inspections
- some other schools that require improvement

**The monitoring inspections are designed to:**

- provide assurance to parents
- provide support to schools
- take into account the school's context, including the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- enable inspectors to reach an assessment of whether leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances

**The monitoring inspections focus on:**

- action being taken to provide education in the current circumstances
- the curriculum, including any adaptations to meet current challenges
- the provision of remote education
- support for pupils with SEND, whether they are in school or being educated at home
- the contribution of those responsible for governance
- the impact of support and challenge provided to the school, including from any external partners

Ofsted also continues to have the power to inspect a school where it has significant concerns. This could include concerns relating to:

- the quality of education being provided, including remote education
- safeguarding

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>