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**Attendance Guidance for Full Re-Opening of ALL Schools – 8 March 2021**

Following on from Government’s announcement on 22 February 2021, setting out the aim of a gradual and phased approach towards easing the restrictions in a sustainable way, full re-opening of schools has been identified as a national priority for all schools across England. The Government have issued detailed Attendance based guidance which is summarised below; this covers Attendance Codes and how to improve school attendance.

Secondary schools are allowed to stagger their return over a week to allow a phased return over a week, to allow Covid testing to be carried out. This does not apply to Primary schools.

(See Appendix A: 1 –School Attendance Guidance for Schools)

**Attendance Expectations**

(See Appendix A: 1 &6 –School Attendance: Guidance for Schools &Addendum: recording attendance in relation to Coronavirus)

Attendance will be mandatory from 8 March 2021 and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

* parents’ duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
* schools’ responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
* the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities’ code of conduct
* A new guidance Issued by the DfE,” Improving School Attendance” (see Appendix A: 5), provides details regarding how schools will be expected to provide support for families and children to identify and overcome barriers before pursuing enforcement. The support may require the delivering of interventions and/or multi agency approach e.g. Social care, Early Help.

**Contents of Attendance Register**

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

* Present;
* Attending an approved educational activity;
* Absent;
* Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances; or,
* Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)
* The school should follow up any absences to:
* Ascertain the reason;
* Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
* Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
* Identify the correct code to use

**Authorised Absence from School**

Authorised absence’ means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence**.**

**Absence and Attendance Codes**

Please see Appendix A: 5- Addendum: Recording attendance in relation to Coronavirus for full codes.

The purpose of this short guidance is to focus on specific codes to provide clarity during the return to full opening of schools:

**Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:**

**Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

**Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)**

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors’ notes.

**Unauthorised Absence from School**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

**Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.**

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. **The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised**.

Can a parent take their child on holiday during term time?

Head teachers should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a head teacher grants a leave request, it will be for the head teacher to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm.

Guidelines for quarantining should be followed and absence from school recorded appropriately (G code for unauthorised leave of absence and X code for quarantining). The pupil should be expected to be in school as soon as the quarantine period is complete

**Code O: Absent from school without authorisation**

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

**Code X: Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)**

For the school year 2020 to 2021, this is a new category added to record instances when a pupil is ‘not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)’.

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)

**This would also relate to pupils classed as “Clinically Extremely Vulnerable CEV”-not expected to be in school**

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.

For example, if a pupil is required to self-isolate, as he/she, or a member of their household has symptoms or confirmed covid. The pupil should get a test. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. If the pupil tests positive they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school. If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. 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) 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. Please see The Addendum (Ref Appendix A: 6) which provides further information and contains more examples.

**Code X: Not required to be in school**

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend. (This code is not counted as an absence in the school census)

**Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances**

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

* The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
* The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil’s home is not within walking distance; or
* A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

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

**Different Term Dates for Different Pupils**

Schools and local authorities can agree to set different term dates for different year groups – e.g. for **‘staggered starts’** or ‘induction days’. Code # can be used to record the year groups that are not due to attend. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that those pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year. However, for 8 March Start, for staggered starts, the DfE have advised use of the Y code for pupils not expected to attend school.

**NEW Further Information on Attendance Coding** (Reference: Appendix A: 7 DfE List of Attendance Subcodes- published 2.3.2021)

The DfE have introduced a set of sub-codes to help schools accurately and consistently record non-attendance related to coronavirus, and helps them to complete the daily education settings status form.

The table below summarises the subcodes which will be used to accurately record the reason for absence for **the I and X code**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Pupil Attendance subcodes description** |
| **I01** | Illness |
| **I02** | Illness Confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) |
| **X01** | Non compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school |
| **X02** | Pupil self-isolating with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms |
| **X03** | Pupil self-isolating due to potential contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) INSIDE the school setting |
| **X04** | Pupil self-isolating due to potential contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) OUTSIDE the school setting |
| **X05** | Pupils required to self-isolate as part of quarantine requirement (after arriving in the UK from a non-exempt country or territory) |
| **X06** | Pupil not in school because they have been advised specifically by their Doctor or public health authority that they are clinically extremely vulnerable and should not attend |
| **X07** | Pupil advised specifically not to attend school as part of restrictions to education set out in Government advice |

Schools SIMs contacts will advise further on how these codes will be mapped using character keys.

Where schools are using these sub-codes they will still need to consider on an individual basis whether Code X is the appropriate code for a given non-attendance. They will need to ensure that Code X is only used where a pupil does not attend school because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

* Contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from either Public Health England (PHE 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)

Where a pupil’s non-attendance does not meet these requirements it should not be recorded as Code X and schools should consider whether another code can be used.

**Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable when shielding is advised** (Ref: Appendix A: 3 &10 –Schools Operational Guidance & Guidance on Shielding & Protecting CEV)

If shielding has been advised nationally or in a local area by DHSC or PHE, then pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from PHE or the 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. Code X should not be used for sessions after the pupil has been advised to return to school.

**Self-isolation and shielding**

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend 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)

We know from 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 as they continue to be at greater risk on exposure to coronavirus.

You will be able to 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.

\*\***The new formal shielding measures will apply across the whole of England until at least 31 March 2021 \*\***

As normal**, you should not encourage parents to request unnecessary medical evidence** such as doctors’ notes from their GP when their child is absent from school due to illness. This is already set out in school attendance guidance (Appendix A: 1) but is especially important in the context of the pandemic and the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme. If evidence is required, it can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, text or email confirmation of appointments, etc. rather than a doctors’ note. As usual, input from GPs should only be sought where there are complex health needs or persistent absence issues.

You 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. You 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.**

**Rapid lateral flow testing In Secondary School for school pupils and staff**

(See Appendix A: 12 Rapid lateral flow testing for households and bubbles of school pupils and staff)

About 1 in 3 people with coronavirus do not have symptoms but can still pass it on to others. Regular testing of people without symptoms is important to help stop the virus spreading and protect your loved ones. Testing is voluntary and no child or young person should be tested unless informed consent has been given by the appropriate person such as a parent or legal guardian and the child and young person is willing to be tested.

However, we strongly encourage all children and young people to participate in testing, wherever it is possible to do so, to help identify asymptomatic positive cases and support appropriate self-isolation to break the chain of transmission.

The lateral flow testing does not apply to Primary Schools; therefore Primary Schools will not require to have a staggered start during the week of 8 March.

**Secondary school pupils**

Upon returning to school, secondary school pupils will be asked to take their:

* First 3 tests at their place of study under the supervision of a trained operator
* Fourth test themselves using a home test kit

Pupils will then continue taking twice-weekly tests using a home test kit provided by their school. Pupils must report their result to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed, either online or by telephone, as set out in the home test kit instructions.

**Primary or secondary school staff**

Upon returning to school, teaching and non-teaching staff of primary and secondary schools should take twice-weekly tests using a home test kit provided by their school. This includes permanent, temporary and voluntary school staff.

**Special Schools -Rapid asymptomatic testing in specialist settings** (see Appendix A: 13 rapid asymptomatic testing in specialist settings)

Specialist settings are encouraged to:

* offer all staff home test kits to be taken on a twice weekly basis
* upon wider reopening from 8 March 2021, where it is appropriate to do so offer pupils and students aged 11 and above (including those who have been attending during the lockdown period, including vulnerable children and the children of critical workers) 3 supervised tests 3 to 5 days apart on-site before moving to home testing
* work with pupils and students of secondary school age who are in attendance and their families to agree the most appropriate way for them to access twice weekly testing from 8 March 2021

For the majority of pupils and students, having their first 3 tests on-site via the setting’s Asymptomatic Testing Site (ATS) will help them get used to the tests before they begin doing them at home.

In circumstances where a pupil or student would not be able to be tested through an ATS but who could be tested at home by (or with support from) a suitably competent adult. Settings can provide home testing kits to them from the outset (without the pupil being tested at an ATS first), where this is appropriate for the pupil or student.

For their fourth test onwards, pupils and students should be offered home testing kits and should be supervised by an adult at home when taking the tests (unless they are aged 18 or above).

**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

School’s 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.

**LA support**

If pupil absence persists despite support and interventions you may seek LA support by completing a Persistent Absence Referral form or a Covid related Absence Referral Form and send to SBC :Attendance Service.

**Encouraging regular school attendance**

You 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.

You 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, you can use the additional catch-up funding that has been provided, as well as existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and pupil premium funding.

You 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.

**Alternative provision and Special Schools** (see Appendix A: 4 Operational Guidance for Special Schools and AP)

All pupils in alternative provision (AP) and Special Schools settings should attend school full-time, including:

* Pupil referral units
* AP academies
* AP free schools
* Independent AP schools

Where they are affected by the Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction, AP settings must provide remote education to pupils covered by the Direction whose attendance would be contrary to government guidance or law around coronavirus (COVID-19).

AP settings must comply with health and safety law which requires employers to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. When working through the system of controls, AP settings should take steps to minimise social contact and mixing as far as is practicable. All AP settings, especially larger AP schools, should consider whether pupils can be placed into smaller groups and still receive a broad and balanced curriculum.

Due to the smaller size of many AP settings, and because AP settings are not typically organised by year groups, AP settings may wish to adopt whole school bubble as part of their systems of control

For pupils and students with SEND, and those in alternative provision settings, their teachers are best placed to know how their needs can be most effectively met to ensure they continue to make progress if they are not in face-to-face education.

We recognise that some pupils and students with SEND may not be able to access remote education without adult support and so expect you to work with families to deliver an ambitious curriculum appropriate for their level of need.

Further details on delivering remote education for children and young people with SEND is set out in Remote Education Good Practice. You should have systems for checking, daily, whether pupils and students are engaging

**How to complete the educational setting status form (**See Appendix A: 8 & 9 How to Complete the ESSF & List of ESSF Questions)

This data will help the government monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on settings, focus support more effectively and keep children safe.

The educational setting status form is for:

* academies (including free schools and studio schools) - each school in a multi-academy trust (MAT) must complete this individually and MAT head office cannot complete it on behalf of member schools
* local authority-maintained schools
* independent schools
* non-maintained special schools
* pupil referral units
* university technical colleges
* special post-16 institutions
* further education (FE) colleges and sixth-form colleges – if colleges are part of a group, a single form should be completed covering all colleges that fall under the corporation

The DfE are asking educational settings for continued cooperation in providing information about pupil or student attendance and setting closures or partial closures during coronavirus (COVID-19).

You MUST access the DfE Covid Portal and complete the ESSF daily by 2pm. The ESSF will ask:

* Whether your setting is open
* Numbers of vulnerable children and children of critical workers attending
* Remote education arrangements
* Free school meals arrangements
* Staff absences

This data is being collected to help manage the impact of and response to coronavirus (COVID-19) on the education sector. The information you supply helps the department and other government bodies make decisions. We thank you for your time and patience.

Guidance on those classed as vulnerable children and children of critical workers can be found on GOV.UK.

**Engagement of Parent’s (**See Appendix A: 11 what parents need to know about early year’s providers, schools and colleges)

It is important that schools maintain good communication and engagement with parents and parental responsibility is made clear regarding the mandatory attendance of all pupils at school.

Pupils who live with family members who are CEV but are not themselves CEV are still expected to attend school.

* Parents should not send their child to school if they:
* have symptoms or live in a household with someone who has symptoms
* have tested positive themselves, even if they do not have symptoms
* live in a household with someone who has tested positive, even if that person does not have symptoms
* are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
* are required to self-isolate for travel-related reasons

Parents are expected to maintain contact with school’s during the absence of their child in order for school to record the attendance appropriately.

We know some parents will be feeling anxious about their children returning to school, if this is the case, schools will be expected to work with parents and pupils to support a return to school.

**Improving School Attendance: support for schools (See Appendix A: 5)**

All school staff involved with attendance should read this guidance which sets out strategies, ideas and techniques on improving attendance using supportive measures foremast and to only use punitive/enforcement measures as a last option.

The guidance provides ways of supporting Pupils at risk of persistent absence with the aim of improving attendance. You may want to:

* establish robust escalation procedures which are initiated before absence becomes a problem, for example by: sending letters to parents
* having a weekly tutor review
* creating attendance clinics
* engaging with local authority attendance teams and/or independent attendance organisations
* **using fixed penalty notices**
* establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance
* monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures (and intervention), for example:
* having a review and clinic drop in
* sampling of case files
* evaluate the impact of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work and that reflect the school context best
* attend or lead on attendance reviews and clinics in line with escalation procedures
* engage governors in attendance panels to reinforce messages and outline relevance in terms of training and employment.

**Local Authority Enforcement Action – Reinstatement of Warning Periods and Penalty Notices**

This will resume from 8 March 2021 in line with guidance from Government for Schools and Local Authorities to use as a means to support attendance at school.

Schools should follow good practice and communicate with their parent community to inform them of enforcement resuming by way of a school wide parent letter or Newsletter. In the first instance it will be important for the school to work with families that are overseas to return immediately to the UK, which may also require a time in quarantining during which online provision can be provided to the pupil/s.

However, if after a time, when schools have exhausted all supportive options schools can request for a warning period (criteria 10 unauthorised absence sessions) or a Penalty Notice (10 sessions of unauthorised absence G code following leave of absence) to be issued. The issuing of WP or PN must be prospective and NOT retrospective and Penalty Notices can only be issued once the pupil returns back to school.

Absences contributing towards criteria for enforcement must be counted from 8 March 2021 onwards however, as mentioned schools should seek to support the family and pupil before choosing the enforcement route.

If a warning period is to be issued we ask that schools provide details of their actions and evidence as part of the request, to help the LA with becoming aware of intrinsic circumstances leading to the warning period. This may form part of a legal file should the parents fail to engage.

Schools are required to submit all documentation/proformas by email to [Attendance@slough.gov.uk](mailto:Attendance@slough.gov.uk) and **only 1 attachment document per email can be sent, if there are multiple proformas please send each proforma individually.**

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate in contacting the **Attendance Service on 01753 787670, or by emailing** [**Attendance@slough.gov.uk**](mailto:Attendance@slough.gov.uk)

Farah Malik

Interim Attendance Team –Service Manager

Attendance Service

Slough Borough Council

Directorate: People - Children

General Attendance Line: 01753 787670

**Appendix A: List of Documents and links Related to Attendance**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Name of Document | Document | Link | Date of Update |
| 1 | School attendance: guidance for schools |  | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance> | 2.3.2021 |
| 2 | Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: Schools |  | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>  (this is not fully updated to incorporate the changes due to opening of schools from 8 March) | 2.3.2021 |
| 3 | Schools Coronavirus (Covid-19) Operational Guidance (applies from 8 March 2021) |  | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak> | 22.2.2021 |
| 4 | Operational Guidance for Special Schools and AP |  |  | 1.3.2021 |
| 5 | Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities |  | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/framework-for-securing-full-attendance-actions-for-schools-and-local-authorities> | 2.3.2021 |
| 6 | Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) | Webpage | Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19), which explains and illustrates the changes made to regulations governing school attendance registers in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19), which come into effect from 24 August 2020 for use throughout the 2020 to 2021 school year.  <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year> | 2.3.2021 |
| 7 | DfE: List of Subcodes |  | Recording Non Attendance related to Coronavirus (Covid-19) | 2.3.2021 |
| 8 | How to Complete the Education Setting Status Form |  | <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-complete-the-educational-setting-status-form?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=28061919-8493-4187-a107-2d9848f847f3&utm_content=immediately> | 2.3.2021 |
| 9 | Questions on the Education Setting Status Form for Schools |  | List of questions for Schools to expect on the DfE Portal for ESSF | 3.3.2021 |
| 10 | Guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable persons from COVID-19 (applies until 31 March 2021) | webpage | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19> | 25.2.2021 |
| 11 | What Parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during Covid-19 | Webpage | 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-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-19 | 24.2.2021 |
| 12 | Rapid lateral flow testing for households and bubbles of school pupils and staff |  | https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff | 4.3.2021 |
| 13 | Guidance Rapid asymptomatic testing in specialist settings Updated 1 March 2021 |  | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/rapid-asymptomatic-testing-in-specialist-settings> | 1.3.2021 |