

School Attendance Service advice to schools on attendance and register coding from the autumn term 2020/21 - July 2020

The DfE's expectation is that all schools will continue to work with families to secure regular school attendance for all children from September 2020. School attendance will be again mandatory for compulsory age children and from the start of the academic year, the previous duties and expectations on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record daily attendance of each child and follow up any absence
- that schools have availability to request penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct for non-attendance.

All schools and academies should resume the use of the absence and attendance codes as referenced in **School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities July 2019** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

Section 1 - What are a school's responsibilities when a pupil is absent?

All schools should follow their own normal attendance policies and procedures which should include:

Day 1 - First day contact, telephone/text the pupil's parent or carer to establish reasons for the absence.

Day 2 - Follow up on first day contact, a subsequent telephone call and/or text must be made. School should explore all known contact details listed for the pupil including any email addresses.

Day 3 – Repeat steps for day 1 and 2. If no contact has been established school should complete a safeguarding home visit.

Day 4 – Repeat steps for day 1 and 2. Additional investigations to establish the pupil's whereabouts should include making contact with;

- Professional agencies currently involved with the family/pupil
- The school where a known siblings attends
- The pupil's school friends
- Neighbours or known associates of the family
- Social Media (where possible)

Day 5 – Repeat steps for day 1 and 2. Write to the parent/carers requesting contact to be made with the school immediately.

Where school staff have concerns about a pupil, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.

Once school has completed these checks and failed to establish any contact with a family, the reason for absence will remain unauthorised. School should explore various possibilities which may include the pupil being on holiday, moved house or CME whereabouts unknown.

All schools have access to advice and guidance on attendance and legal processes via the School Attendance Toolkit - <http://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk/Pages/Download/18a59a8c-941d-4040-a250-db5df47e352d>

Section 2 – Frequently asked questions from schools

FAQ 1 - Can schools request that penalty notices to be issued?

In Leeds we anticipate that schools will have already provided parents with information on how, when and where each child will return to school in September. Parents will be aware that full attendance is expected and the first few days may be those of transition to a new pattern. Referring to the LA to request Penalty Notice process for unauthorised absence is legal from the start of term but many schools may wish to support a restorative approach for the first week or so unless for holiday absence.

Fast Track Initiatives (Penalty notices) – From September 2020 schools can resume undertaking Fast Track Initiatives. The evidence period can commence once a pupil has had 10 or more unauthorised absences.

FAQ 2 - If parents who are anxious and reluctant to send their children back to school in September, what should schools do?

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age **must** be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc.)

The Educational Psychologist Team have produced documents which support the 'return to school' including a parent/carer guide, mental health in school strategies and resources to support with planning. The link to these documents can be found here:
<http://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk/Page/17462>

FAQ 3 - Which pupils should be self-isolating?

Please refer to the latest government guidance on self-isolation:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

FAQ 4 - Which pupils should be self-isolating (quarantine) after travel?

Please refer to the latest government guidance on countries which you **do not need** to self-isolate on return to the UK: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors#countries-and-territories-with-no-self-isolation-on-arrival-in-england>

FAQ 5 - What attendance code do we use for pupils expected to attend that are currently self-isolating?

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following public health advice, absence will not be penalised and our view is that the continuation of Code Y is the most appropriate. When pupils are part of a collapsed bubble and requested by the school to self-isolate this should also be coded as Y. Where a pupil has tested positive – code I (illness)

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FAQ 6 - For pupils who are self-isolating do we need to provide access to remote education?

There is currently no clear DFE guidance however we would assume that if the child may be able to access remote learning if not too unwell.

FAQ 7 - What evidence do schools need to accept for self-isolating and/or quarantine as a valid reason for absence?

Self-Isolating – Evidence is a positive test result. If negative the pupil would be expected to be in school the following day.

Quarantine - Refer to latest government guidance to determine which country this applies to. Parent will need to evidence this e.g. copy of travel document/s.

FAQ 8 - Which pupils should be shielding?

Shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the [current advice on shielding](#)

Some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#).

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised

FAQ 9- Should schools provide access to remote education to pupils who are shielding?

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, the expectation from DFE is that schools are able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity.

FAQ 10- What attendance code do we use for a pupil who is shielding?

Code Y - Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised. This has not been confirmed by DfE but would be in line with the current advice.

FAQ 11 - Do we need to submit attendance data to the DFE?

The DfE will issue further technical guidance for schools to record attendance and absence, including what data schools will be asked to return to the department. There is an expectation that further advice may follow.

FAQ 12 – When we have a staggered start time do we need to close the registers at different times?

The closing of registers should reflect the staggered start times.

Section 3 - What support can the School Attendance Service (SAS) offer schools in the autumn term?

- **Week 1** – The Schools Attendance Service will response to any email/ telephone enquiry plus usual support for Children missing education known and CME unknown.
- **Week 2** – SAS Email and telephone support continues, Children Looked After support will commence and traded work will restart **plus specific support on Year 7 and reception who have not yet appeared in school.**

Schools can pass on names of those from these 2 year groups who they have not been able to contact in the first week. Attendance officers will then contact.

Please see link below for the ‘Failed to take up place Sept 2020’ referral form:
<http://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk/Page/18018>

- **Week 3/4** – Follow up on all other years without reason for non-attendance. Schools can send in (Absence) 10 day unauthorised absence form and attendance officers will follow up.

Please find link to ten day absence form at <http://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk/Page/18018>
Completed forms to be sent to tendayabsence@leeds.gov.uk

Please note - specific queries will be responded to by Attendance Team Managers if sent to schoolattendanceservice@leeds.gov.uk