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Guidance

Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2021 to 2022 academic year

Updated 6 January 2022

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Purpose of this document

This publication is an addendum to the non-statutory [school attendance: guidance for schools](#).

We have amended regulations to enable schools, in the 2021 to 2022 academic year, to continue to record where a pupil does not attend in circumstances relating to COVID-19.

Expiry or review date

This guidance will be reviewed before August 2022.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- school leaders, school staff and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies, independent, and free schools
- local authorities

Summary

This guidance sets out how schools should record where pupils are not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus in the 2021/22 academic year. This category should only be used to record where their attendance would be contrary to legislation or guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19 from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), or the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Attendance expectations

Attendance is mandatory. The usual rules on attendance continue to 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' codes of conduct
- the duty on local authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education

Not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19

This category must be used to record sessions that take place in the 2021 to

2022 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 COVID-19 from UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), 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 COVID-19

This category must only be used to record where a pupil is not attending for the reasons set out above. It should not be used to record any other type of non-attendance or absence - for example, where a parent or pupil is anxious about attending school because of COVID-19.

The [schools COVID-19 operational guidance](#) sets out when pupils should self-isolate and when they ought to be tested in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

Examples in which ‘not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19’ could apply

In line with current legislation and guidance from the UKHSA and DHSC, examples are as follows.

Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms of COVID-19

Pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should follow the latest government guidance on whether they need to take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

Where a pupil is required to take a PCR test, and they test negative and feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the PCR test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I (illness). 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. For symptomatic pupils, Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test.

After a pupil tests positive for COVID-19 (LFD or PCR), they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school. They should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance.

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

From 14 December 2021, adults who are fully vaccinated and all children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months (pupils) identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 are strongly advised to take a LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result.

Daily testing of close contacts applies to all contacts who are:

- fully vaccinated adults – people who have had 2 doses of an approved vaccine
- all children and young people aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months (pupils), regardless of their vaccination status
- people who are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons
- people taking part, or have taken part, in an approved clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine

Although close contacts are strongly advised to get a test, they should continue to attend school unless they are symptomatic. Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in line with the [school attendance: guidance for schools](#).

Children under 5 years are exempt from self-isolation and do not need to take part in daily testing of close contacts.

Pupils with SEND identified as close contacts should be supported by their school and their families to agree the most appropriate route for testing including, where appropriate, additional support to assist swabbing. For further information please see [SEND guidance](#).

Further information is available in [NHS Test and Trace: what to do if you are contacted](#) and in the [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

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

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. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, the school should use code X in the

register.

Pupils who are self-isolating but who have not had a test

In line with public health advice, pupils with symptoms must self-isolate and schools should strongly encourage pupils to take a PCR test. Where the pupil is unable to take a PCR test, the school should record the pupil as code X in the register.

Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in line with the [school attendance guidance for schools](#).

Remote education

If a pupil is not attending school because their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID-19, we expect schools to offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with, this activity, but this does not need to be tracked in the attendance register.

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