

Pupil Attendance and Absence Recording

Frequently Asked Questions

2023/24

Introduction

The following will provide you with advice regarding what codes to apply to cover a range of scenarios which you may encounter. Using the Index, press 'Ctrl' and Click on any question to be taken to the answer. If you require further detail please contact:

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Q1: What code should I use where a pupils is late to school due to issues outside his / her control (e.g. transport), or is unable to attend school on a particular day due to transport issues?

If a pupil is at fault: - Code L – Late (before registration closed) or Code U – Late (after registration closed) may be used. If lateness is due to circumstances beyond pupil's control, Code U may be amended subsequently by the school. Alternatively, if the school is satisfied with the reason provided by the pupil, Code! – “No attendance required” may be used.

Q2: Are all pupils entitled to study leave?

No. Study leave should be applied only to public examination candidates during the examination timetable, in the event of any cancellation of examinations to facilitate study for those pupils in Years 12 to 14 completing alternative qualification assessments. This decision must be made by senior management, and it is considered good practice to provide parents/carers with a minimum of one weeks' notice that study leave is being applied to such pupils.

Q3: How should schools record the attendance of pupils on study leave?

Study leave should be recorded using registration code S. Supervised study or revision classes provided in school should be coded Present / (am) or \ (pm). As above, study leave should only be granted to pupils, if appropriate, undertaking public examinations.

Q4: Can a school use a designated school day as a parent/teacher review day?

No. Review days should not be used as part of the school day. Schools should endeavour to hold these reviews out of school hours. Under no circumstances should pupils be recorded as being on study leave during school hours under these circumstances.

Q5: Can a parent/carer take a child on holiday during term time?

Principals should only authorise a holiday during term time in exceptional circumstances. As a rule, holidays during term time should be actively discouraged and recorded as an unauthorised absence, if the Principal has not agreed to it. Likewise, if the Principal authorises a holiday, and the agreed duration is exceeded, the excess period should be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Q6: A parent/carer has not provided any reason for a pupil's absence. How do I deal with this?

Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence at the earliest possible stage. Contact mechanisms with parents/carers are crucial and an absence notification form has been developed which all schools should consider circulating to parents and encourage its use. The form can be accessed at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/absence-notification-form>

Q7: What happens if I have to close my school on a designated school day?

A school should contact the Department's Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team to apply in writing to take an exceptional closure day. Exceptional conditions mean that a school is closed due to an unavoidable cause, such as, extreme weather conditions, flooding or electricity failure. [Guidance to apply for an exceptional closure is available on the DE website.](#)

Q8: When can a parent remove a child from the school register?

A parent can remove a child from the school register only in the following circumstances:

- pupil is registered at another school in Northern Ireland;
- pupil has departed from Northern Ireland;
- pupil has been expelled;
- pupil has died;
- pupil leaves school after having completed his/her compulsory education.

When a parent/carer advises that child is being removed under Regulation 6(2) of The Registration and Attendance of Pupils Regulations (NI) 1974 [No. 78], for example for elective home education, the school must complete an SA1 form: [Form SA1 – Removal of a pupil from registration](#). Where a parent has indicated that they are considering elective home education, schools must constructively engage in discussion about the implications of making this choice. Parents must be made aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child receives a suitable efficient full-time education. Parents must also be informed that if they choose to de-register their child from the school, it may not be possible to re-register them again at the same school. The Education Authority have published guidelines in respect of Elective Home Education and parents who are considering this option must be presented with a copy for their information. Copies can be downloaded from the Education Authority's website via the link below:

- [Guidelines for Elective Home Education](#).

Q9: A pupil is subject to Dual Registration, how should this be recorded?

The Main school is required to record attendance for the sessions when the pupil is attending their school and the Subsidiary school using the appropriate code. **The Main school should make arrangements with the Subsidiary school to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended.** The Subsidiary school should also record the attendance accordingly. Attendance statistics for publication will be taken from the Main schools data in the Census returns. Please refer to [Circular Number 2016/22](#) 'Guidance on the Enrolment Status of Pupils, including those subject to SEN and EOTAS Referrals, using Dual Registration.

Q10: A pupil in the school is pregnant. How should I record this pupil's attendance when they are absent due to pregnancy related sickness or when they are have their baby?

When a girl is absent due to sickness, it should be recorded as normal illness using Code I, providing you have been informed by the pupil's parent/carer that the pupil is ill. When the pupil is absent from school to have her baby, you would use Code O. If at any time the pupil is receiving home/hospital tuition arranged by the Education Authority, you should use Code 2.

Q11: A pupil's parent/carer removes them from school when they are working in another country and their child travels with them, how should the pupil's absence be recorded?

When the parent/carer have advised that they are taking the child out of school, specifically to go with them to the other country while they work then the school must apply to the Department to use Code J.

If approved this can be used up to a maximum of three weeks. After this, Code O should be used, if the school is content. The Department will require to see proof of the working arrangement. This can either be an email or letter from the parent's employer confirming the dates and location of placement/employment outside Northern Ireland.

Q12: A pupil has ongoing medical appointments. How should these be recorded?

Code M should be used for a pupil's absence when the school have been notified that the child is attending a medical appointment. If the pupil is in attendance at registration but has a medical appointment during either the AM/PM session then the pupil should be recorded as present. If the pupil misses registration due to a medical appointment that the school has been made aware of in advance then Code M should be used, however if the pupil returns to

school within that session then the Code should be changed to present.

Q13: A number of pupils cannot make it into school due to the failure of school transport or if the school is closed for part of the day. How should I record this?

Code! – No attendance required should be used for the pupils affected by failure of school transport and also if pupils are sent home due to such scenarios as adverse weather, electricity or heating failure. However, if school transport is not available due to planned industrial action then schools MAY if they have the capacity, request pupils to avail of online learning and to record attendance as present provide the school is content that learning has been undertaken.

Q14: In the event of Industrial Action by Teaching Staff. How should I record this?

Code! No attendance required should be used for the period the school is closed to pupils.

Q15: What are the procedures for reducing a pupil's timetable and if there is an absence how is it coded?

If a school wants to reduce a pupil's timetable or effectively provide a temporary exception from the curriculum they need to follow the guidance set out in the following link: [Temporary Exemptions from the Statutory Curriculum and Assessments provisions for Individual Pupils](#)

Code! No attendance required can be used for this purpose.

Q16: Can the Extended Leave code be used for pupils going on a family holiday back to their country of origin?

No, this is only for an emergency situation agreed by the school after the appropriate procedures have been completed.