Review of School Attendance codes

We want your views on revisions to the school attendance codes for primary and secondary schools.

First published: 12 February 2026

Last updated: 12 February 2026

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Overview

School attendance in Wales has not fully recovered since COVID-19, with Estyn reporting secondary attendance remaining considerably lower than pre-pandemic levels and recovery projected to take up to a decade without targeted action.

Whilst we have seen a slow and considered increase in attendance, accurate and detailed attendance codes are critical to diagnosing patterns and directing support effectively.

Since the original codes were introduced in 2010, education policy and provision have evolved substantially, including the growth of online and remote learning, flexible timetables, dual registration, and part-time arrangements. These developments require codes that distinguish learning contexts and enable robust oversight.

Safeguarding and wellbeing priorities, such as the Whole School Approach and increasing evidence of non-physical health-related absence, highlight the need for codes that identify non-physical illness and barriers to attendance. Equity and inclusion considerations, including updated guidance for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and changing family and social circumstances, necessitate clearer coding to ensure consistency and fairness. The proposed revisions will strengthen data accuracy, improve safeguarding, and reflect the realities of modern education, supporting high-quality, consistent data collection across Wales.

We are seeking views on proposed revisions to Wales' **guidance on school attendance codes** (https://www.gov.wales/school-attendance-codes-guidance). This technical consultation will run for six weeks. Responses are invited from partners including maintained and independent schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), Special Schools, local authorities, professional associations and Public Health Wales only, given the technical nature of the attendance codes.

How to respond

Responses to this consultation should be emailed or posted to the address below to arrive by 26 March 2026 at the latest.

You are able to respond by completing the consultation form attached to this consultation.

When responding, you may find it helpful to read the full revised attendance codes in addition to the summary of the changes when completing the consultation form.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

Related documents

School attendance codes: guidance (https://www.gov.wales/school-attendance-codes-guidance)

Contact details

For more information:

Supporting Access to Education
Equity in Education
Education, Culture and Welsh Language
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

email: **AdolygiadYCP.ACCReview@gov.wales**
(mailto:AdolygiadYCP.ACCReview@gov.wales)

UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

The Welsh Government will be data controller for Welsh Government consultations and for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation.

Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. The lawful basis for processing information in this data collection exercise is our public task, that is, exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government. (Art 6(1)(e)).

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. In the case of joint consultations this may also include other public authorities. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (for example, a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation and that the Welsh Government may be under a legal obligation to disclose some information.

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

Your rights

Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data held about you and to access it
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the UK GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ

E-mail: **dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales** (mailto:dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales)

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: **https://ico.org.uk/** (https://ico.org.uk/)

Ministerial foreword

Ensuring that every learner in Wales has the opportunity to attend school regularly is a key priority for the Welsh Government. Accurate recording of attendance is essential to understanding patterns, supporting learners, and improving outcomes.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 set out the framework for how schools record attendance. However, we know that the way schools operate has evolved, and feedback from practitioners and stakeholders suggests that some attendance codes are unclear or no longer fit for purpose.

This consultation seeks your views on proposed updates to attendance codes to ensure they are clear, relevant, and support consistent application across all schools in Wales. Your input will help us develop guidance that reflects modern learning environments and supports our shared commitment to learner well-being and achievement.

I encourage those who work in education to take part in this consultation and share your views. Together, we can ensure that our attendance recording system continues to meet the needs of learners, schools, and communities across Wales.

Lynne Neagle
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Summary of proposals

Main issues

The Welsh Government wants every child to take part in, enjoy learning and

have the best education possible to progress and expand their knowledge, skills and experience.

This will support them to become:

- ambitious, capable pupils ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens ready to be citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

Attendance Codes are used by schools to record attendance information for pupils. They help in tracking attendance data and determining whether a pupil is marked as present or absent. Essentially, they are the letters and marks added to an attendance register to indicate the reason why a pupil is absent.

Since the introduction of the current codes, societal and educational contexts have evolved significantly. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in new patterns of absence and highlighted the need for more accurate data so that we can develop clearer guidance on remote learning.

Updating the codes will ensure they remain fit for purpose in a changing educational landscape, provide local authorities and schools with greater clarity, and ensure the Welsh Government's approach to recording attendance is applied consistently across Wales.

Revising the attendance codes will enable a more detailed understanding of the reasons behind pupil absence and support schools and local authorities in implementing targeted strategies to address specific barriers to attendance.

Development of the revised attendance codes

The current proposed changes to the codes have been made in line with the above Regulations. Therefore, no amendment of **the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010** (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2010/1954/contents) is needed.

The proposed changes refine existing attendance codes to improve the accuracy and usefulness of attendance data, strengthening safeguarding, and providing enhanced clarity for schools and local authorities.

The Welsh Government have worked collaboratively with local authorities to develop the draft revised codes with the draft revised codes being co-constructed with a cohort of local authority colleagues.

Welsh Government officials have also engaged with partners to ensure they reflect technological developments and evolving delivery models.

Purpose of the consultation

Attendance codes provide assistance to schools (including independent schools) and local authorities in the use of codes to record pupil attendance and absence in schools. They relate to attendance at statutory morning and afternoon registration sessions.

This consultation welcomes both schools and local authority views on the revised codes. The aim of the revised codes is to secure an accurate picture of attendance and reasons for absence and to enable schools, local authorities and Welsh Government more detailed understanding of the reasons behind pupil absence and to support any future changes in related policy development.

Respondents may find it helpful to read the full revised attendance codes document in addition to the summary of the changes when completing the consultation form.

Consultation timing

This consultation will run for a period of six weeks. We believe this timeframe is sufficient for respondents to fully consider the proposed revisions to the codes and submit their responses.

A feedback phase will end in Spring Term 2026, after which all responses will be

analysed and considered by the Welsh Government. Feedback will be considered and any revisions made and, subject to the Cabinet Secretary for Education's agreement will be published on the Welsh Government's website.

Proposed revisions: explanations

We have maintained the 5 existing statistical categories which are outlined in the table below:

Existing statistical categories

Statistical category	Proposed Codes in this category
1. present	/\ and L
2. approved education activity	B, P1, P2, V and W
3. authorised absence	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, F, H, I1, I2, J1, M, S, E, R and T
4. unauthorised absence	N, O, G, U
5. not required to attend	D, X, Y1, Y2, Y3. Y4, Y5, Z and #

Proposed revisions

1. Present Codes

Present is when a child arrives when the school register is open. Registers stay open for 30 minutes. Registers are open for morning and afternoon sessions.

Present is denoted by the following codes on the registers: /\ and L:

- (1.1) Λ: Refers to a pupil being present in school during registration.
- (1.2) L: Indicates where a pupil is late for school but arrived before registration closes.

There have been no changes made to the definition of these codes but the use and additional information in relation to the codes has been reviewed and updated.

2. Approved Educational Activity Codes

An approved educational activity is one which takes place away from the school site and this activity has been agreed by the school.

The proposed codes to cover an approved educational activity are B, P1, P2, V, and W:

- (2.1) Code B: There have been no revisions made to the definition of this code but the use and additional information in relation to the code has been reviewed and updated.
- (2.2) Code P: (Previously this was an approved sporting activity). We have subdivided this code into the following codes:
  - (2.2.1) P1: (approved sporting activity), and
  - (2.2.2) P2: (approved performing activity).
- (2.3) Code V: The use and additional information in relation to code V has been reviewed and updated to ensure that the information is clear.
- (2.4) Code W: The use and additional information in relation to code W has been reviewed and updated to ensure that the information is clear.
- (2.5) Code D: This currently applies where a child is dual registered, (registered at 2 different schools), that is, on roll at one school but attends another school. Code D was previously an approved educational activity.

We propose amending this to 'no longer required to attend'. Previously, both schools' registers were required to mirror each other, this is no longer the case. The main school will use Code D on days when the pupil is scheduled to attend another setting, while attendance and any absences will be recorded by the other school or PRU on the days the pupil is scheduled to attend there.

3. Authorised absence codes

The proposed codes to signify authorised absences are C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, F, H, I1, I2, J1, M, S, E, R and T:

- (3.1) We would propose significant changes to authorised absence codes. Code C, previously used for all authorised absences, would be subdivided to provide greater clarity and consistency. The new proposed categories would be as follows:
  - (3.1.1) C1: General authorised absence (previously Code C). This code could cover absence due to attending a wedding, bereavement, responsibilities as a young carer, prison visit, birth of a child.
  - (3.1.2) C2: Authorised absence for a paid performance.
  - (3.1.3) C3: Authorised absence where the headteacher has agreed to a parental request for flexi-schooling. Flexi-schooling is where a head teacher agrees that a registered pupil can be home schooled for part of their education.
  - (3.1.4) C4: Authorised absence for a reduced timetable. A reduced timetable is put in place to support a child who is struggling with full-time provision. This must be agreed between the school, parent and pupil with a view to return the child to full time provision with a support plan in place.
  - (3.1.5) C5: Authorised absence for remote learning where education is delivered online by the school or local authority. We are aware from our discussions with LA leads on EOTAS that there are an increasing number of schools who are turning to virtual online learning as a means of addressing attendance. Online virtual schooling has increased since the pandemic however Welsh Government does not currently gather data on this and are unclear of the extend of use of this provision.
- (3.2) Code F: This refers to an agreed absence where a parent has submitted a request for an absence due to an extended holiday in term time. The use and additional information in relation to the code has been reviewed and updated.
- (3.3) Code H: This refers to an agreed family holiday where a parent has submitted a request for an absence due to a holiday in term time. The use

and additional information in relation to the code has been reviewed and updated.

- (3.4) Codes I1 and I2: The illness code has been subdivided into I1 and I2, enabling schools to distinguish between:
  - (3.4.1) physical, and
  - (3.4.2) non-physical illnesses. This change will help schools understand the impact of non-physical illness on attendance and provide local authorities with data to support the effectiveness of the Whole School Approach, as well as fulfil their duty under Section 19A of the Education Act 1996 to provide EOTAS provision where pupils cannot attend school due to illness, exclusion, or other reasons.
- (3.5) Code J1: This refers to an external interview and now represents an authorised absence rather than an approved educational activity.
  - (3.5.1) This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or for a place at another school, a further or higher education establishment or a training provider.

The use and accompanying guidance for codes M, S, E, R, and T would be reviewed and updated to ensure clarity and consistency, as follows:

- (3.6) Code M: This refers to a medical absence. This code refers to missed registration (am or pm) for a medical or dental appointment.
- (3.7) Code S: This refers to absence due to agreed study leave.
- (3.8) Code E: This refers to absence due to exclusion from school.
- (3.9) Code R: This refers to absence due to religious observance (Ramadan, Eid, Diwali, and so on).
- (3.10) Code T: This refers to absence due to Gypsy Roma Traveller families travelling and seeking work.

4. Unauthorised absence codes

The definition of Unauthorised Absence remains unchanged. It applies where a school does not accept the reason provided for an absence or where no reason has been given. While the definitions have not been altered, we propose the accompanying guidance and additional information for codes N, O, G and U be reviewed and updated to ensure clarity and consistency in their application:

- (4.1) Code N: This refers to the fact that no reason has been provided by the parent for the absence.
- (4.2) Code O: This refers to an unauthorised absence which is not covered by any other code for example a child or sibling's birthday, going shopping, a special treat.
- (4.3) Code G: This refers to an unauthorised absence due to a parental holiday request not being authorised by the school.
- (4.4) Code U: This refers to an absence due to a child being late, that is, arriving at school more than 30 minutes after the school registers have closed.

5. Not required to attend

The proposed codes odes to signify that pupils are not required to attend school are D, X, Y1, Y2, Y3, Y4, Y5, Z and #:

- (5.1) Code D: As outlined earlier in 2.5, we propose Code D to be updated and should be categorised as 'no longer required to attend'. Schools should apply Code D for pupils who are dual registered with another provider on days they are scheduled to attend that setting.
- (5.2) Code X: This signifies that there are un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils. We propose no changes to the definition of Code X, however, its use and accompanying guidance should be reviewed and updated for clarity.
- (5.3) Code Y: We propose substantive changes made to Code Y, which applies when a pupil is not required to attend due to school closure following a forced full or partial closure. These changes will enable local authorities and Welsh Government to better understand the reasons behind school closures. We propose Code Y to be subdivided as follows:
  - (5.3.1) Y1: Unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of the pupil's home and transport is not provided.
  - (5.3.2) Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread travel disruption caused by a local, national, or international emergency.
  - (5.3.3) Y3: Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and pupils cannot be accommodated in the remaining open areas.

- (5.3.4) Y4: Whole-school closure when a scheduled session has been cancelled.
- (5.3.5) Y5: Attendance would be contrary to or prohibited by guidance or law relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease.
- (5.4) Code Z: This is used where pupils are not required to attend as pupils are not yet on the school roll.
- (5.5) Code #: This is used to cover half term and full-term holiday breaks (statutory holidays).

While the definitions of these codes Z and # remain unchanged, their use and accompanying guidance will be reviewed and updated to ensure clarity.

Consultation questions

1. Present and late codes

Question 1

(1.1) Does the additional information for codes /\ provide greater clarity?

Question 2

(1.2) Does the additional information for code L provide greater clarity?

2. Approved education activity codes

Question 3

(2.1) Does the additional information for code B provide greater clarity?

Question 4

(2.2) Do you agree with the decision to subdivide the P code?

Question 5

(2.2.1). Does the additional information for codes P1 and P2 provide greater clarity?

Question 6

(2.3) Does the additional information for code V provide greater clarity?

Question 7

(2.4) Does the additional information for code W provide greater clarity?

3. Authorised absence codes

Question 8

(3.1) Do you agree with the decision to subdivide the C code?

Question 9

(3.1.1) Does the additional information for code C1 provide greater clarity?

Question 10

(3.1.2) Does the additional information for code C2 provide greater clarity?

Question 11

(3.1.3) Does the additional information for code C3 provide greater clarity?

Question 12

(3.1.4) Does the additional information for code C4 provide greater clarity?

Question 13

(3.1.5) Does the additional information for code C5 provide greater clarity?

Question 14

(3.2) Does the additional information for code F provide greater clarity?

Question 15

(3.3) Does the additional information for code H provide greater clarity?

Question 16

(3.4) Do you agree with the decision to subdivide the I code?

Question 17

(3.4.1) Does the additional information for code I1 provide greater clarity?

Question 18

(3.4.2) Does the additional information for code I2 provide greater clarity?

Question 19

(3.5) Do you agree with the proposed change in statistical meaning for the code J1 from 'approved educational activity' to 'authorised absence'?

Question 20

(3.5.1) Does the additional information for code J1 provide greater clarity?

Question 21

(3.6) Does the additional information for code M provide greater clarity?

Question 22

(3.7) Does the additional information for code S provide greater clarity?

Question 23

(3.8) Does the additional information for code E provide greater clarity?

Question 24

(3.9) Does the additional information for code R provide greater clarity?

Question 25

(3.10) Does the additional information for code T provide greater clarity?

4. Unauthorised absence codes

Question 26

(4.1) Does the additional information for code N provide greater clarity?

Question 27

(4.2) Does the additional information for code O provide greater clarity?

Question 28

(4.3) Does the additional information for code G provide greater clarity?

Question 29

(4.4) Does the additional information for code U provide greater clarity?

5. Not required to attend codes

Question 30

(5.1) Do you agree with the change in statistical meaning for code D from 'approved educational activity' to 'not required to attend'?

Question 31

(5.1.1) Does the additional information for code D provide greater clarity?

Question 32

(5.2) Does the additional information for code X provide greater clarity?

Question 33

(5.3) Do you agree with the decision to subdivide the Y code?

Question 34

(5.3.1) Does the additional information for code Y1 provide greater clarity?

Question 35

(5.3.2) Does the additional information for code Y2 provide greater clarity?

Question 36

(5.3.3) Does the additional information for code Y3 provide greater clarity?

Question 37

(5.3.4) Does the additional information for code Y4 provide greater clarity?

Question 38

(5.3.5) Does the additional information for code Y5 provide greater clarity?

Question 39

(5.4) Does the additional information for code Z provide greater clarity?

Question 40

(5.5) Does the additional information for code # provide greater clarity?