

## School Attendance 2020- 21 (Secondary)

### Summary taken from DFE guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

Schools may wish to alert parents to the guidance below:

<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-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

The above guidance relates to changes for the 2020- 21 academic year.

### Main principles:

- **From the start of the autumn term 2020 attendance in school is mandatory and the usual rules on attendance apply**
- **Schools should now record attendance and follow up absence in the usual way**
- **The duty on parents to ensure the regular attendance of children of compulsory school age is no longer disapplied**
- **The ability to issue sanctions such as penalty notices is no longer disapplied**

#### 1. Marking attendance registers

Schools should now use the usual attendance/ absence codes unless the absence from school is related to coronavirus.

A new attendance category using the X code is to be used for non-attendance in circumstances relating to Covid 19.

This category does not count as an absence for statistical purposes and so means that students' attendance is not penalised when they follow official public health advice.

#### When should the X code be used?

- **Household isolation-** a member of their household has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus. If the household member tests positive then the student should isolate for 14 days from the household member first displaying symptoms. If they subsequently become ill, the guidance related to their test result should be followed as below. The student should return to school earlier than the 14-day period if a Covid test on the household member is negative.
- **Self-isolation-** the student has symptoms of Covid 19. This code is only used PRIOR to testing. Once the test has occurred the student, should return to school if negative and now

well enough to attend. If they do not return at this point (due to ongoing illness) then the subsequent absence should be recorded as I. *If the student tests positive then the absence from this point until they return is marked as I*

- Requirements to **quarantine** on return from foreign travel
- A student is required to **self-isolate due to close contact with a person** who has symptoms or confirmed Covid 19. Test and trace requires self-isolation for 14 days following close contact with a person testing positive
- **Local or national lockdowns- shielding-** guidance will be provided dependent on the local circumstances but it may be expected that those classed as clinically extremely vulnerable may be advised not to attend school. Schools must then ensure a robust online education is offered. Evidence in the form of a letter must be provided by the student/ family in this circumstance
- **Local lockdowns-** Based on PHE guidance it may be that schools have to close or restrict attendance to certain year groups. In this case, X is used. The guidance may indicate this relates to students from specific geographic areas

#### When should X code not be used?

- **Phased returns or staggered starts for the whole school-** in most cases this should be coded as C- see additional note 2 and 3 below
- **Phased reintegration for an individual-** C code for sessions when attendance is not required. There must be evidence that the provision in school is increasing over time
- **A student who has tested positive for coronavirus-** I should be used from the point of the positive test result
- **Students on remote education for whom there is no medical evidence at a consultant level advising against attendance at school-** in some cases it may be that there is no consultant level advice against attending school but that there are some significant and genuine health concerns for the family/ individual that the school may wish to support through the use of remote learning. This must only be used as a short-term intervention with regular reviews whilst the school builds up confidence to attend school. In most cases code C should be used. See additional note 3 below. The remote education offer must comply with the DfE regulations around the quality and robustness of such an offer of education

## 2. Attendance/ absence procedures

Schools should return to using their pre - existing processes to address school absence. They may wish to address some of the specific issues related to the return to school in the following ways:

- Allowing time for reintegration work for anxious students. For example, providing an opportunity to visit school after hours to walk through the new measures
- Meet with families to discuss the processes and use video tours to ease concerns regarding new procedures
- Allow short period of part time reintegration when needed
- Consider if there are any students who may initially benefit from working in a smaller nurture bubble or may work in school at the end of the school day with the support of a TA

or pastoral member of staff. This may be suitable for those with concerns around shielding a social distancing. This would be a short-term plan and would need to be reviewed.

- Schools SHOULD ask for evidence to confirm test results. If a student is, absent for the reason of Covid 19 symptoms then the school should be requesting a test is undertaken. In order to determine the appropriate attendance mark then the test results should be provided
- Attendance contracts should be used when appropriate
- Schools should make sure they have a record of these students absent with Covid symptoms so that patterns/ repeats can be easily identified
- Schools should establish a log/ record system to ensure clarity on expected return dates following self-isolation
- The document below provides more detail on approaches to returning students to full time attendance:



Encouraging  
reluctant learners b:

#### **Additional notes**

- Schools must ask to see test results to enable them to follow this guidance
- Self-isolation is usually for 10 days after a positive test. In most instances, schools should then be contacting home to discuss a return to school. A return would be suitable if there is a remaining cough and loss of sense of smell and/ or taste. If any other symptoms remain such as a high temperature then they should not return to school until these are gone
- If a student misses school time due to a foreign holiday school may choose to use the G code (if leave not requested or granted) for the time the student is absent from school as they are physically out of the area. However, periods of quarantine should be coded as X irrespective of when the holiday occurred
- Students and those with household members who were shielding should return to school UNLESS they have up to date advice from their consultant
- Schools should consider amending their register opening and closing times in their school attendance policy to take account of any staggered starts to the day. In cases where the 'stagger' is over a fairly short period of time school may simply decide to keep the register open a little longer than normal. If the staggered start is a long period then this strategy would mean that late students from the first cohort of the day would only rarely be marked as U and there would be inconsistencies between year groups in levels of tolerance to lateness. In the cases of school models with wide start times it may be more sensible to specify the start and end times of the school day alongside with the register closing times **specific to that year group**. It is possible to make this change in SIMS. BTLS are able to advise further.
- For schools with a wide variety of start and finish times by year group they may consider amending the time/ school period used for the AM and PM register. This can be different for different year groups. DfE guidance states that the AM/ PM divide should be linked to a break and should be in the middle of the defined school day (this is different to the day i.e. midday)

- The number codes 7,8,9 are now no longer required although schools may wish to differentiate between absences that are Covid related and not.
- Day 6 provision for exclusion is still a statutory requirement but difficult to achieve in 'bubbles. Schools may consider if 5 day exclusions are more practical at this time.
- Whilst legal sanctions can again be used (the decision making for the threshold for this lies with the school) it would be expected that schools have offered as much support as is appropriate to the situation to ease the return of the student to school
- The school census in Spring 2021 will collect all school attendance codes including B, Y and X. This is a change from previous years when only absence codes have been collected
- Schools may wish to consider how they report attendance data internally being aware throughout that the official data for which they are accountable is that taken by the School Census from their school MIS. For example, schools may wish to record numbers of students who are absent with Covid as opposed to other absences (Consider the use of additional number codes- although this is not a requirement), are there certain students who you may wish to exclude from internal data? If a staggered start has been used what is the start date to run meaningful attendance from?

**Note 2:**

**Schools offering a phased return in September**

Phased returns for either individuals or for the whole school/ year groups does not comply with the use of the X code.

The law allows a school to set different term dates for different year groups but each year group MUST have 380 sessions in the school year. It may be that the school has opened early to allow Y7 students a day in school alone. If this is done by changing the published and agreed term dates for the year groups to ensure that all year groups still receive 380 sessions in the school year then Y8-10 should be coded as 'not required to attend' (i.e. school holiday) on this first day.

If the return of year 8-11 has been delayed to facilitate this resulting in the offer of 378 sessions in the school year then the absence would be coded C.

For individual students who have been offered a reintegration phased timetable the C code should be used to record sessions when the student is not in school.

**Note 3**

**Schools using remote education as part of:**

- a. a phased return**
- b. provision where there is a medical concern that has not been supported by consultant evidence**

DfE guidance makes it clear that remote education must be robust education. It can only be coded as a B code when it complies with safeguarding requirements (i.e. the school have full responsibility during the session to safeguard the student) and is interactive education (as opposed to downloadable resources to complete). In reality, this means that the provision would need to be live delivery e.g. through platforms such as Teams, Google Classroom/ Meet to be coded B.

The B code can only be used for sessions when the provision is actually in place. Other sessions are coded as C.

**H. Smith**

**August 25<sup>th</sup> 2020**