

Subject:

Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording By Schools

**Circular Number:
2018/12**

**Date of Issue:
3 September 2018**

Audience:

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all primary, post-primary grant-aided schools and special schools;
- Education Authority;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Governing Bodies Association;
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education;
- Independent Schools;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta; and
- Controlled Schools Support Council.

Summary of Contents:

This Circular provides guidance to schools on managing pupil attendance and:

- Annex A - Sample School Attendance Policy, Absence Notification Form & Extended Leave form; and
- Annex B – Absence Codes Guidance for Schools (Inc. Frequently Asked Questions).

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

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Governor Awareness:

Essential

Status of Contents:

Action Required
Information for Schools

Related Documents:

Circular 2013/09
Circular 2016/22
Circular 2017/14

Superseded Documents:

Circular 2017/15

DENI Website:

www.education-ni.gov.uk

Tel: 02891 279543
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Introduction

1. This circular replaces DE Circular 2017/15 'Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording by Schools' and should be read in conjunction with Circular 2016/22 'Guidance on the Enrolment Status of Pupils, including those subject to SEN and EOTAS Referrals, using Dual Registration'.

www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201622-guidance-enrolment-status-pupils-including-those-subject-sen-and-eotas-referrals

Recording pupil attendance

2. Attendance/absence of pupils should be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon registration sessions using the C2k codes detailed in Appendix B. Information recorded by schools is published by the Department.

3. Care should be taken in how pupil absences are recorded and schools should ensure that the reasons for pupils' absences are followed up with parents / carers within 5 days. Schools may wish to consider using a notification form for completion by parents/carers when their child returns to school following an absence. A suggested template has been included and can also be downloaded from the Department's website at:

www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/absence-notification-form

Referrals to the Education Welfare Service (EWS)

4. If a school is concerned about a pupil's pattern of attendance and/or if it falls below 85% and there is a cause for concern, a referral should be made to the EWS, based on consultation with the designated Education Welfare Officer during the school year. The EWS should be monitoring pupil absences at school level during termly audits which will also identify those pupils who require support.

Removal of pupils' names from the register

5. A pupil's name may be removed from a school's register **only** in the following circumstances:

	Reason for Removal	Date of Removal
i.	Confirmation that pupil is registered at another school in Northern Ireland	Day following last attendance
ii.	Departure from Northern Ireland	Day following last attendance
iii.	Expulsion	Day following expulsion
iv.	Death	Day following death
v.	Leaves school after having completed his/her compulsory education	Day following last attendance
vi.	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 elective home education.	Day following last attendance

6. It is expected that a school should notify the Education Authority once a pupil has been removed from its register.

Retention of Records

7. All schools must continue to hold copies of pupil attendance records and pupil registration records for not less than ten years from the date on which the register ceased to be used. This can be in the form of a printed version of the data held on the system or alternatively the documentation can be retained electronically. Paper copies of such information may be required for purposes of verification, for example audit of pupil numbers.

Absences during term time

8. Missing school at any time is detrimental to a child's education therefore family holidays or other appointments e.g. doctor or dentist should be arranged, where possible, outside school hours. Schools should discourage holidays during term time as this can have a significant impact on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time, which have not been agreed, will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. In 2015/16, 73.1% of absent half days in primary schools were authorised and 26.9% of absent half days were unauthorised. In post-primary schools, the equivalent figures were 66.7% and 33.3% respectively.

9. Annual statistics show that the majority of pupil absences are due to illness, which is regarded as an authorised absence. In 2015/16, illness accounted for 63.1% authorised absent half days in primary schools, 53.0% in post-primary schools and 48.4% in special schools. Whilst illnesses may be unavoidable there may be numerous reasons why a pupil may not feel they are able to attend school such as family problems, personal problems and bullying. Schools should ensure all reasonable steps are taken to support pupils in order that they feel able to attend school.

10. The proportion of absent half days for which no reason was provided accounts for the largest unauthorised absence reason and in 2015/16 represented 12.1% of absent half days in primary schools, 22.3% in post-primary schools and 23.4% in special schools.

Study Leave

11. It should be noted that Study leave should be applied only to **public examination** candidates during the examination timetable. Public examinations are those which are authenticated or awarded by an outside person or organisation, and not internally by the school. The main examples of such examinations include GCSEs, A Levels and equivalent qualifications.

12. Study leave **should not be used for** internal examinations, for extended periods or in advance of the commencement of the examination timetable.

13. Study leave should only be granted, using this criterion, and is at the discretion of the school. The Department will be monitoring the use of the study leave code and will address any misuse.

14. Decisions on study leave should be made by senior management and it is recommended that schools using study leave have a written policy on such leave to ensure consistency and provide clarity for parents/carers.

15. It is considered good practice to provide parents/carers with a **minimum notice of one week** that study leave is being provided to such pupils.

Exceptional closure (whole day closure)

16. Exceptional closures should only be used when the school has been granted permission by the Department of Education. The Department will consider an application for a reduction in the days on which a school is in operation to take account of specific exceptional circumstances where the closing of the school is outside the control of the school authorities. Schools must not use this code unless they have applied in writing and been granted permission to take an exceptional closure day/s by the Department's Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team at attendance@education-ni.gov.uk.

17. Circular 2017/14 refers and can be accessed at: [Circular 2017/14 - School optional and exceptional closures](#)

18. Examples of specific exceptional closures are:

- The death of a teacher or pupil at the school;
- Flooding or burst pipes at the school;
- Electricity failure;
- Damage to school;
- Severe weather conditions e.g. heavy snowfall; or
- School being used as a polling station for parliamentary/local government elections.

Failure to meet all the protocols may result in the exceptional closure being refused.

Reduced Timetable for a pupil *NEW*

19. Schools often unofficially reduce the time pupils are in attendance in school for various reasons such as emotional, behavioral and welfare reasons under SEN or phased return after a long illness. Pupils should only be excepted from the statutory curriculum (reduced timetable) and assessment requirements on a temporary basis if the school has carried out the appropriate procedures outline in the Education (Curriculum) (Temporary Exemptions) Regulations (NI) 1990.

[Temporary Exemptions from the Statutory Curriculum and Assessments provisions for Individual Pupils](#)

Industrial Action

20. Code ! Should be used for the following:

- If the whole school cannot operate for a session(s) i.e. am, pm or both due to the strike action;
- For groups of pupils. In this case some of the school is affected, whereby certain classes or year groups can't be covered, and parents/carers are asked not to send their children in those classes or year groups to school. The code could be used for am, pm or both sessions; and
- For pupils unable to get to school e.g. due to strike action affecting their normal mode of transport.

21. Please note that in the case of children absent from school due to any other reason, including parents/carers deciding themselves not to send the

children to school due to the strike action, normal action should be taken to establish the reason for non-attendance and the appropriate code used.

Extended Leave *NEW*

22. A new code “J” has been developed in consultation with schools and its purpose is to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse population. This new “Extended Leave” code allows pupils, for a limited period only (agreed with the school), to travel outside the UK without their attendance levels being adversely affected. Family holidays either agreed or not agreed are not to be coded using this code. The code may be used for the following purposes:

- Short-term parental placement/employment outside the UK
- A need to leave the UK for a specific complex family need such as:
 - death of a relative;
 - care for a sick relative;
 - sibling or parent receiving medical treatment outside NI; or
 - attend to immigration matters.

For this code to be used, the family concerned must make an application to the school, outlining the reasons for the request and the proposed period of extended leave. Each request should be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the circumstances for which leave is sought, the pupil’s attendance (and attainment) to date, previous similar requests and whether or not the pupil’s specific needs will be met (both personally and academically) during the proposed absence.

The school should ensure it is content with the information provided by the child’s parent(s)/carer(s) before the template is completed (see Annex A) and the absence is recorded in SIMS. All approved applications must be sent to the Department of Education at attendance@education-ni.gov.uk.

Incentives

23. While there is no Departmental requirement to reward school attendance, schools may wish to consider:

- Incentives for pupils such as a Breakfast Club and/or after school programmes;
- Celebrating regular attendance at school through pupil certificates, year group awards, school outings, parental and community events; and

- Reminding parents/carers of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their children's regular and punctual attendance.

24. If a school wishes to acknowledge attendance they may use discretion regarding how they use the data recorded on C2k. In the case of an individual school's award scheme which does not fully correspond to the data input onto C2k e.g. for 100% record, it may be prudent to have this included in the school's pupil attendance policy.

Attendance Returns

25. Schools should ensure that all attendance data is updated as early as possible, as each Education Welfare Officer should be having regular meetings to monitor attendance levels.

26. Attendance data should be returned as part of the annual School Census and the "return a hard copy" check box should not be checked.

Miss School = Miss Out: Improving Pupil Attendance Strategy – Roles and Responsibilities

27. DE's Attendance Strategy was published in December 2016 and outlines the support for improving pupil attendance under four key themes:

1. School Leadership;
2. Early intervention;
3. Tailored support; and
4. Collaboration and Engagement.

28. For each of the four themes the strategic key roles and responsibilities are as follows:

1. School Leadership - Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Pupils

- ✓ Parents/carers should be aware of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should read and adhere to the school's Pupil Attendance Policy and procedures and support their children to understand and follow the rules.
- ✓ Parents/carers should support the efforts of school leaders to prioritise school attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should co-operate with and support school leaders if they recommend actions to address their child's poor attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should be aware of the link between pupil attendance levels and their subsequent academic attainment.

Schools

- ✓ Schools should ensure a Pupil Attendance Policy is in place, approved by their Board of Governors.
- ✓ Schools should ensure that all pupils and parents/carers are aware of and understand their school's Pupil Attendance Policy and what it means to them.
- ✓ Schools should include school attendance targets in the school development plan and ensure pupil attendance is on the agenda at all Board of Governors' meetings.
- ✓ Schools should promote the importance of school attendance and its link with attainment.
- ✓ Schools should engage with pupils in relation to potential barriers to attending such as the appropriateness of the curriculum.
- ✓ Schools should enhance the capacity of teachers and support staff to understand and support pupils with attendance problems.

2. Early Intervention - Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Pupils

- ✓ Parents/carers should be aware of the aim of schools in preventing the establishment of long-term patterns of poor attendance through early intervention.
- ✓ Parents/carers should let the school know of any issues that may impact upon attendance as early as possible.
- ✓ Parents/carers of young children should recognise the role that can be played in helping their children to shape a constructive attitude towards school attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should be supportive of the school's efforts to develop positive patterns of attendance amongst pupils from an early age.
- ✓ Parents/carers should understand the need for a positive mind-set on attendance to be developed in pupils from an early age.

Schools

- ✓ Schools should robustly follow up on all pupil absences and lateness. Monitor post-registration pupil absence and advise parents/carers of issues by, for example, a phone call or text message.
- ✓ Schools should ensure there are systems in place to monitor and analyse attendance patterns at an individual pupil, pupil group and whole school level prior to their entrenchment.
- ✓ Schools should have an attendance policy that documents how the school will apply the principles of early intervention into their work to promote and support the maximisation of pupil attendance.
- ✓ Schools should have flexible processes in place to enable support to be provided to pupils with poor levels of attendance at an early enough stage.
- ✓ Schools should proactively promote the value of school attendance to pupils in their earliest years, particularly in order to establish good attendance practices.
- ✓ Schools should take action to react, where appropriate, to changes in a pupil's circumstances that may impact upon their attendance such as a domestic crisis.

3. Tailored Support - Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Pupils

- ✓ Parents/carers should be aware of their legal responsibilities in respect of their child attending school regularly.
- ✓ Parents/carers and pupils should engage openly and constructively with the school and/or the EWS as they provide support and advice to improve attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should understand that the EA will take legal action, where appropriate, to ensure that a child receives an appropriate education.

Schools

- ✓ Schools should ensure that their pupil attendance policy includes timely supports to be made available to target attendance issues either on an individual pupil or group basis.
- ✓ Schools should take account of the challenges or barriers to learning that may affect a pupil's attendance and offer appropriate support that takes account of their individual circumstances.
- ✓ Schools should be sensitive to personal issues that may impact upon a pupil's attendance, and offer effective pastoral support.
- ✓ Schools should refer a pupil to the EWS in line with the guidelines in the Department's Attendance Circular.
- ✓ Schools should co-operate with the EA support services in their working with referred pupils

4. Collaboration and engagement - Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Pupils

- ✓ Pupils should talk to a teacher or trusted adult about any worries they have about school which may affect their attendance in order that the school can take action if necessary.
- ✓ Parents/carers should provide a reason immediately each time their child does not attend school and advise the school on issues such as medical appointments.
- ✓ Parents/carers should attend all parent/teacher interviews and be willing to address poor attendance patterns.
- ✓ Parents/carers should take an active interest in their child's education, the life of the school and promote the benefits of regular attendance.
- ✓ Parents/carers should support school staff in their efforts to manage difficult or challenging behaviour.

Schools

- ✓ Schools should work to build positive relationships with the local community that will help to promote closer engagement with the education system.
- ✓ Schools should try to promote closer parental engagement in their child's education by maximising their involvement in the life of the school.
- ✓ Schools should seek to share good practice through co-operation with local schools, with the EA and the ETI.
- ✓ Schools should consult with their pupils about the appropriateness of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the teaching in engaging the learner.
- ✓ Schools should have in place forms of pupil participation to help pupils be involved in making decisions that affect them such as curriculum choices.
- ✓ Schools should ensure all parents/carers are aware of what information is required in respect of their child's non-attendance and when it should be provided.
- ✓ Schools should seek to explore the opportunities for sharing of good practice offered through C2k and ESaGS.tv

Output Measures

1. An increase in the overall attendance level.
2. A reduction in the levels of unauthorised absences
3. A reduction in the proportion of pupils with attendance levels less than 90%.

Checklist to help schools manage and improve attendance

1. Ensure you have a School's Attendance Policy.
2. Board of Governors roles & responsibilities.
3. Dedicated Attendance person.
4. Strong monitoring system in place.
5. Set time for regular communication with EWO.
6. Incentive system in place for pupils.
7. Ongoing engagement with pupils, parents/carers & teachers.
8. Strong pastoral care system in place.
9. Measures to improve, such as contact with similar schools who have high attendance levels to examine what measures they have put in place.
10. Highlight the link between attendance and attainment.

School details and crest

SAMPLE PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY (For use by schools)

Introduction

Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential.

(Name of school) will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

(School should also include their own mission statement)

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at *(Name of school)*.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
4. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

(Suggested roles – schools should provide own roles and responsibilities)

Role of the School

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance; *(teachers/designated staff)* should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his/her attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions.

To accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2018/12, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/DE%20Circular%202018%2012%20-%20Attendance%20Guidance%20%26%20Absence%20Recording%20by%20Schools%20-%20Updated%20for%20Sept%202018.pdf>

(Name of school) is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Role of Parent/Guardian

Parents/guardians have a legal duty¹ to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

If a child is registered in school, their parent/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is a parent's/guardian's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

(Each school can decide what it feels is the most appropriate way to be informed of a pupil's absence such as emails, letters, phone calls, text messages etc)

Pupils are expected to be in school at xxxxx for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record.

If your child appears reluctant to attend school please discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

Role of Pupils

(Schools should insert their own roles for pupils)

Each pupil at *(Name of School)* must attend school punctually and regularly. **(Example)** If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher when you return.

Absence Procedures

(Each school should insert own procedures for reporting absence, monitoring, medical appointments etc)

(Example) All parents/carers are required to complete the attached absence notification form which provides a clear reason for any absence.

Family holidays during Term Time

(Name of school) discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be

¹ Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986

categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

(Each school should insert own procedures for managing non-attendance)

Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have a legal duty to make sure that parents/guardians meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

If a pupil's absence causes concern, and/or if their attendance falls below 85% and there is also a concern, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

Signature – Principal

Signature – Chair, Board of Governors

Date

ABSENCE NOTIFICATION FORM

Please Note – This form must be completed for each period of pupil absence and returned to the school immediately.

Name of Pupil _____

Class / Teacher Name _____

Date(s) of Absence _____

Reason _____

Signed (Parent / Guardian) _____

Date _____

**Please note this is a sample form and it is for each school to determine its own notification system.*

Extended Leave Application *NEW*

DENI Ref:	
School Name:	
Pupil(s) Name:	
Proposed start date of Extended Leave	
Proposed end date of Extended Leave	
Reason for Extended Leave	

Have you given due consideration to the following:
(Please ensure all considerations have been documented and kept)

Please select all that apply:

Safeguarding concerns/child protection issues	yes / not applicable
Any SEN issues	yes / not applicable
EA Services involved	yes / not applicable
Provision of education whilst away	yes / not applicable
Previous requests for extended leave	yes / not applicable

(if so, provide date of last approval)	
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Name of parent / guardian:	
Relationship to pupil(s):	
Mobile:	
Email address:	

Approval granted:	Yes / No
Extended Leave Start Date:	
Extended Leave End Date:	
Reason for decision:	

Signature of Principal/SLT	
Signature of Parent:	
Designated staff contact:	
Phone:	
Email address:	

Please ensure a copy of this form is provided to the pupil's parent / guardian and a copy is kept on the pupil's file *(All data contained on this form will be stored in accordance with GDPR)*

ABSENCE CODES

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

October 2017

(Revised August 2018)

CONTENTS
ABSENCE CODES: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	STATISTICAL MEANING	NOTE
/\	Present: / = (AM): \ = (PM)	Present	
A*	Artistic Endeavour	Authorised Absence	
B*	Bereavement	Authorised Absence	
C	Suspended	Authorised Absence	
D	No reason provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence	
F*	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence	
G*	Family Holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised Absence	
H*	Other Absence	Unauthorised Absence	
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	Authorised Absence	
J*	Extended Leave	Attendance not required	New
L*	Late (before registration closed)	Present	
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	Authorised Absence	
N	No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only)	Unauthorised Absence	
O*	Other Exceptional Circumstances	Authorised Absence	
P*	Approved Activity	Approved Educational Activity	The scope of this code has been expanded to be more encompassing.
R*	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence	
S*	Study Leave	Approved Educational Activity	
U*	Late (after registration closed)	Unauthorised Absence	
V*	Educational Visit/Examination	Approved Educational Activity	Now includes reference to examinations.
W*	Work Experience	Approved Educational Activity	
X	Only staff should attend	Attendance not required	
Y*	Exceptional Closure	Attendance not required	
#	Holiday for all	Attendance not required	
!*	No attendance required	Attendance not required	
1	Community Providers / EOTAS (organised by the EA)	Approved Educational Activity	
2	Exceptional Teaching Arrangement/hospital tuition (organised by the EA)	Approved Educational Activity	Title has been broadened.
3	Elective Home Education	Attendance not Required	
4	Pupil Referral Unit	Approved Educational Activity	
5	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework – EF)	Approved Educational Activity	
6	Training Organisation (under EF)	Approved Educational Activity	
7	FE College (under EF)	Approved Educational Activity	
8	Intensive Support Learning Unit	Approved Educational Activity	
9	CAMHS / Mental Health Support	Approved Educational Activity	Title broadened to include Mental Health Support.

*** The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.**

Attendance and Absence Codes

The attendance codes, a brief explanation of each and some examples can be found in this section. The codes for 'present', 'attendance not required', 'authorised absence' and 'unauthorised absence' have been grouped together for ease of reference.

Present codes:

Codes / \: Present

/ = AM

\ = PM

These codes should be used when a pupil is present during both/either of the registrations at AM or PM. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration he/she would still be counted as present for statistical purposes, although schools should have a system in place to identify that a pupil has left during a session.

Please note if a pupil leaves after registration without an appropriate reason their present code may be changed to unauthorised absence using either code D or H.

For health and safety reasons, schools need to be aware of the whereabouts of all pupils, particularly those leaving or arriving on the premises during a session.

Dual Registration

This is when a pupil is registered in one school and attends another school. The two schools are categorized as:

1. Main school – where they are originally enrolled; and
2. Subsidiary school – where they have been referred to and are attending for purposes identified in codes 1 - 8.

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.

Present / Approved Educational Activity Codes

Code J*: Extended Leave - *NEW*

Extended leave is not to be considered the same as a family holiday and should only be considered in circumstances such as:

- Short-term parental placement/employment outside the UK
- Family required to leave the UK for a specific complex family need such as:
 - death of a relative;
 - to care for a sick relative;
 - sibling or parent receiving medical treatment outside NI;
 - attend to immigration matters.

The school should ensure they are content with the information provided by the parents/carers before they record the absence and the appropriate template (see Annex A) has been completed. All approved applications must be sent to the Department of Education at attendance@education-ni.gov.uk.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code L*: Late (before registration closed)

This code should be used when a pupil arrives late to school but before registration is closed. Schools should actively discourage late arrival. Schools should identify in their Attendance Policy how long registers are kept open. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.

If a pupil persistently arrives late before registration the school should address this with the parent/carer.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code P*: Approved Activity

This code should be used in the event of a pupil attending an activity which the school deem has a direct correlation to their ongoing academic or educational progression.

This code may also be used when a pupil is participating in or attending an approved sporting activity such as participation as an amateur in a school-organised sport or as a representative at county, provincial or international level.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code S*: Study Leave

This code should be used for study leave as agreed by the school.

Study Leave is unsupervised time out of school and should only be applied to public examination candidates, in Years 11 to 14, during the examination period.

Study Leave should not be granted to pupils not involved in public examinations. (Public examinations are those which are authenticated or awarded by an external organisation, and not internally by the school. The main examples of such examinations include GCSEs, A Levels and BTECs).

Supervised study or revision classes provided in school should be coded Present / (am) or \ (pm).

Study leave should not be used in advance of the commencement of the examination timetable.

Decisions on study leave should be made by senior management and should be addressed in the school's Attendance Policy to ensure consistency and provide clarity for parents/carers.

It is considered good practice to provide parents/carers with a **minimum notice of one week** that study leave is being awarded to such pupils.

*Please note there is no requirement for schools to grant study leave to pupils and therefore is at the discretion of the school.

Code V*: Educational Visit / Examination

This code should be used for pupils attending school-organised trips and visits, including residential trips. It may also be used for other trips of a strictly educational nature, which are arranged by external organisations, **provided the school deem has a direct correlation to their ongoing academic attainment or educational advancement.**

Code V can also be used for academic interview. The school should be satisfied that the interview is linked to future education such as Further & Higher Education.

This code can also be used in the event of a pupil attending a recognised examination where a correlation can be made between it and ongoing educational attainment / progression.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code W*: Work experience

This code should be used for pupils on supervised work experience. Work experience should be arranged by or in conjunction with the school. Schools must

ensure that they check on the attendance of the pupil at the work experience placement and mark the register using the appropriate code.

Code W can also be used for a job interview. The school should be satisfied that the interview is linked to job prospects.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code 1: Community Providers / EOTAS (organised by the EA) (Post Primary)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is attending a Community Provider and/or an EOTAS setting by approval of the Education Authority. This code is for pupils at Key Stage 3 & 4 only. A pupil's placement in either a Community Provider and/or an EOTAS provision must be arranged through the Education Authority.

The Main school should make arrangements with the EOTAS facility to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Code 2: Education Teaching Arrangement (ETA) or Hospital tuition (organised by the EA)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site by receiving education by an ETA or in hospital under arrangements approved by the Education Authority. Schools should make every effort to arrange ETA/Hospital tuition for School Aged Mothers during the period of the child's birth.

The Main school should make arrangements with the ETA provider/ hospital school to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Code 4: Pupil Referral Unit (Primary)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at a Pupil Referral Unit as organised and approved by the Education Authority.

The Main school should make arrangements with the unit to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Code 5: Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework – EF)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at another mainstream school (under the EF). The pupil may be attending days or sessions at other post primary schools for selected courses through arrangements made under the EF.

The Main school should make arrangements with the EF school to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Code 6: Training Organisation (under Entitlement Framework – EF)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at another training organisation (under EF). Pupils attending days or sessions at a training organisation through arrangements made under the EF. **The Main school should make arrangements with the EF organisation to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.**

Code 7: Further Education (FE) College (under Entitlement Framework – EF)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at a FE College (under the arrangements of EF). **The Main school should make arrangements with the EF organisation to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.**

Code 8: Intensive Support Learning Unit

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at an Intensive Support Learning Unit (ISLU). **The Main school should make arrangements with the ISLU to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.**

Code 9: CAMHS / Mental Health Support

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently either being educated off-site whilst an in-patient or whilst they are attending sessions at a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) facility.

Code 9 can also be used for a pupil attending other support systems organised by the Education Authority.

The Main school should make arrangements with the CAMHS facility to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Attendance not required codes:

Code X: Only staff should attend

This code should be used for days on which teachers are in school; however, there is no requirement for pupils to attend. For example, staff training, INSET or school development days.

Code X can be used for part session, i.e. AM or PM.

Code Y*: Exceptional closure

This code should be used when the school has been granted permission by the Department of Education for an exceptional closure day. The Department will consider an application for a reduction in the days on which a school is in operation to take account of specific exceptional circumstances where the closing of the school is outside the control of the school authorities. Schools must not use this code unless they have applied in writing and been granted permission to take an exceptional closure day/s by the Department's Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team at attendance@education-ni.gov.uk. Circular 2017/14 refers and can be accessed at:

[Circular 2017/14 - School optional and exceptional closures](#)

Examples of specific exceptional closures are:

- The death of a teacher or pupil at the school;
- Flooding or burst pipes at the school;
- Electricity failure;
- Damage to school;
- Severe weather conditions e.g. heavy snowfall; or
- School being used as a polling station for parliamentary/local government elections.

Failure to seek permission may result in the exceptional closure being refused.

Partial Closure

Exceptional conditions mean that part of the school is closed due to an unavoidable cause e.g. a school may operate on 2 sites with only 1 site affected.

If part of a school is closed Code Y can be used for those year groups affected **only**.

(Note: In the C2k Attendance Module this code is displayed as Exceptional Circumstances - For all other exceptional circumstances Code O should be used)

Code #: Holiday for all

This code should be used for school vacations where pupils and staff are not required to attend. Examples are:

- Between terms;
- Half terms;
- Occasional days when the whole school (including staff) are on holiday; or
- Weekends.

Code !*: No attendance required

This code should be used where attendance of a pupil or some pupils may not be required in either the morning or afternoon session. It may also be used for:

- Induction days e.g. Year 8;
- A pupil who is unable to attend due to adverse weather or EA provided transport failure;
- When school is closed for partial day due to unforeseen issues such as power failure;
- A pupil is dual registered and this code should be used by the Subsidiary school when they are not required to attend that school. It will be the responsibility of the main school to record the attendance;
- Pupils who may, for specific reasons, have been excepted from the statutory curriculum (reduced timetable) and assessment requirements on a temporary basis (as outlined in [DE Circular 1990/45: Temporary Exceptions from the Statutory Curriculum and Assessment Provisions for Individual Pupils](#));
- A pupil is ordered to attend court; or
- Industrial action.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code 3: Elective Home Education

This code should be used for a registered pupil whose parents/carers have elected to educate at home and have advised the school or EA of the position.

This code should be used from the date a parent/carer advises the Principal that they have decided to educate their child at home until the Principal provides a certificate of attendance (Form S.A.1) to the parent/carer, which states the reason for removal as “elective home education”. When Form S.A.1 is issued, the pupil can be removed from the General Register and there will no longer be a requirement to record their attendance. A completed copy of this form should be held by the school and a copy forwarded to the respective Education Welfare Service for information and an end date inserted on C2K. Copies of the form S.A.1 can be found at: [Form SA1 – Removal of a pupil from registration](#)

Authorised absence codes:

Code A*: Artistic Endeavour

This code should be used when a pupil is absent from school to attend an event which relates to a pupil's artistic endeavour which has not been organised through the school as part of normal school activities. However the school is content that there is a correlation between it and the pupil's ongoing educational attainment / progression.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code B*: Bereavement

This code should be used when a pupil is absent from school due to the death of a close relative. Death of a close relative would be parent/carer, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, nephew, niece, or other relative who is a member of the household.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code C: Suspended

This code should be used for a pupil who has been suspended for a fixed period and remains on the school register.

Code F*: Family Holiday (agreed)

This code should **only** be used in very exceptional circumstances when a family holiday is judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events and agreed by the school.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code I: Illness

This code should be used when parents/carers phone to say that their child is ill or when parents/carers send a letter after the period of illness to explain the child's absence. Parents/carers should be advised to notify the school as soon as possible when a child is ill. If a pupil is present for registration but returns home because of illness, no absence need be recorded for that session. Schools should keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to school in case of an emergency. Schools can request parents/carers to provide medical evidence to support absence on the grounds of illness, however, they are advised not to request medical certificates unnecessarily (particularly retrospective certificates), especially if the illness was not treated by a doctor at the time.

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can record the absence as 'Other Absence' (Code H) but should advise parents of its intention.

A pupil receiving medical treatment on site should be marked 'present'.

For an absence at registration due to a medical, dental or hospital appointment please see Code M for additional information.

Code M: Medical/Dental Appointments

This code should be used when a pupil is absent from registration for a medical or dental appointment. If a pupil is present for registration but has a medical appointment later, no absence need be recorded for that session. Although, for Health and Safety reasons or in case of emergency, a system must be in place to record that a pupil has either arrived at school or left the premises during the session.

If a pupil misses registration for a medical appointment, which has been notified to the school in advance, but returns to school within that session then the registration code should be changed from M to / or \ as applicable (i.e. present).

Code M should be used for the session if the school had not been notified of the appointment in advance.

Code M can be used for part session, i.e. AM or PM.

Medical appointments include:

- Attendance at a GP's surgery;
- Attendance at a dentist's surgery; or
- Hospital appointments (not a stay in hospital).

Code O*: Other exceptional circumstances

This code should be used for special occasions that have been agreed at the discretion of the school or an exceptional event outside the control of the pupil. Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking the following into account:

- The nature of the event;
- Its frequency (is it a one-off, or likely to become a regular occurrence?);
- Whether or not the parent/carer gave advance notice; or
- The pupil's overall attendance pattern.

Examples might include occasions such as attending the wedding of an immediate family member or as stated below:

Young Carers

- In a genuine crisis, a school can approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made.

Birth of a Child

- Code O should only be used when the provision of home tuition (Code 2) is not available. Schools should provide direct support to assist pupils remaining in school wherever possible, and to return her to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth.
Further information about School Age Mothers can be obtained at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/school-age-mothers-programme>

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code R*: Religious observance

This code should be used when a pupil is absent to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/carer belong, including religious festivals.

Parent/carer should be encouraged to give advance notice.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Unauthorised absence codes:

Code D: No reason provided for absence

This code should be used when no reason has been provided for a pupil's absence 5 school days after the pupils return to school. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence from school. During the absence and in the initial 5 school day period after the pupils' return, Code N (no reason yet provided for absence) may be used as a temporary code.

Code D should only be used in exceptional cases as a reason for absence should always be established.

(Note: In the C2k Attendance Module this is displayed as – Did not provide a reason for absence.)

Code G*: Family Holiday (NOT agreed)

This code should be used for a family holiday that is not agreed by the school. Examples of reasons a school would not agree a holiday would be as follows:

- The availability of cheap holidays;
- The availability of desired accommodation;
- Poor weather experienced during school holidays;
- A holiday that overlaps the beginning or end of term;
- Where a school's prior agreement is not sought and the pupil goes on holiday; or
- If parents/carers keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time should be recorded as Code G.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code H*: Other Absence

This code should be used for other absences which are not covered by any other code and where the reason is not acceptable to the school. Examples would be:

- Un-notified illness or false allegation of illness;
- Pupil's/parent's/carer's/sibling's birthday;
- Shopping;
- Having hair cut; or
- Couldn't get up.

Please note that unexplained absences should be recorded under code N (initially) and then Code D.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code N: No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code)

This code is a temporary code and should be only used during a pupils' absence and in the initial 5 school day period following the pupils' return to school.

This code should be used to cover an unexplained absence on a temporary basis until the pupil returns with an explanation of their reason for absence. After 5 school days following the pupil's return to school, if no explanation for the absence has been provided, the code should be changed to Code D and every effort should be made to get a reason of absence from the parents/carers.

Code U*: Late (after registration closed)

This code should be used when a pupil arrives late to school after registration is closed with no relevant reason to code it otherwise.

For example, if a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) for reasons such as: they couldn't find their shoes; their school uniform was drying in the tumble dryer; their younger sibling was misbehaving etc, then code U should be used. Although, if a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) due to a doctor or dentist appointment, then code M would be used for the session if the school had not been notified of the appointment in advance.

Schools should actively discourage late arrival. Schools identify how long registers are kept open in their Attendance Policy. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are all pupils entitled to study leave?

No. Study leave should **only** be granted, at the discretion of the school, for public examination candidates, in Years 11 to 14, during the examination timetable.

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 awarded to such pupils.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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 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.

5. 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>

6. 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 for example, extreme weather conditions. Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team can advise on the criteria in detail for an exceptional closure.

7. When can I remove a child from the school register?

You 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; Expulsion; Death; 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 elective home education. The school has to complete an SA1 form:

[Form SA1 – Removal of a pupil from registration](#)

8. A pupil is subject to Dual Registration, how should this be recorded?

Dual Registration should be recorded in line with the codes provided in this Circular 2017/15. However, 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 at the following link:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201622-guidance-enrolment-status-pupils-including-those-subject-sen-and-eotas-referrals>

9. A pupil in the school is pregnant. How should I record this pupil's attendance when they are off due to pregnancy sickness and also when they are off having the baby?

When the girl is off sick 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 off due to having the baby then you would use Code O.

However, if at any time the pupil is receiving home/hospital tuition arranged by the Education Authority then it would be Code 2.

10. A pupil's parent/carer removes them from school when they are working in another country because the pupil travels with them. What should the pupil's absence be recorded as?

When the parent/carer have advised that they are taking the child out specifically to go with them to the other country while they work then Code O should be used, once the school are content.

11. 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 change to present.

12. 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 ! 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.

13. In the event of Industrial Action. How should I record this?

Code ! should be used for the period the school is closed to pupils.

14. 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 ! can be used for this purpose.

15. 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.