ATTENDANCE POLICY

Addendum

Contents

Introduction

1. This addendum has been updated to reflect government guidance published on 26th July 2021 in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) and the new academic year 2021/22.

2. It should be read in conjunction with Star's Attendance and Punctuality Policy.

3. The Department for Education will collect the attendance data recorded from the start of the autumn term and intends, barring any further major developments in the coronavirus pandemic, to use it as a school performance measure. It is therefore vitally important that schools follow the guidance closely.

4. Identified groups of pupils will continue to learn from home under government direction due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19). It is, however, expected that numbers will be substantially reduced as close contacts of positive cases will not be required to self-isolate.

5. Parents, pupils, and schools should not be penalised when pupils are directed to learn from home. The Department for Education has continued to extend the use of the X code, in some circumstances, for pupils of statutory age into the new academic year. The X code is discounted in all statistical analyses.

Guiding principles

6. **School attendance is mandatory in 2021/22.**
   - The usual rules on regular school attendance apply.
   - Schools need to ensure attendance is carefully monitored and that attendance is maximised both at an individual and whole school level.
   - Excellent school attendance has a critical role to play in contributing to the Trust's priorities, specifically, a rapid and secure catch up, exam readiness and emotional wellbeing and self-esteem.
   - It is a parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil.
   - Schools have a responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence robustly.
   - Schools should use legal interventions in the appropriate circumstances, including fixed penalty notices and prosecutions, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct to secure regular attendance.
   - Schools should facilitate local authority arrangements for identifying, and addressing, children missing education. Any school considering a CME referral should first consult with the Trust's Admissions and Exclusions Team to gain approval.

7. **Schools must be ready to persuade parents to send their child to school.** It is no longer permissible for parents to choose to keep their children at home due to concerns related to coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools should respond to parental concerns sensitively but must inform parents of their legal duty and explain the existing protective measures and any step-up arrangements, which have been or will be implemented in school to keep their child safe. Parents must be asked to consider the balance of risk of contracting the virus with the long-term impact of continued self-isolation on educational outcomes, wellbeing and self-esteem.

8. **The extension of the use of attendance category 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'.** During the academic year 2021-2022, the X code should be used for pupils who cannot attend because their travel to, or attendance at school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19 from Public Health England (PHE), or its successor UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)

- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

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

9. **Welfare calls for non-attendance.** Where pupils are not attending due to concerns related to coronavirus, daily welfare calls should be made alongside extensive efforts to re-engage the pupil in full-time on-site education. In the interim, at the Principal's discretion, provision for remote learning can be made, but it should be made explicitly clear to parents that this is not a substitute for on-site provision and that the absence is unauthorised. Withdrawing access to online learning may well prompt parents to have their children re-engage with face-to-face provision.

Key priorities

10. Leaders and governors must:

- support pupils and parents in adapting to a *new normal* as we learn to live with coronavirus and allow a successful return to regular attendance and punctuality for the whole school.

- maintain a high level of confidence amongst parents and pupils that the school is a safe place to attend. Clearly articulate the measures which are still in place to secure the health and safety of pupils and any step-up measures which can be quickly and seamlessly reintroduced if required.

- complete the attendance registers using any revised attendance codes outlined in the addendum for the academic year 2021 -2022.

- seek assistance of social workers and other external agencies when dealing with children from the vulnerable groups who are not attending.

- ensure where pupils are self-isolating, liaison with families is prioritised and highly effective. It is essential that schools ask parents to inform them immediately about the outcome of a test so that schools can record absence accurately and advise parents on next steps related to school attendance. Schools should not require evidence of test results before welcoming children back to school.

- If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), schools should immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement in this activity, but this does not need to be tracked in the attendance register.

Recording attendance in SIMS

11. The attendance register should be taken in SIMS using the full range of attendance codes in the established [non-statutory guidance](#) in addition to the advice outlined below.

12. Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19 <u>do not need to self-isolate</u>. They should instead get a PCR test and should only self-isolate if they test positive. If they do test positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

13. **Code O (unauthorised absence) should be used if the Principal decides that the reason for absence is not acceptable.** This should include parents who are choosing to keep their children at home because they are anxious about their child, or other family members contracting coronavirus (COVID-19). By recording unauthorised absence, legal interventions become a consideration for the school, in partnership with the local authority.

14. **Code X** should be recorded for pupils who are not attending because of circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19);

    - **pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms or confirmed COVID-19.** Pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should self-isolate and get a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

        If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I (illness). Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.

        If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

    - **pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine following foreign travel.** As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, the school should use code X in the register. The requirements around quarantine are under regular review by the government and up to date guidance can be accessed through this link.

    - **Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable when shielding is advised.** Clinically extremely vulnerable people are no longer advised to shield. All clinically extremely vulnerable pupils should attend their education setting unless they are one of the very small number of children and young people under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend. In these circumstances medical evidence should be obtained, securely filed and the X code applied.

        If at some point, shielding is reintroduced nationally by the DHSC, PHE or UKHSA, for example because of a new variant of concern, then pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable may be advised not to attend school for a period of time. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from DHSC, PHE or UKHSA should be recorded as code X.

        In addition, step up measures may be taken by the local Director of Public Health as a result of rising transmission rates and increased levels of hospitalisation. This could include shielding for the clinically extremely vulnerable. Any pupil absence which resulted from such circumstances would also be X coded.

    - **Pupils who are self-isolating but who have not had a PCR test.** In line with public health advice, pupils with symptoms must self-isolate and schools should strongly encourage pupils to take a PCR test. Where the pupil is unable to take a PCR test, the school should record the pupil as code X in the register. Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence

from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes and pursue a legal intervention.

15. **Code I** should be used for any pupil who tests positive for COVID-19 from the date of the test result.

16. **Code L and U** should be recorded when a pupil arrives late both before and after the registers have closed but considering any staggered arrival times.

Remote education

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

Reporting to the Department for Education and the Trust

18. Schools are required to submit a daily educational settings status online form to the Department for Education. In addition, school data will be collected via the January 2022 census for the autumn term and then in subsequent terms.

19. The Trust will download data directly from SIMS following the closure of registers each day. Schools should ensure that there is a protocol in place to ensure that any missing marks are processed daily prior to this download so that the Central Team can accurately monitor daily attendance and X code absence rates.

Review and adaptation

20. Leaders will keep the arrangements detailed in this addendum under review in line with any further government updates.

Appendix 1 – Examples of scenarios and coding

Scenario	Coding
A pupil has symptoms of COVID-19 and is advised to get a PCR test. The test result is positive.	The X code should be used whilst the test is being arranged and the family are awaiting the results. When the positive test result is received from the date of the test the I code should be used as the pupil is ill with COVID.
A pupil has symptoms of COVID-19 and is advised to get a PCR test. The test result is negative, and the pupil feels well enough to attend school.	The X code should be used whilst the test is being arranged and the family are awaiting the results. The pupil resumes their education and receives a present mark. No absence is recorded.
A pupil has symptoms of COVID-19 and is advised to get a PCR test. The test result is negative, but the pupil is too unwell to return to school.	The X code should be used whilst the test is being arranged and the family are awaiting the results. When the negative test result is received from the date of the test result the I code should be used as the pupil is ill with something other than COVID.
A pupil is identified as a close contact of the positive COVID case by NHS Track and Trace. They do not need to self-isolate but are advised to take PCR test. The test is taken but requires a short absence from school. Following the test, they return to school as soon as possible as they do not need to wait for the results. The PCR result is positive and the pupil is required to self-isolate upon receiving the result.	If getting the test requires them to be absent from school to this absence should be X coded for this session if a statutory register is missed. The absence following the positive test result should be I coded as the pupil is ill with COVID.
A pupil is identified as a close contact of the positive COVID case by NHS Track and Trace. They do not need to self-isolate but are advised to take PCR test. The test is taken outside of school hours. Following the test they return to school as soon as possible as they do not need to wait for the results. The PCR result is negative.	No absence to record.
A pupil is identified as a close contact of the positive COVID case by NHS Track and Trace. They do not need to self-isolate but are advised to take PCR test. The parents, despite school's request, refuse to get a test and the pupil continues to attend school. They develop symptoms of COVID and the school follows the usual protocol. The parents still refuse to get the pupil tested and they have to self-isolate for the next ten days.	X code is used for the whole self-isolation period as COVID is not confirmed.

A pupil returns from travelling abroad and is required to quarantine based on the most recent government guidance.	X code for the whole period of quarantine.
Even though clinically extremely vulnerable pupils are not generally advised to shield, a parent has been informed by a clinician that shielding is required in the child's particular medical circumstances and has supplied medical confirmation of this requirement.	X code for the whole period of shielding.