

# Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020 to 2021 academic year

Updated 2 March 2021

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## Purpose of this document

This document is an addendum to the non-statutory [school attendance: guidance for schools](#). It replaced temporary guidance documents on recording attendance during the outbreak.

For ease of reference, it explains and illustrates changes made to regulations<sup>[\[footnote 1\]](#)</sup> governing school attendance registers in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) from 24 August 2020 for use in the 2020 to 2021 academic year. It should be read in conjunction with the wider guidance document which gives advice on other usual attendance duties and processes that remain in force.

We have introduced [a set of sub-codes](#) to help schools accurately and consistently record non-attendance related to coronavirus, and help them to complete the daily education settings status form.

## Attendance expectations

Attendance will be mandatory from 8 March 2021 and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

## Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

There are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

To make sure schools record this accurately and consistently, we have made changes to the regulations<sup>[\[footnote 2\]](#)</sup> governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'.

This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)<sup>[\[footnote 3\]](#)</sup>
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

## Attendance codes

From the beginning of the new academic year, schools should return to using the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak (set out on page 9 of the [school attendance: guidance for schools](#)), in addition to the new category of 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)':

- pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be recorded using code X<sup>[\[footnote 4\]](#)</sup>
- schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak

## **Examples in which ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’ could apply**

In line with current legislation, and current guidance from PHE and DHSC, examples are as follows.

### **Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

View [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

Pupils who have symptoms should self-isolate and get a test.

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), 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, as would usually be the case. 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 for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. 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.

If someone in the pupil’s household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test.

If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result when the pupil can return to school.

If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive. Code X should be used during this period.

In all cases of self-isolation, schools should ask parents to inform them immediately about the outcome of a test. Schools should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

### **Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

View [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#) and [NHS test and trace](#) guidance.

Pupils may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).

The [NHS test and trace](#) guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive. Code X should be used for these pupils during this period.

## **Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine**

View guidance on [how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK](#).

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<sup>[\[footnote 5\]](#)</sup>. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, code X should be used in the register.

## **Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable when shielding is advised**

Read [guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable persons from COVID-19](#) for advice on whether clinically extremely vulnerable pupils are advised to attend school or not.

If shielding has been advised nationally or in a local area by DHSC or PHE, then pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from PHE or the DHSC should be recorded as code X.

Schools should contact parents of pupils who are shielding when measures in the local area are lifted and shielding is paused again, to set out the expectation that they can return to school. Code X should not be used for sessions after the pupil has been advised to return to school.

## **Local or national lockdown**

If rates of the disease rise locally or nationally, schools may need to prevent some pupils from attending. Schools should follow PHE or DHSC guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of local or national lockdown. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X - should be used for pupils who are asked not to attend.

## **Remote education**

If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), we expect schools to be able to immediately 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.

## Data collection

This year the census will collect attendance codes in addition to absence codes.

1. [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2020 ↵](#)
2. [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2020 ↵](#)
3. And their equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland if a pupil attending a school in England resides there. [↵](#)
4. Code X is not counted as an absence in the school census. [↵](#)
5. [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, International Travel\) \(England\) Regulations 2020 ↵](#)

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