

Attendance update for schools January 2021.

On Monday 4th January, the DfE circulated guidance to schools regarding attendance and how to code attendance during this new period of lockdown including school closures. The relevant sections of this email are quoted below:

During the period of national lockdown, schools and colleges should only allow vulnerable children and the children of critical workers to attend. Children with at least one parent or carer who is [listed as a critical worker](#) are eligible for a school place. It is not necessary for both parents to be critical workers.

Attendance recording in schools

As vulnerable children are still expected to attend school full time, they should not be marked as Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). Schools and colleges should encourage vulnerable children to attend but if the parent of a vulnerable child wishes their child to be absent from school, the parent should let the school know that the pupil will not be attending. The Department for Education expects schools and colleges to grant such applications for leave given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

As with vulnerable children, critical worker parents and carers should let schools know if their child will not be attending and, if not, schools should grant a leave of absence (code C) given the exceptional circumstances.

All pupils who are not expected to be in school should be marked as Code X. They are not attending because they are following public health advice.

Definition of “vulnerable”:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children’s social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued attendance. This might include children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children’s social care services, adopted children, those at risk of becoming NEET (‘not in employment, education or training’), those living in temporary accommodation, those who are young carers and others at the provider and local authority’s discretion.

In practice then this means that all children who are NOT in a vulnerable group as defined above would be coded as X and they are NOT expected to be in school.

All children in the vulnerable group are EXPECTED to attend full time. If they are absent from school due to a reason related to public health advice – e.g. they are shielding / self-isolating or quarantining – this can be coded as X. If parents request that the child does not attend this should be recorded as an authorised absence (code C unless another authorised absence code is more applicable). Full time attendance is expected for children in the vulnerable groups and there has been no guidance yet for schools with regard to any alternatives to full time attendance. Where parents choose to keep their vulnerable child at home please ensure that appropriate home learning is in place with appropriate differentiation for those children with an EHCP in line with stated and identified needs and provision in the plan.

As of Thursday 7th January, the Secretary of State has issued a disapplication notice for attendance until 6th February. This means that the duty to ensure a child regularly attends school is lifted and there are therefore no actions to be taken for non-attendance until this notice expires and also that the penalty notices for taking a child out of school during term time are suspended.