

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

Updated January 2021

Purpose of this document

This document is an addendum to Our Lady and St Bede Attendance Policy, in response to the temporary guidance issued by the Department for Education on recording attendance during the outbreak.

Attendance expectations

From the start of the autumn term 2020 pupil attendance is mandatory and the usual rules on attendance applied, 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

2020 to 2021 – not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Although school attendance was mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils can not attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

A new category of non-attendance – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' was added to make sure schools record this accurately and consistently.

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)[footnote 3]
- 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 were advised to return to using the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak (page 7-8 in original Attendance Policy), 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
- 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 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 will 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. Our Lady and St Bede will 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). Code X will be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive they will 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 will 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 will be used during this period.

In all cases of self-isolation, Our Lady and St Bede asks parents to inform them immediately about the outcome of a test. We do 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 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 will be used for these pupils during this period.

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

Our Lady and Ste Bede ask that as usual, parents to 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, code X should be used in the register.

Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period where rates remain high. Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from PHE or the DHSC will be recorded as code X.

Our Lady and St Bede will 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 will not be used for sessions after the pupil has been advised to return to school.

National Lockdown

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 4 January 2021, only children of critical workers and vulnerable children and young people should attend school or college. All other pupils and students will receive remote education.

Local lockdown

If rates of the disease rise locally, schools may need to prevent some pupils from attending. Our Lady and St Bede will follow PHE or DHSC guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of local lockdown. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X – will 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), Our Lady and St Bede will immediately offer them access to remote education. Our Lady and St Bede should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with this activity, but this will not be tracked in the attendance register.

Data collection

Collection of school attendance data as part of the school census will resume in January 2021, collecting data for the autumn term 2020. Subject to the necessary legislation being made, from January 2021, the census will collect attendance codes in addition to absence codes. Further information from the Department for Education will follow on what, if any, additional attendance data will be required during the 2020 to 2021 academic year to monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and support the government's planning.