



Attendance Policy

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Attendance Policy and Procedures for Holyrood Academy

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Contents

Attendance Policy and Procedures for Holyrood Academy.....	3
Part 1 Policy:.....	5
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Aims	5
Effects of non-attendance	7
3. Safeguarding and Attendance.....	7
4. Legislation and Guidance	7
Part 2 What the Law Says and Our School Procedures:	8
1. Contents of Attendance Register	8
2. Present at School (and Lateness)	8
Effects of Late Arrival at School.....	9
3. Authorised Absence	9
3.1 Illness.....	9
3.2 Medical/Dental Appointments	11
3.3 Religious Observance.....	11
3.4 Traveller Absence	11
3.5 Exclusions.....	12
5. Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance	13
6. Leave of Absence Requests – ‘Exceptional Circumstances’	13
7. Unauthorised Absence.....	14
8. Approved Educational Activity (AEA)	14

9. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (as set out in the law and DfE guidance)	15
10. Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave)	15
11. Students on Part-time Timetables	16
12. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions.....	17
13. Children Missing Education (CME).....	18
14. Following up Unexplained Absences	18
15. Reporting to Parents.....	18
16. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence	18
17. Roles and Responsibilities	19
18. Policy Monitoring Arrangements	20
19. Links with other policies	20

Part 1 Policy:

1. Introduction

It is the aim of Holyrood Academy that students should enjoy learning, experience success and realise their full potential. Our Attendance Policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of students.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a student as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason.

2. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by promoting good attendance; ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled; and acting early to address patterns of absence.

This policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents¹ must follow to report their child absent from school.

It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits. Therefore, the school will encourage parents of compulsory school age to send their children to every session that is available to them. If the child is unable to attend the school for any reason, the parent should inform the school of the reason on the first day of absence. If the school is concerned about a student's attendance for any reason, we will contact the parent to discuss the matter, in the first instance.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory² school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

¹ Education law defines parents as: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child. In this policy the term 'parent' includes parents and carers.

² A child becomes of 'compulsory school age' on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday and ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of Year 11.

We want our students to attend school every day, unless they are really not well enough to. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our students to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality is essential in the workplace, and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the attendance expectations in the workplace.

In April 2017 the Supreme Court clarified the definition of regular attendance to be attendance "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school", therefore if an absence is not authorised by the school, the student's attendance is deemed to be irregular.

We will do all we can to encourage our students to attend. We will also make the best provision we can for any student who needs additional support in school or who is prevented from attending school, due to a medical condition.

Please see DfE guidance documents 'Supporting students at school with medical conditions - December 2015' – or ask the school for a printed copy.

We believe that one of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all students, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community
- Raise our student's awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Provide support, advice and guidelines to parents, students and staff
- Work in partnership with parents
- Celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality

Effects of non-attendance

The table below indicates how what might seem like just a few days absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons.

Attendance during school year	Days lost in a year	Which is approximately	Approximate number of lessons missed
95%	9.5 Days	2 Weeks	50 Lessons
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 Lessons

3. Safeguarding and Attendance

Our school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all students as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a student's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019 version, or as updated by the DfE) we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any student who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the student's welfare. (Please see our school's Safeguarding Policy for more information.)

4. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the 2019 school attendance guidance, from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's 2015 statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance including:

- The Education Act 1996 (as amended)
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended in 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended in 2012 and 2013)

The DfE's guidance on the school census explains the persistent absence threshold.

Part 2 What the Law Says and Our School Procedures:

1. Contents of Attendance Register

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion the school must record whether each student is:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Attending an approved educational activity; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

2. Present at School (and Lateness)

Students are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If a student leaves the school premises after registration they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

The Attendance Officer and/or Year Leader will meet with parents of those students who are frequently late arriving at school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

Our students must arrive by **08:30am** on each school day.

Our morning register is taken at **08:35am** and will be kept open until **08:55am**

Our afternoon register is taken at **12:30pm** and will be kept open until **1:30pm**

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late (**L**) – which counts as present

A student who arrives late **after** the registers close will be marked as absent. If the student is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised. If the student is late for no good reason they will be marked with the **unauthorised** absence code 'Late after registers close' (**U**). See DfE Attendance Codes – Appendix One.

Effects of Late Arrival at School

When a child arrives late to school, they miss important events like assembly, teacher instructions and introductions. Children often also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others.

Minutes late per Day	Equates to Days of Teaching Lost in one Year	Which means this number of lessons missed
5 mins	3 Days	15 Lessons
10 mins	6 Days	30 Lessons
15 mins	9 Days	45 Lessons

3. Authorised Absence

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away from the school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the school:

3.1 Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows the 2019 DfE School Attendance Guidance which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. (See DfE 2019 School Attendance guidance document - link at the end of this policy).

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some instances the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the student's GP directly.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a student has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have **not** been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence. You can do this by one of the following ways;

- Calling the Academy Absence Line
- Call into the Academy Reception to report that your child will be absent

If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school every other day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

If your child is absent and we do not hear from you, we will Telephone or text you on the first day of absence to query the reason for the absence. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

Where absences become persistent, you will be Invited to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Year Leader.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact our school's Designated Safeguarding Lead for further information on the support available.

Parents should also contact their GP or the NHS Helpline by phoning telephone number 111 for advice if they are concerned. In case of emergency parents should dial 999.

Students taken ill during the school day

If a student needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the student must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

3.2 Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a student must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

3.3 Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

3.4 Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller student of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged

in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In which case the child will be dual registered at that school and this school, which is their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

3.5 Exclusions

If the school decides to send a student home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an Exclusion. The school will follow the current DfE's statutory guidance on exclusions.

Any exclusion must be agreed by the Headteacher.

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion. If the student is a Looked After Child, the school will notify the student's carer, social worker and Virtual School. In other instances, where a student is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

The student must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

4. First Day of Absence Response

On the first day of absence it is expected that parents will contact the school's absence line on 01460 260100 to explain why a child cannot attend school. If this call is not made then the school will contact the parent/ carer by text for safeguarding purposes to ensure that the child is safe.

It is our school's requirement that parents provide details of at least two people who can be contacted in an emergency. You will be asked to provide these details on admission and will be sent a Data Collection Sheet at the start of each academic year. Please ensure that you update the school if there are any changes to this information.

If the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers provided, and is concerned for the welfare of the student, we may request a Welfare Check from the police.

5. Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance

Good attendance is celebrated in termly celebration assemblies. Prizes and house points are given for attendance above 95% and are sent home on a termly basis. Postcards and house points are given to students who improve on their overall attendance.

6. Leave of Absence Requests – 'Exceptional Circumstances'

The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead as necessary. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the student can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence. **Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing.**

Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage we will follow the necessary protocols. (Please see our school's Safeguarding Policy for more information.)

7. Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence will be unauthorised if a student is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Waiting at home for maintenance reasons or a parcel to be delivered
- Day trips
- Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school)
- In the case of term time leave - if a student is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

Unauthorised absences may result in Legal Sanctions, usually Penalty Notices or Prosecutions.

8. Approved Educational Activity (AEA)

When students are attending educational activities off the school site that have been approved by the school, the register will be marked to show this is the case. (See DfE 2019 School Attendance guidance.)

If a student is attending an alternative education provider such as another school, or Student Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, our school will make arrangements for the student to be dual registered at the other setting and mark our registers accordingly.

If a student is attending an alternative education provider, which is not a school or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, we will mark the sessions which the student attends the alternative setting as code B (off-site educational activity). The school expects the alternative provider (AP) to notify us of any absences by individual students, to ensure we become aware of any attendance concerns as soon as possible and take follow up action as necessary. Attendance updates will be provided on a weekly basis, or more frequently if agreed with the alternative setting.

Any attendance concerns will be followed up by us, in conjunction with the AP.

9. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (as set out in the law and DfE guidance)

In accordance with DfE school attendance guidance, our school will record students as 'Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances' in the following circumstances (such circumstances are not recorded as absences):

- Our school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause
- The transport provided by our school or the Local Authority is not available and the student's home is not within statutory walking distance. (See the DfE's 'Home to school travel and transport' guidance document, or ask the school for a printed copy.)
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the student from attending school.
- The student is in custody, but still on the school roll. (If the school has evidence that the student is attending educational activities we can record those sessions as 'present at approved educational activity'.)

10. Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave)

Sometimes students can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and students to be open and honest with us about the reason for the student's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a student is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support students and parents in the best way.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a student, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. Parents may be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer to discuss the matter. In some cases, this may result in a formal action plan being produced in the form of an Attendance Contract or support from the Team Around the School being offered.

If our school refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. This will at least be evidenced via the sending of a warning letter.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic approach to the issue and involve other agencies as necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies, or fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a student who is absent we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

11. Students on Part-time Timetables

Students are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have.

If, for any reason, our school is unable to provide a student with a full-time education due to the student's needs, we will work with the student, parent and other agencies where appropriate, to come to a mutually convenient arrangement. Any part-time timetables will be for the shortest amount of time possible, whilst arrangements are made to support the student's return to a full-time timetable.

12. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered student at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent, but may have day to day care of the child.

Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered student at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold, currently 10 unauthorised sessions in 12 school week period, for a Penalty Notice to the Local Authority for legal action, unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Penalty Notice or Prosecution.

Penalty Notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences and a tool to support improved school attendance. They are an alternative to prosecution, and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a student's irregular attendance.

A student's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following:

1. A Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 payable within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. (Failure to pay will result in prosecution.)
2. Prosecution.

Prosecution could lead to fines up to £2500 and /or 3 months imprisonment. Penalty Notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child and are issued for each child with irregular attendance. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices, if two siblings had irregular school attendance, and there were two parents with responsibility for the children, four Penalty Notices would be issued. Penalty Notices cannot be paid in instalments.

13. Children Missing Education (CME)

Our school will add and delete students from roll in line with the law. The school will follow Somerset Child Missing Education process and make CME referral as appropriate.

14. Following up Unexplained Absences

Where no contact has been made with the school the school will contact parents by text initially. Then by email, telephone or letter to try and establish the reason for a child's absence. When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence. If we are unable to establish the reason for absence within 3 school days, we will mark the absence as unauthorised, using the **O** code. If we are concerned about a student's absence and are unable to contact the parent/s, we may contact the student's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the student's whereabouts.

15. Reporting to Parents

We will report on a child's attendance annually in the student's school progress update. This gives the parents the opportunity to look at their child's attendance percentage and to raise any queries with the school.

Where a child's attendance drops below 94%, our school will write to the parents to highlight this, unless there is a good reason not to.

16. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence

We record the reason that is given for the absence on the electronic SIMS system.

17. Roles and Responsibilities

The attendance officer alongside the tutor and the Head of Year will monitor attendance. The attendance officer will set Warning Penalty Notice periods. These will be set in liaison with parents in order to identify barriers to attendance and to help to improve these. The attendance officer will issue Penalty Notices for periods of unauthorised holiday. The Attendance office will work alongside the Somerset Safeguarding Partnership to procure any evidence required for the prosecution of parents due to significant unauthorised absence.

The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and requests fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

Attendance Officer

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual student level.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as appropriate.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Co-ordinates requests for Term-time Leave of Absence.
- Make referrals to the Education Safeguarding Service where appropriate.
- Requests Penalty Notices for authorised term-time absence.

18. Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed Biannually by the Deputy Headteacher and the Attendance Officer or more frequently if there are changes to legislation and guidance. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing body.

19. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Bullying Policy, Behaviour Policy, Inclusion Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Supporting Students with Medical Conditions Policy.

Guidance Documents:

Supporting students at school with medical conditions (DfE December 2015)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-students-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>

Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school (DfE January 2013)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>

Keeping children safe in education (DfE September 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

School Attendance (DfE September 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

School attendance parental responsibility measures (DfE January 2015)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

School census 2017 to 2018 (DfE May 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-census-2017-to-2018-guide-for-schools-and-las>

School Exclusion (DfE September 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

Home to school travel and transport guidance (DfE July 2014)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>

Appendix 1 – Department for Education (DfE) Attendance Codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. present at another school or PRU)	Not counted in possible attendances
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Activity Education
W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved Activity Education
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age students	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Where the school site, or part of it, is closed due to unavoidable cause; or the transport provided by the school or local authority for students (who do not live with walking distance) is not available; or where a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the student from attending school; or a student is detained in custody for less than four months.	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Student not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all students	Not counted in possible attendances