2024-2026

Our Community Multi Academy Trust
CEO – David Whitehead

Attendance Policy

Committee	Standards/ Trust Board
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1. Commitment

«School Name» is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. We aim to:

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- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Minimise the disruption caused by late arrivals or non-attendance to the quality of the education and provision for all pupils

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils, and we use a variety of weekly, termly, and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Trust, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at **«School Name»**

The DFE guidance outlines the following expectations of working together to improve attendance:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school-attendance (applies from 19th August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures.

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance guidance for schools

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Headteacher

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is The Headteacher/Head of School and can be contacted via the Attendance Manager – trustattendance@ocmat.org.uk or through the school office

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 pupils and issues fixed- penalty notices, where necessary.

The school office staff

Office staff are expected to check absence lines, emails and take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. Office staff are expected to contact parents when absence has not been reported as per the policy guidelines:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level and ensures attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided by 9.30 am, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call.
- Follows policy to ensure implementation
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Family Liaison Officer and/or the Trust Attendance Manager
- Sends and maintains correspondences

Family Liaison Officer

The Family Liaison Officer will support families to identify issues around poor attendance:

- arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues and draw up attendance contracts where required

Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily. Teachers record absence as an N code and attendance and correct codes are added by the school office. Class teachers are responsible for working with parents to ensure improved attendance for identified pupils. Class teachers are responsible for reporting any concerns about patterns of absence to the Family Liaison Officer and Trust Attendance Manager and on My Concern when it is considered a Safeguarding issue.

Trust Attendance Manager

The Headteacher and the school has access to the support of the Trust Attendance Manager:

- Monitors attendance data at the Trust schools and individual pupil level
- Provides support, advice and guidance on policy to Headteachers
- Provides support, advice and guidance to the Family Liaison Officer and school office staff on all statutory attendance matters
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
- Works with school to tackle persistent absence
- Supports families with higher level attendance concerns
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices, and has delegated responsibilities for the issue of fixed penalty notices
- Provides data and reports to the CEO and for governor meetings

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the development of the child, and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

- It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known.

4. School Procedures

Attendance register

By law, schools are required to keep an attendance register. We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day «Time»am and once during the second session «Time»pm. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Unplanned Absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.30am or as soon as practically possible by leaving a message on the school absence line or speaking to the school office:

- Please note that vague and non-specific reasons such as ill/sick/unwell/poorly' will not be accepted. If no reason is given or the reason is vague, the office staff will call to follow up and ascertain more specific information.
- Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.
- Where a child is absent for 10 sessions (5 days) due to illness, medical evidence may be requested (appointment card, prescription are examples of medical evidence)

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the

authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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

If no reason for absence has been provided by 9.30 am, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call.

Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence, as long as proof of this appointment has been provided. Advance notice is required for authorising these absences and we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Advance notification of appointments should be made to the office only, either by telephone or email.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 5.

Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive by **«Time»am.** All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

- Arriving after this time can affect a child's progress. It also disrupts the classroom when lessons have already begun. Therefore, not only must children attend school regularly, but they must also not be late.

To reduce congestion at the beginning of the school day and help all our children arrive on time, we do open our school gates at **«Time»am**. Children are collected from the school playground at **«Time»am** and gates are closed **at «Time»am «(when lessons begin)».**

Lateness and punctuality

At **«School Name»** the register is taken at **«Time» am** and **«Time» pm**. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded:

- A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the code (L).
- A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the code (U).

Frequent lateness after the register has closed will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice. Any pupil who misses 10% or more of all sessions is classed as a persistent absentee, and to comply with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 the school is required to keep a register of these pupils and give their names to the Local Authority.

Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, and identify whether the absence is approved or not and the correct attendance code to use.

- If no contact by 9.30am on the first day of absence a first day calling system is used. This means that the office will contact ALL contacts to establish a reason for absence. If we are still unsuccessful, two members of the Wellbeing team may make a home visit to ascertain why your child is not in school. If nobody is home, we will then notify the police as this will become a safeguarding issue.

Reporting to Parents

Parents are informed on their school reports (seasonally) of the child's attendance figure. Live attendance information is also available on the Arbor app

5. Authorised and Unauthorised absence

Granting approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

Headteachers, or Deputy Headteachers in their absence, may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' which could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave soon that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close family member.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, unavoidable, significant, and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

If a parent needs to discuss any exceptional circumstances for an application for leave this should be done at least 2 weeks in advance, where possible, initially with the Trust Attendance Manager by telephone. A record of any conversations are logged and any decision is overseen by the Headteacher.

- Leave of absence is not an automatic right. Each case will be judged on its own merits and the Head Teacher's decision is final. Once the decision to not authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

In the case of a holiday that is taken that is un-authorised, the Trust Attendance Manager would request the Penalty Notice directly.

Other authorised absence such as illness and medical/dental appointments are explained earlier.

Unauthorised absence

The following are examples of reasons for absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip

Where attendance is poor the following action will be taken with parents/carers:

- Contact by phone or Arbor with Family Liaison Officer

- Contact via letter
- Meeting with Family Liaison Officer and Trust Attendance Manager (may be via TEAMS),
- Meeting with Headteacher
- Case reviewed with the Trust Attendance Manager before any decision to refer to KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service

Children Missing from Education (CME)

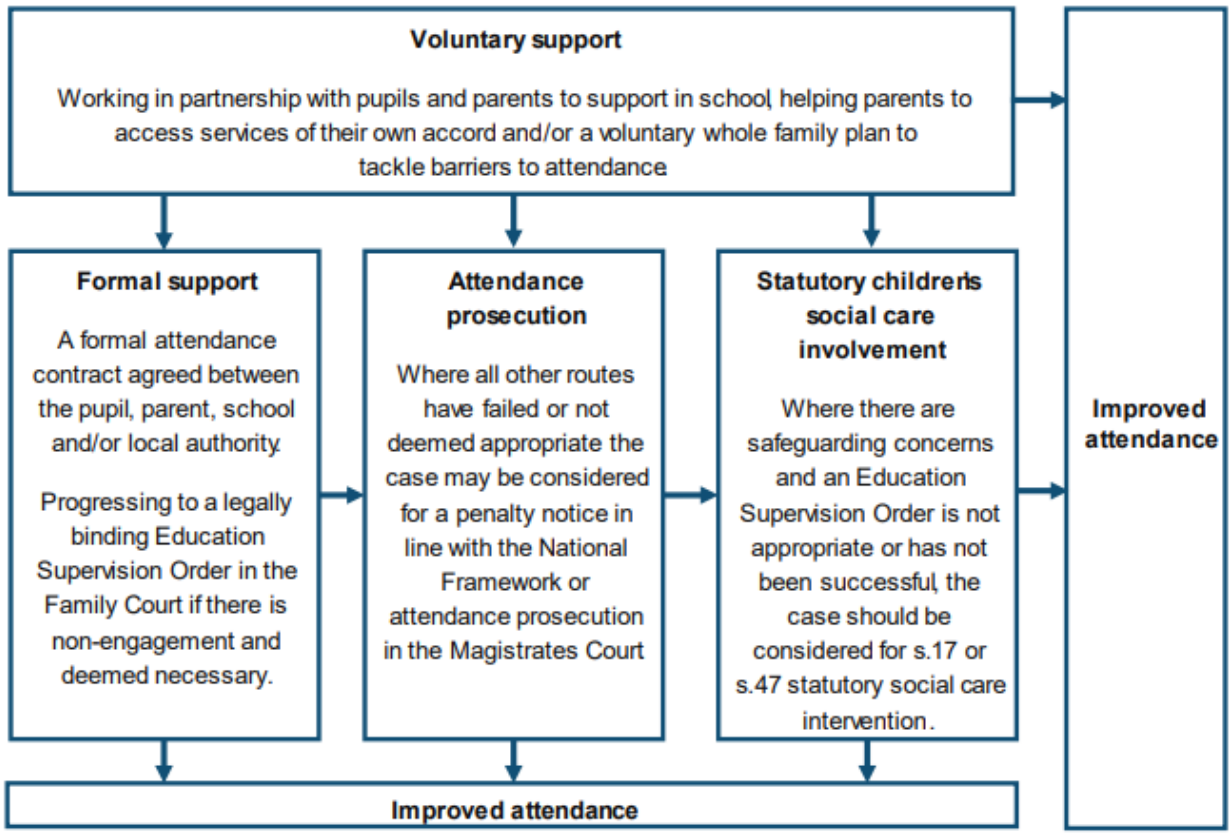
No child will be removed from the school roll without consultation. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed for the following circumstances:

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

6. Sanctions

[school name] will make use of the full range of potential sanctions to tackle poor attendance, including, but not limited to, those listed below. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis. The Department for Education has clear guidance on measures to be taken ahead of legal intervention, shown below:

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil

- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.
If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

7. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Pupils with barriers to attendance

We understand that there are a number of complex barriers faced by some pupils when it comes to school attendance. This can be caused by mental or physical ill health, or Special Educational needs.

This policy applies to this group of pupils regardless of their attendance percentage. Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that are related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Some pupils will have experienced lengthy or unavoidable absences from school. When this is the case, we will work to re-integrate them with the input of all stakeholders. The process will start with a meeting including the child, parents and key school representatives to formulate a reintegration plan. This will be reviewed as frequently as required. Actions on the plan may include, but are not limited to:

- Alternative working environment (e.g. Library)
- Reduced timetable
- Catch-up work
- Internal support such as peer mentoring
- External support where necessary

8. Attendance monitoring

The school can call on the support of the Trust Attendance Manager, who, along with the Headteacher monitors pupil absence on a half termly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 5.2).

We monitor a pupil's absence if it falls below 96% and take action if it falls below 93%:

93% - 90% Letter sent home to advise of low attendance with a follow up call from the Family Liaison Officer
Below 90% Further letters sent home, support meetings and attendance contracts with Family Liaison Officer, Trust Attendance Manager

Absence for COVID will not count as part of absence monitoring during the pandemic and during the 'learning to live with COVID' phase. This will be updated as guidance is reissued from government.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will follow the steps as described in section 5.2 above.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee (PA).

DfE Attendance Monitoring
Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.
Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the Board of Trustees three times a year.

Absence data

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors.

As a school, we collect attendance data on our management information system, Arbor. As per legal requirements, this data is shared with the local authority and nationally. Internally, we check this data on a weekly basis to look for patterns of absence across the school and at an individual level with a particular focus on those pupils in danger of being classed as PA. The office staff, Family Liaison Officer and Trust Attendance Manager will then monitor these pupils and try to work with families to improve attendance.

This overall data is also shared with our Governors and the Trust Board of Directors to ensure the school are keeping PA to its lowest levels. Attendance of pupils that have a history of poor attendance, who are in receipt of free school meals or are vulnerable, are a focus of this monitoring. From this the school keeps a record of identified children on Arbor.

The identified children are the focus of action and intervention and are discussed with meetings with our Family Liaison Officer, Trust Attendance Manager and Trust Safeguarding Lead. These identified children become a daily or weekly focus to ensure improvement. The school are committed to working with parents to help solve attendance issues and ensure regular attendance. As parents/carers have accepted a place at our school, it is an expectation that parents/carers will be committed to ensure attendance is as high as possible and pupils are always punctual.

Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
    - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
    - Explain the help that is available
    - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
    - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section ???, above)

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to Our Community Multi Academy Trust Safeguarding Policy.

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school

N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays