



# School Attendance Policy

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## **Section 1: Rationale**

We want all young people at our school to be confident both academically and socially. This will ensure that they succeed in the next stage of their learning beyond school. Attendance at school allows young people to develop skills to enable them to make choices about their lives beyond school, have ambitions about the future, enjoy a wide range of experiences and to take part in a range of social activities.

School isn't always easy. Most young people have days when they don't want to go. However, if they aren't in school, they will feel isolated, left behind in their learning and may form patterns of non-attendance that are hard to break. Non-attendance can impact on their confidence. They also miss out on shared experiences with friends, which can make them feel left out. This can make school feel even harder and lead to more regular absence.

This policy represents our commitment to regular attendance in school. Most young people attend school at least 96% of the time, and this is what we aim for. The policy sets out the principles, procedures and practice we undertake to encourage attendance and to address absence.

To ensure we are successful in having to highest possible attendance rate for all of our students we expect that parents will take a key role to ensure their child is in school every day, when the schools are in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

The attendance pattern for all students is monitored weekly, with the school staff seeking to work actively with parents and other agencies to ensure a positive regular pattern is maintained. We will do all we can to encourage your child to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We expect that parents will also do all they can to ensure their child's attendance is as good as it can be.

### **Principles**

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Children whose attendance is low are likely to have poor outcomes, so will be treated as vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

### **Aims of the Policy**

- To ensure that all young people attend school regularly and punctually, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To promote good attendance, thus maximising their opportunities to access life enriching opportunities and prepare for their next steps.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing social isolation.

- To carry out our duty to safeguard students to the best of our ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for young people's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors, understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.

## **Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities**

We will use every opportunity to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include bulletins and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. However, we believe that the foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between school, parent/carers, and the young person.

We will:

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that young people feel safe and valued.
- Maintain a consistent, whole school approach by raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality, using a range of communications to parent/carers.
- Key members of staff with responsibility for monitoring, analysing and improving school attendance. They will look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and provide additional and targeted support. At Sir Charles Parsons School, this role is fulfilled by assistant headteachers responsible for lower and upper school phase pastoral support.
- Ensure that there are designated members of the senior leadership team responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school. At Sir Charles Parsons School, this role is fulfilled by Claire Andrew and Joanne Maher assistant headteachers who are responsible for lower and upper school phase pastoral support.
- Ensure that governors maintain a strategic oversight of this policy and its impact on attendance.
- The school student support team, Jo Whittington and Leanne Ginnelly, will provide regular attendance updates to school staff and report concerns about attendance to the appropriate senior leadership team members. They will work with relevant school staff to tackle persistent and severe absence.
- The student support team will liaise directly with families that require support around attendance. They will have the capacity to signpost and refer families to appropriate external services. Where appropriate they will bring details of families where additional support via the access and inclusion team is needed and advise the senior leadership team when to consider fixed-penalty notices.
- Pastoral teams led by the pastoral teacher are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this

information to the school office as soon as possible during morning and afternoon registration sessions.

- Pastoral teams will pass on any information regarding planned absences and that they receive via the home school diary and pastoral phone calls to the office in a timely manner.
- Pastoral teams will have a key role in supporting students to view school positively and have a safe and contained point of contact for any worries students or families have.
- The school office team will be available to take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record this onto electronic student record systems (SIMS & CPOMS) within the school office to be shared with relevant pastoral and senior leadership staff as needed. They will also process and record holiday request forms as a first point of contact.
- The school office team will make first day response calls to chase up absence information for students when parents have failed to provide this and process attendance figures as needed by the student support team, phase leadership teams and senior leadership team.
- The school office team will provide a positive and welcoming first point of contact for parents visiting and telephoning school.
- Encourage parents/carers to fully support the policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education. All new parent/carers are introduced to the policy, information and expectations on attendance. Information is also accessible on the school website or available from the school office for those without access to internet.
- Encourage young people to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Celebrate good attendance.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored and that absences are followed up promptly in accordance with this policy.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies to support families who are struggling with attendance.
- Meet the legal requirements with the use of correct codes for absence, with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Ensure all staff are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.
- Ensure attendance information is available for Governors and parents.
- Ensure that a positive relational approach towards resolving attendance issues using the Thrive approach and EBNSA toolkit are employed.

**We expect parent/carers to:**

- Encourage school attendance and the value of attending school regularly.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Provide details of at least two contacts for emergency use.
- Notify the school when your child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day of the absence.
- Telephone the school after the first day of absence if the absence is continuing.
- Keep the school well informed, especially about circumstances that might mean your child is absent for several days.
- Provide medical evidence, if possible, indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor, or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation arises. This might include an appointment note or an NHS App message. Whenever possible all appointments should be made outside of school hours.
- Ensure that your child arrives at school on time each day.
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g., if a car breaks down, if an urgent appointment has been made.
- Book family holidays during school holiday time.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the Head Teacher creates an offence in law.

**We expect students to:**

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Share details of any difficulties or barriers they are experiencing around attending school and accessing learning opportunities.

## Section 3: Recording attendance

### Understanding types of absence coding

We must record every half-day absence as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why we always need information about the cause of any absence. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, emergencies, medical or dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time.

Only schools can authorise an absence. Parents/carers do not have this authority.

Consequently, **not all** absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

Where attendance is not possible due to unavailability of SEND transport services students attendance figure will not be impacted.

### Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable, and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents, birthdays.
- Sibling unwell.
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (after the close of registration).
- Truancy.

In some cases, we may change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but there is subsequent evidence they have been on holiday. We will communicate any such change to parents/carers.

### Illness

If your child has repeated periods of illness, we may ask you to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you to make our own enquiries.

## **Section 4: School Procedures**

### **Registration and punctuality procedures**

We are legally obliged to take a register twice a day. Once at the start of the school day and once at the start of the afternoon session. The registers will remain open for approximately 20 minutes. Where students do not travel on transport provided by the school or a local authority, those arriving before the end of the registration period will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. Those arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole session. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration (U mark) will be subject to legal action. For students traveling via transport provided by the school or a local authority which is late or is not available and where the student's home is not within walking distance we will record code Y.

Only the Head Teacher can authorise absence. If we don't know the reason for the absence at registration, then we will record it as unauthorised until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in our view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absence). It is reasonable for members of staff to ask questions regarding a child's attendance and punctuality and when appropriate, request evidence to support the reason for absence from school.

### **First Day Absence Contact**

You must notify us by 8:30am if your child is unable to attend for any reason. Please leave a voicemail if there is no answer, telephone 0191 295 2280 or leave a message for School Office on School gateway. If we don't receive notification, we will contact you as early as possible in the school day.

### **First Day Response Procedures**

We will follow First Day Response (FDR) procedures by:

- Contacting you on the first day of absence by telephone/text, to try to ascertain the reason.
- Making a home visit if phone calls are unanswered.
- Informing any appropriate professionals or agencies working with your child or family.

If your child is still too unwell to attend the following day, you must contact us again before 8:30am to inform us. If we already have concerns about your child's attendance, we may carry out a home visit even if you have given us a reason for the absence.

Parents/carers are expected to maintain contact with the school throughout the absence.



If you do not keep in contact or provide a reason for your child's absence, we will contact you throughout your child's absence as part of our safe and well check procedure:

Day 1 - a member of our admin team will make contact with you.

Day 3 - your child's teacher will make contact with you to offer support.

Day 5 - your child's phase leader will make contact with you to offer further support.

Day 7 – the family liaison officer will make contact with you to make plans around your child returning to school and signpost to external support services where appropriate.

### **Continued Absence Procedures**

If after three days of absence, your child has not been seen and you have not contacted the school, we will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with you, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

If this is unsuccessful, we will make a home visit to check the safety and wellbeing of your child. We may also contact officers from the Local Authority.

If we have concerns about your child's attendance, we will invite you into school to discuss the matter. If attendance fails to improve, we will refer the matter to the Local Authority.

### **Children Missing from Education (CME)**

All Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to identify young people who are missing from education (CME) and those young people at risk of missing education. Where necessary, Local Authorities must return them to suitable education.

This applies to young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll or receiving suitable education elsewhere and have been out of any education for a substantial period, usually more than four weeks.

We have a legal duty to undertake our own checks first and will notify the Local Authority if a young person has left the school and their whereabouts are unknown.

### **Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs**

If your child is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or accumulatively, we will work with the Local Authority to ensure that your child will have access to relevant and appropriate education. This includes Public Exam provision and the education of siblings where your family have had to travel and stay away from the home. Such an absence would normally be accompanied by medical evidence.

## Partial Timetables

All young people of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary partial timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a young person from attending full-time education and a partial timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A partial timetable must last no longer than six weeks. After that point a young person is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision. If we believe that a partial timetable is in the best interests of your child, we will discuss this with you. We will agree formal review arrangements to take place. In agreeing to a partial timetable, we agree to a young person being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised and code in the register as a C, which is an authorised absence.

## Persistent and Severe Absence Procedures

If your child misses more than 10% of their schooling across a year **for whatever reason, whether it is authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both**, they become a 'Persistent Absentee.' Missing more than 50% of their school is defined as severe absence. At this point your child would not be receiving a suitable education and their outcomes will be affected. We will inform you if your child is moving into the category of persistent absence, and your child's attendance will be monitored. This is because young people can easily get into a habit of missing school. Without help it can rapidly get worse.

It is essential that we avoid the kind of impact that poor attendance can have on your child. If you are facing circumstances which make it difficult to ensure your child's attendance at school, you should tell us. We will meet with you and provide access to wider support services to help remove barriers to attendance.

We monitor registers to identify students with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA). Initially we will try to resolve the problem with you. We will agree actions to improve attendance. However, if the pattern continues, we will make a referral to the Local Authority.

## Reluctant attenders/school refusal

You should do everything possible to ensure your child attends school. However, if the reason for your child's reluctance appears to be school based, such as difficulty with accessing the curriculum or bullying, you should discuss this with us at the earliest opportunity and we will do everything possible to resolve it. Remember that issues like this are rarely solved immediately and can only be solved if you work with us to get your child in to school. Supporting your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

School will actively build relationships with students and families to encourage regular school attendance. Communicate regularly with parents about attendance data and concerns about attendance to prevent regular absence. Use resources (School based

and external services) to intervene early with support, with targeted support for persistent/severe absences. And liaise with the Team around the school and Access and inclusion teams for advice and guidance when necessary.

## **Section 5: Legal Sanctions**

You have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full-time attendance at school of registered students (Education Act 1996).

We regard the use of legal sanctions as a last resort where attendance is low and has not improved despite our best efforts to work with families. However, our use of legal sanctions underlines the importance of attendance and our determination that all young people at this school receive a suitable education.

If your child's attendance drops uncharacteristically without a suitable reason, you will receive a letter telling you that we are concerned.

If there is further unauthorised absence you will be invited to a meeting to develop a plan of support that improves attendance. If there are further unauthorised absence you will be invited to a meeting to develop a plan of support that improves attendance. Further unauthorised absence totalling 10 or more unauthorised sessions in the next ten weeks and attendance below 90% will result in a referral to the Local Authority for consideration of legal action.

### **Penalty Notices**

The Local Authority may issue fixed penalty notices (fine) and prosecution to parents for poor attendance. If you don't pay a fixed penalty notices, the Local Authority will make a referral to Court.

Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised term-time holidays, poor attendance and poor punctuality (U mark).

If your child's attendance does not improve after we have offered support, the consequences may be one of the following:

1. £60 fine (per student, per parent/carer) if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court.
2. The Local Authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.
3. In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of your child.

### **Unauthorised absence during term time**

There is no entitlement in law to time off in term time, any request for leave of absence due to holidays or other non-exceptional circumstances in term time will not be authorised.

We request that parents do adhere to our policy and avoid their children taking unauthorised time off school during term time. We acknowledge the complex needs of our students and that there may be exceptional circumstances where families cannot avoid an absence during term time.

In this circumstance a term time absence request forms are available from the school office or via the website. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the Head teacher and must be made in writing at least two weeks prior to the absence date. Parents/carers will receive feedback form school stating whether the absence is agreed or not, along with the reason for the agreement or refusal. The Head teacher may contact parents to discuss the reasons for the application.

In the case of all unauthorised leave of absences, incurring 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 days), an application for a Fixed Penalty Notice will be made to the Local Authority.

## Information for parents and carers

### Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is below 96%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks

90% equates to a day off every two weeks

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks

80% equates to one whole day off every week

**A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school**

### Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the guidance [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE),

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- 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 \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that the 'parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise.'

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18. The Children Act 1989 provides for a number of actions that can be taken to protect children's safety and welfare, on the premise that the welfare of the child is paramount.

### **Appendix A**

#### **Attendance Parenting Contracts – guide for parents**

##### **What is an Attendance parenting contract?**

An attendance parenting contract is a formal written agreement between a parent or carer and the school. An attendance parenting contract may be offered if your child has failed to attend school regularly.

An attendance parenting contract is meant to support you and the school to identify and address the issues surrounding your child's irregular attendance at school and encourage a positive working relationship to improve attendance. It is not intended to be a punishment.

##### **What does it involve?**

Everyone signed up to the contract will agree to take certain actions which are realistic, and which address the issues of non-attendance for a specified period of time. You might agree to do things like getting your child up on time, signing a daily report card and reporting any difficulties to school as soon as possible. School might agree to inform you if your child does not arrive at school, deal quickly with any problems and involve other agencies that might be able to offer you additional support. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

##### **Do I have to enter into an attendance parenting contract?**

Entry into an attendance parenting contract is voluntary but it does provide you with an opportunity to get support to improve your child's attendance at school. If you do take up the offer of an attendance parenting contract and try to comply with it, this may assist your case if the local authority decides to take legal action against you for your child's irregular attendance. If you refuse the offer or don't comply without good reason this may also be presented as evidence.

If you decide not to enter into a contract, you will need to try to find other ways of improving your child's attendance and it may be worth discussing how you intend to do this with the school.

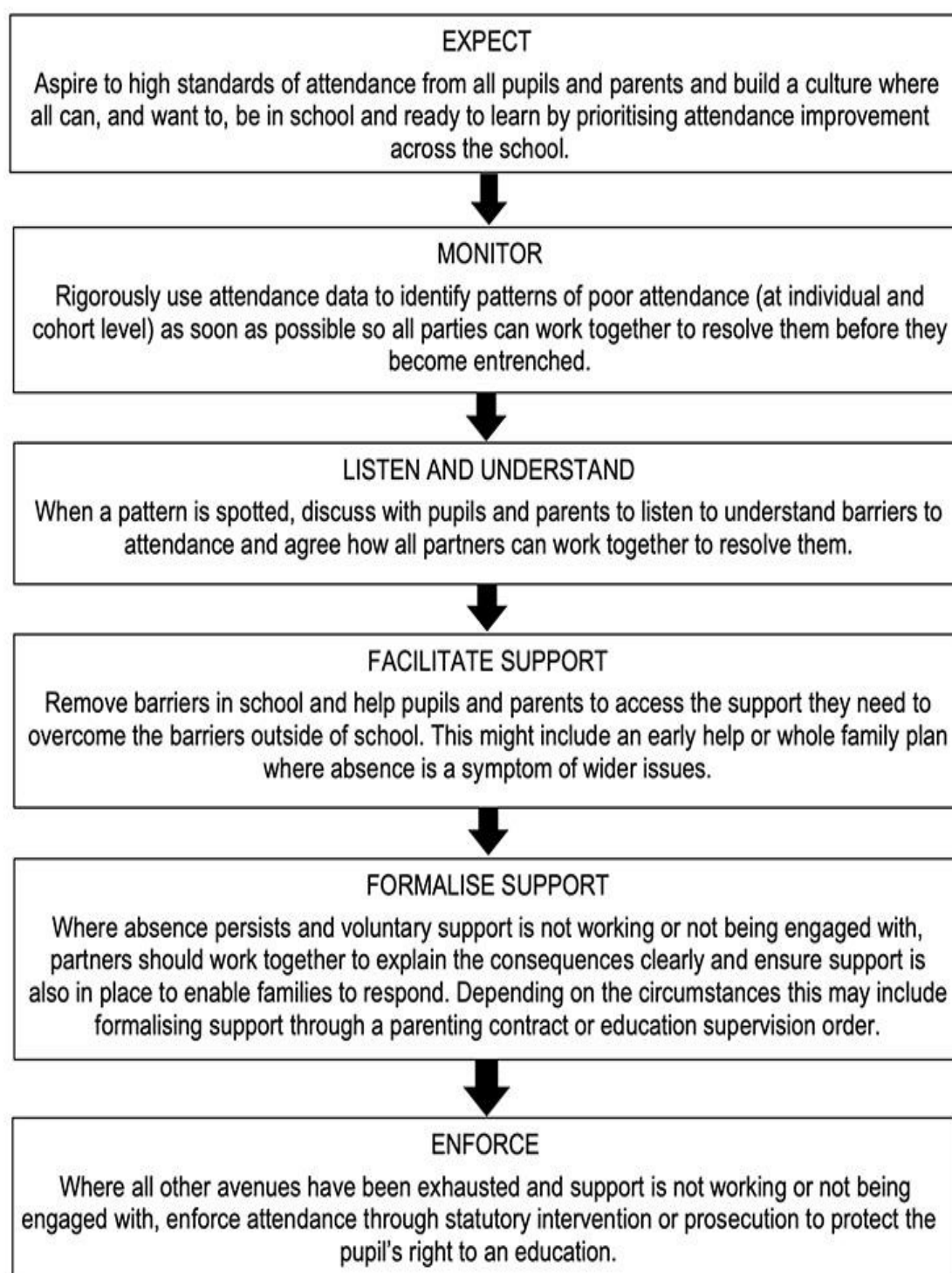
##### **How is an attendance parenting contract arranged?**

You will be invited to a meeting in school with a school representative. Depending on their age and understanding, your child can attend part or all of the meeting.

At the meeting you will be asked your views on your child's attendance and whether there are any underlying issues. Try to think about the reasons behind your child's absences, any particular difficulties you are experiencing at the moment and what

would help you to improve your child's attendance. Also think about what you can do to improve attendance.

School will explain what support they can offer and whether any other agency might also be able to help you and your child. You will be able to discuss what is expected of both you and the school and then agree the actions that will support improved attendance. If you choose to accept the offer, the final contract will be signed by you and the school representative.





## Appendix B: attendance codes

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

Code	Meaning	Scenario
/	Present morning	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present afternoon	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late before the register has closed	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educated activity (approved by the school / supervised)	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Supervised sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Education visit or trip	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement
C	Authorised leave of absence, exceptional circumstances	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Holiday authorised by the school	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma traveller absence	Student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	No reason has yet provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Absence from school without authorisation	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrived in school after the register closed	Student arrived at school after the register closed
X	Not required in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend

<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not yet on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned whole or partial school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day