



Attendance Policy – Trust Master Template

Policy Version Control

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Author	Family Services Manager
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Description of changes	Policy comprehensively updated to reflect <i>Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2026</i> , with enhanced safeguarding and attendance expectations, expanded support for vulnerable pupils, revised attendance and legal intervention procedures, updated legislative references, and a simplified Trust-wide structure with school-specific appendices

1. Our Attendance Vision

At SHINE Academies, we believe every child has the right to a full-time education and the opportunity to achieve their very best.

Excellent attendance supports:

- Academic achievement
- Physical and emotional wellbeing
- Positive friendships and relationships
- Personal development
- Safeguarding and protection from harm

We are committed to creating a culture where every child feels safe, welcomed, supported and encouraged to attend school every day. We recognise that attendance difficulties are often a sign that a child or family may need help and support, and we are committed to working in partnership with families to remove barriers to attendance wherever possible. This reflects the graduated approach of Expect, Monitor, Listen and Understand, Facilitate Support, Formalise Support and Enforce outlined within [Working together to improve school attendance 2026](#).

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All children attending SHINE Academies schools
- Parents and carers
- School staff
- Trust leaders
- Governors and Trustees

Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2026) sets out clear expectations of roles and responsibilities: [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#)

This policy applies to all children across the Trust, including children of non-statutory school age. While the policy principles are applicable across the Trust, enforcement action will only be taken against children of statutory school age.

Each school will publish an appendix outlining its local day-to-day attendance procedures, contacts and operational arrangements.

3. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2026
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 as referenced within the SHINE safeguarding policy
- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- School Attendance (Child Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Equality Act 2010
- SHINE Academies Trust Safeguarding Policy 2026

4. Attendance and Safeguarding

Attendance is a safeguarding priority and everyone's responsibility.

Children who are not attending school regularly and on time can be at increased risk of:

- Harm
- Neglect
- Child exploitation
- Mental health difficulties
- Becoming missing from education

SHINE Academies recognises that attendance concerns may be an indicator that a child or family requires additional support. Attendance concerns will therefore be considered alongside safeguarding, wellbeing, SEND, behaviour and family circumstances. We recognise that some children face additional barriers to attendance and will ensure support is tailored to individual circumstances while maintaining high expectations for all.

Schools will monitor attendance carefully for groups of children who may face additional barriers including:

- Children with SEND
- Children with medical needs and disabilities
- Children experiencing mental health difficulties
- Children who are young carers
- Looked after children
- Children with social workers
- Other vulnerable groups

5. Recording Attendance and Absence

All schools will keep an electronic register using Arbor, and place all children onto this register. We will take the attendance register twice a day – once at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session (afternoon). Schools must use national attendance codes accurately – see Appendix 2. Parents can access a copy of their child's attendance certificate through the Arbor app or via request to the School Office.

When a child is absent from school, parents should contact the school by 8:40am with the reasons for absence and where appropriate, the anticipated length of any continued absence.

Once the reason for absence is ascertained, the school will identify the appropriate attendance code to use. Absence from school is either authorised (where the school approves the reason for the child's absence) or unauthorised (where the school does not approve of reason for absence).

Further information on authorised and unauthorised absences can be found in 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' 2026 Department for Education Guidance, Chapter 8.

If a child who arrives late to school:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (U)

The Attendance Team will monitor lateness. Recurring lateness will result in letters to parents/carers to understand the reasons for lateness and a may involve an invite for a meeting with school to explore any support available.

Absence from school will either be planned, such as a pre-arranged medical appointment, or unplanned, such as an illness.

Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the child's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents/Carers must contact the School Office to notify the school of a planned leave of absence and provide evidence of the appointment where possible. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the child should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The child's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 7 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

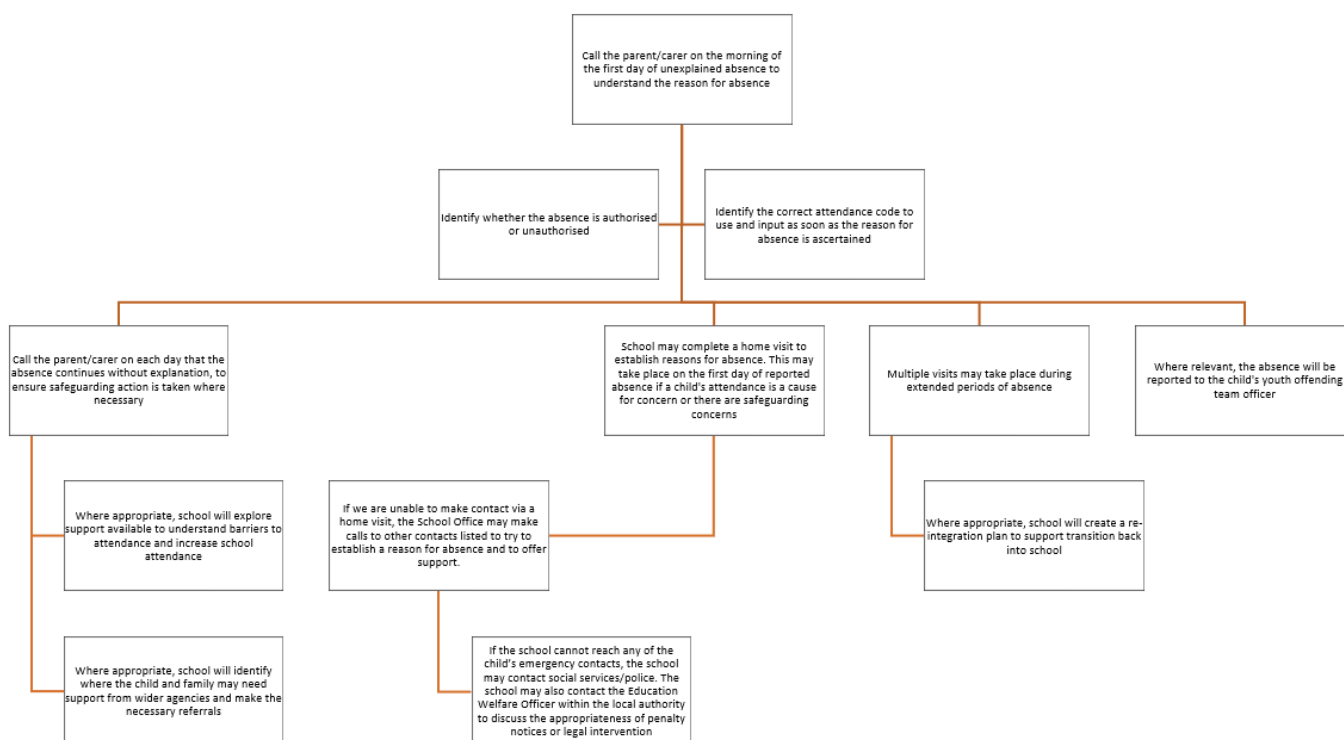
Unplanned Absence

Where a child will be absent from school, the parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:40am by calling the school office. We will make absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

NOTE: Parents who routinely fail to contact the school may have all absences unauthorised and referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made.

6. First Day of Absence Process

If a child is absent from school, but expected to attend, school will:



7. Requesting a Leave of Absence

It is recognised that on occasions, there may be extenuating or compassionate reasons where a parent/carer may wish to request a leave of absence for their child. The School Attendance (Child Regulations) (England) 2024 states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Where a parent/carer wishes to request a leave of absence, they should:

- Request the leave of absence for exceptional circumstances as far in advance as possible
- Request a copy of the Leave of Absence form from the school office
- Complete the Leave of Absence form to submit the request in writing - this should include the reason why a parent/carer feels that it is necessary to take the leave of absence. This may include evidence to support the request where appropriate

When considering the request, the School will:

- Consider each case individually
- Parents/Carers will be notified in writing of the School's decision on exceptional leave
- Requests will be responded to within 7 days of receipt of the request
- Where leave of absence has been granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school as authorised absence. This would be coded accordingly on the attendance register as C code
- Where leave of absence request is denied, the absence will be coded as unauthorised absence using O code.
- The regulations do not allow for Schools to give retrospective approval. If the leave of absence is not applied for in advance, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and referred to the Local Authority
- When referred to the Local Authority, a Penalty Notice fine may be issued and/or prosecution taken (see section 11 – Legal Intervention).

8. Children with Medical/Special Educational Needs

The Trust recognises that some children experience barriers to attendance linked to:

- Special educational needs and disabilities
- Long-term health conditions
- Mental health difficulties
- Neurodiversity
- Anxiety relating to school attendance
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Where attendance difficulties arise, schools will work with children, families and professionals to:

- Understand individual barriers
- Put appropriate support in place
- Consider reasonable adjustments
- Review support regularly
- Maintain high aspirations for attendance and achievement
- Support re-integration back into full time education after a period of absence due to medical needs

Medical evidence will only usually be requested where it is necessary to understand needs, plan support or verify long-term or repeated absences. This may be asked for to support the school in the correct coding of attendance.

9. Supporting Families to Improve Attendance

Where a child's absence begins to decline, we will reach out to parents/carers to offer support at the earliest opportunity. This support may be via the Attendance Team, Family Services Team, SENDCo or relevant partner agencies as appropriate to meet the needs of the child and family. We aim to work collaboratively with children and families to understand and overcome barriers to attendance and school engagement.

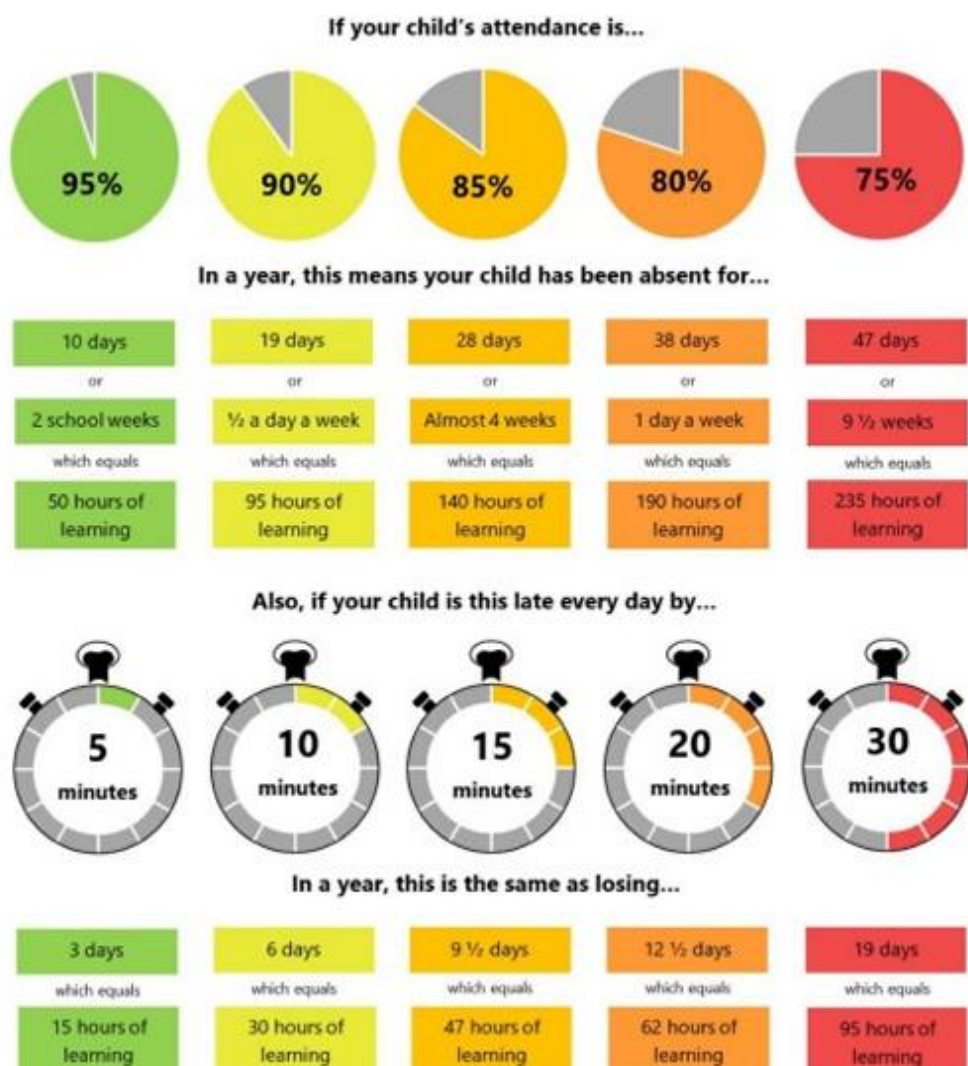
Support may include:

- Attendance meetings
- Family Services support
- Early Help services
- Multi-agency working
- Reasonable adjustments
- Mental health support
- SEND support
- Support from local authority attendance services
- EBSNA (Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance) support

See appendix 1 for more detailed guidance around support in place at School.

10. Persistent Absence/Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a child misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a child misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is a priority for our School.



When working to reduce Persistent and Severe Absence, School will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Notify parents/carers where a child's attendance is a cause for concern
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and SHINE Safeguarding Policy
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of children 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 children. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary and if there is limited engagement or impact from the support already in place

11. Legal Intervention

Where supportive approaches have not improved attendance, or where support is not engaged with, the school may work with the local authority to implement formal interventions.

These may include:

- Attendance contracts
- Notices to Improve
- Education Supervision Orders
- Penalty notices
- Prosecution proceedings

Any legal intervention will be used in accordance with the National Framework for Penalty Notices and relevant legislation.

Schools must regularly inform the Local Authority of any children who are regularly absent from school, have irregular attendance, or have meet the thresholds for reporting absence from school.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in a Penalty Notice being issued and/or prosecution under s4441 Education Act 1996 by the Local Authority for the School.

The national threshold for a penalty notice defined as 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child, and the amount of the penalty will be £80 if paid within 21 days and £160 if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28-day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority, Attendance Service. Under the updated national framework (effective August 2024), if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within a three-year period, the fine will automatically

be set at the higher rate of £160 per parent, per child. Additionally, there is a limit of two fines per parent within a three-year period. If further unauthorised absences occur beyond this limit, the Local Authority may consider alternative actions such as a parenting order or prosecution instead of issuing additional fines.

12. Children Missing in Education

Children are considered to be 'Children Missing in Education' (CME) as listed in Working Together to Improve School Attendance in the following circumstances:

Where a child has been continuously absent from the school for a period of 20 school days or more and:

- at no point has the absence been authorised by the school (under regulation 6(2))
- the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the child is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause.
- the school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the child's location, but they have not succeeded.

Where a child has been granted a leave of absence (under regulation 7) and the child has not attended school within the ten school days immediately after the end of the period granted, and:

- the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the child is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause
- the school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the child's location, but they have not succeeded.

Where a child has ceased to attend the school and no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school, and the child is not a boarder at the school and where parents are withdrawing their child but are unable to say how their child will continue with their education, for example, the family are relocating but have not been able to secure a place at a new school in advance, once the child has completed their final day at school and moved out of the area, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and the child's information should then be transferred to the Lost Child Database via the S2S system. Advice is always taken from the EWO for these circumstances.

DfE's guidance on Children Missing Education sets out the expectations for schools and local authorities in respect of making reasonable enquiries.

Schools will use the Child Missing Education Enquiry Form to support this, and it should be sent to Education Welfare Officer following Local Authority guidance.

13. Part-Time Timetables

All children of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a child's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a child from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a child's behaviour. A part-time timetable should have a time limit by which point the child is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the child and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a child 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 C2, which is an authorised absence.

14. Suspensions

If a child has been suspended from school, they will be marked with the appropriate attendance code (E). Any child who has been suspended from school, and provision arranged, if the child does not attend the provision this shall be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in further action taken by the school, which may result in a penalty notice issued by the Local Authority.

The decision to suspend a child will be made in line with the SHINE Academies Suspensions and Exclusions Policy.

15. Data Sharing and Monitoring

Schools will work collaboratively with:

- Local authorities
- Social care
- Health services
- Attendance services
- Safeguarding partners
- Other relevant agencies

Information will be shared lawfully where necessary to safeguard children and improve attendance.

SHINE Academies and schools will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual child, year group and cohort level.

Child information will be shared with the DfE as 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.

Schools will benchmark its attendance data at year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the Local Governing Board and Trust Board.

The School will:

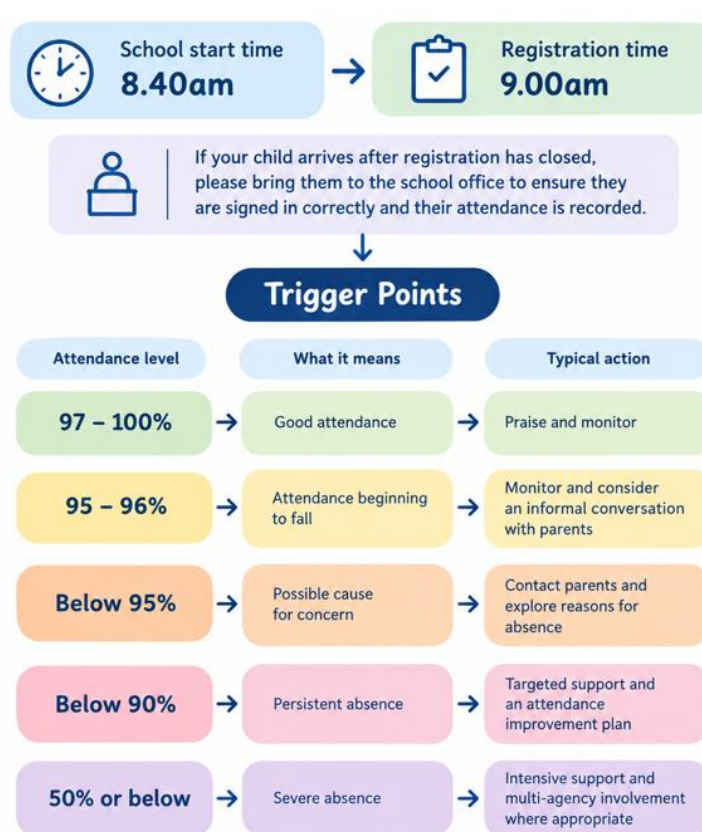
- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify children, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance
- Identify children whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Identify attendance patterns across the trust to identify common issues and barriers and share effective practice between schools

The Trust will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual children, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the children it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with children and families, and to the central team/trustees/governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and child premium leads)

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a child's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific children, where appropriate

Appendix 1 School Absence and Support Process



Appendix 2 Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Child is present at morning registration

\	Present (pm)	Child is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Child arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Child 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	Child is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Child is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Child is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Child is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Child 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	Child is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Child is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Child has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Child has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Child of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend

C2	Part-time timetable	Child is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Child has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Child is a ‘mobile child’ who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Child is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Child is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Child 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	Child is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Child 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	Child is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Child 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 child absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)

Y5	Criminal justice detention	Child 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	Child'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	Child 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	Child has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective child not on admission register	Child 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