**Attendance at school from September 2020**

The Department for Education published an addendum to the attendance advice on 6.8.2020.

The DFE have set out clear expectations in relation to pupils returning to school in September 2020 and have emphasised that this is mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply. These include:

* parents’ duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where they are registered
* Schools responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
* The ability to issue sanctions including issuing fines or prosecution in line with local authority codes of conduct

From September schools should revert to using the attendance codes that were in place prior to the outbreak as detailed in the attendance guidance <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf>

In addition to this a further code has been added for pupils not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19). This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

* contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
* prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Details of the categories are included in the addendum: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>

They include:

Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)

Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)

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

Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only. Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. Government advice is that these individuals no longer need to shield (but should continue to take necessary precautions). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

For pupils who fall into these categories the X code should be used.

**Pupils and families who are anxious about returning to school**

Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and support should be put in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, schools should discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc). Schools should keep a record of the actions they have taken to reassure families and support a return to school.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#section-1-public-health-advice-to-minimise-coronavirus-covid-19-risks>

If despite attempts to reassure families a pupil remains absent from school and none of the statutory reasons apply the school should record the absence as unauthorised and contact their Access and Inclusion Officer to agree next steps

**Sarah Wright**

**Area Service Manger Inclusion August 2020**