

Pupil attendance and absence recording

Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

The following will provide you with advice regarding what codes to apply to cover a range of scenarios which you may encounter. Using the Index, press 'Ctrl' and Click on any question to be taken to the answer. If you require further detail, please contact:

- Email: attendance@education-ni.gov.uk
- Telephone: 02891 279328 / 02891 279543

All queries relating to the use of BROMCOM should be answered via the C2K helpdesk

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Q1: What code should I use where a pupils is late to school due to issues outside his / her control (e.g. transport), or is unable to attend school on a particular day due to transport issues?

If a pupil is at fault: - Code L – Late (before registration closed or Code U – Late (after registration closed) may be used.

If lateness is due to circumstances beyond the pupil's control, Code U may be amended subsequently by the school. Alternatively, if the school is satisfied with the reason provided by the pupil, Code! – “No attendance required” may be used.

Q2: Are all pupils entitled to study leave?

No. Study leave should be applied only to public examination candidates during the examination timetable, or in the event of any cancellation of examinations to facilitate study for those pupils in Years 11 to 14 completing alternative qualification assessments.

This decision must be made by senior management, and it is considered good practice to provide parents/carers with a minimum of one weeks' notice that study leave is being applied to such pupils.

Study leave should NOT be used for pupils from Year 8-10.

Q3: How should schools record the attendance of pupils on study leave?

Study leave should be recorded using registration code S. Supervised study or revision classes provided in school should be coded Present / (am) or \ (pm). As above, study leave

should only be granted to pupils, if appropriate, undertaking public examinations.

Q4: Can a school use a designated school day as a parent/teacher review day?

No. Review days should not be used as part of the school day. Schools should endeavour to hold these reviews out of school hours. Under no circumstances should pupils be recorded as being on study leave during school hours under these circumstances.

Q5: Can a parent/carer take a child on holiday during term time?

Any family holiday taking during term time should be recorded as an unauthorised absence with Code G applied.

Q6: A parent/carer has not provided any reason for a pupil's absence. How do I deal with this?

Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence at the earliest possible stage. Contact mechanisms with parents/carers are crucial and an absence notification form has been developed which all schools should consider circulating to parents and encourage its use.

The form can be accessed at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/absence-notification-form>

Schools should be minded that unexplained absence could be deemed as a child protection/safeguarding issue.

Q7: What happens if I have to close my school on a designated school day?

A school should contact the Department's Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team [using the online facility to request](#) an exceptional closure day. Exceptional conditions mean that a school is closed to both staff and pupils due to an unavoidable cause, such as, extreme weather conditions, flooding or electricity failure. [Guidance to apply for an exceptional closure is available on the DE website.](#)

Q8: When can a parent remove a child from the school register?

A parent can remove a child from the school register only in the following circumstances:

- pupil is registered at another school in Northern Ireland;
- pupil has departed from Northern Ireland;
- pupil has been expelled;
- pupil has died;
- pupil leaves school after having completed his/her compulsory education. This means that the 30th June following a pupil's sixteenth birthday is their last compulsory day of education.

When a parent/carer advises that child is being removed under Regulation 6(2) of The Registration and Attendance of Pupils Regulations (NI) 1974 [No. 78], for example for elective home education, the school must complete an SA1 form: [Form SA1 – Removal of a pupil from registration](#). Where a parent has indicated that they are considering elective home education, schools must constructively engage in discussion about the implications of making this choice. Parents must be made aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child receives a suitable efficient full-time education. Parents must also be informed that if they choose to de-register their child from the school, it may not be possible to re-register them again at the same school. It may also be very difficult to register with an exam centre to undertake public exams. The Education Authority have published guidelines in respect of Elective Home Education and parents who are considering this option must be presented with a copy for their information. Copies can be downloaded from the Education Authority's website via the link: [Guidelines for Elective Home Education](#).

Q9: A pupil is subject to Dual Registration, how should this be recorded?

The Main school is required to record attendance for the sessions when the pupil is attending their school and the Subsidiary school using the appropriate code. **The Main school should make arrangements with the Subsidiary school to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended.** The Subsidiary school should also record the attendance accordingly. Attendance statistics for publication will be taken from the Main schools data in the Census returns. Please refer to [Circular Number 2016/22](#) 'Guidance on the Enrolment Status of Pupils, including those subject to SEN and EOTAS Referrals, using Dual Registration.

Q10: A pupil in the school is pregnant. How should I record this pupil's attendance when they are absent due to pregnancy related sickness or when they are having their baby?

When a pupil is absent due to sickness, it should be recorded as normal illness using Code I, providing you have been informed by the pupil's parent/carer that the pupil is ill. When the pupil is absent from school to have her baby, you would use Code O. If at any time the pupil is receiving home/hospital tuition arranged by the Education Authority, you should use Code 2. Schools should liaise with EWS SAM Coordinator. The role of the SAM Coordinator is to assist young people in partnership with schools and other services to achieve their full potential.

Q11: A pupil's parent/carer removes them from school when they are working in another country and their child travels with them, how should the pupil's absence be recorded?

When the parent/carer have advised that they are taking the child out of school, specifically to go with them to the other country while they work then the school must apply to the Department to use Code J.

If approved this can be used up to a maximum of two weeks. After this, Code O should be used, if the school is content. The Department will require to see proof of the working arrangement. This can either be an email or letter from the parent's employer confirming the dates and location of placement/employment outside Northern Ireland.

- [Download workable pdf form](#)

Q12: A pupil has ongoing medical appointments. How should these be recorded?

Code M should be used for a pupil's absence when the school have been notified that the child is attending a medical appointment. If the pupil is in attendance at registration but has a medical appointment during either the AM/PM session then the pupil should be recorded as present. If the pupil misses registration due to a medical appointment that the school has been made aware of in advance then Code M should be used, however if the pupil returns to school within that session then the Code should be changed to present.

Q13: A number of pupils cannot make it into school due to the failure of school transport or if the school is closed for part of the day. How should I record this?

Code! – No attendance required should be used for the pupils affected by failure of school transport and also if pupils are sent home due to such scenarios as adverse weather, electricity or heating failure. However, if school transport is not available due to planned

industrial action then schools MAY if they have the capacity, request pupils to avail of online learning and to record attendance as present providing the school is content that learning has been undertaken.

Q14: In the event of Industrial Action by Teaching Staff. How should I record this?

Code! No attendance required should be used for the period the school is closed to pupils. This will also be the case in the scenario where a school is closed to pupils but there are still a number of teachers physically on site.

Q16: Can the Extended Leave code be used for pupils going on a family holiday back to their country of origin?

No, this is only for an emergency situation agreed by the school after the appropriate procedures have been completed and the code approved for use following [submission of an application](#) to the Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team

Holidays taken during term time are to be recorded as Code G – Family Holiday (not agreed).

Q17: Is Emotionally Based School Non – Attendance (EBSNA) a diagnosed medical condition?

No, EBSNA is NOT an actual medical condition that a pupil can be diagnosed with.

EBSNA can be understood as a spectrum of behaviours.

For some children it is clear that they have great difficulty attending school. Some children have chronic non-attendance. For other children it is more subtle and evident in emerging patterns of missed days, missed classes and avoidance strategies.

It should be noted that, depending on the child's unique profile of risk factors, the onset of EBSNA can be sudden with a clear trigger, for example following bereavement, or it can be gradual and hard to see.

Children may exhibit difficulties with engagement, frequent avoidance strategies, fear, anxiety and distress. They may find it difficult to leave their home, or to separate from their parent/guardian. Some children may report psychosomatic symptoms. Each young person is unique, but in a high proportion of cases anxiety is a common denominator.

Q18: I have a parent who is saying their child is absent due to “EBSNA”, can I challenge this?

While you may ask a parent to explain symptoms, it is also worth informing them that this is an authorised absence and as such counts against a pupil's attendance record.

Q19: Should I use the comments field in the SMS Attendance to record symptoms when using the absence code for EBSNA?

The Department would strongly recommend this approach in order to establish symptoms which may in turn determine what the school's approach is to in assisting the pupil to return to full time education. When using this feature, schools should be minded to record concise and factual comments as this is discoverable data.

Q20: Should I inform the Education Welfare Service when a pupil is absent as a result of EBSNA?

The Department would recommend that settings advise their EWO on a monthly basis of the numbers of pupils who have been or are currently absent and being coded with Code I4.

These are NOT deemed as referrals but are purely on a 'for information' basis.

Q21: I have a pupil who is on a flexible timetable due to anxiety, how do I record their attendance and absence?

For the time that the pupil is in school they should be recorded as being present using the appropriate am or pm mark. For the period of time that they are not in school, the Code I4 (EBSNA) should be used.

Q22: How should I record a pupil who is on a flexible timetable, and they are in school for a class either side of lunchtime?

In a case such as this, it is suggested that you mark the pupil present for either the am or pm session, but not for both. The EBSNA Code I4 should be used for the period that is chosen as 'absent'. The reason for this coding is that to mark the pupil as present for both the am and pm sessions is both masking the reason for the need for a flexible timetable and also potentially sets a precedent that other pupils and parents may cite as being unfair.

Q23: What is difference between 'Temporary Exceptions to the Curriculum' and a pupil on a flexible timetable?

A pupil who has been given a temporary exception to the curriculum will be in receipt of an authorised absence mark (code O2) for the period of time that they may be out of school for.

There are set criteria for this which may include:

- Pupils who arrive from such a different educational system that they require a period of adjustment to the curricular requirements;
- Pupils who have had spells in hospital, been educated at home or been excluded from school and need time to adjust;
- Pupils who temporarily have severe emotional problems (perhaps because of a family crisis) and need special arrangements.

Flexible timetabling is **NOT** an arrangement which the Department promotes and the example above of "severe emotional problems" is designed to reflect situations such as 'domestic distress' at home.