



Attendance Policy – COVID-19 Addendum

School closures during the last academic year as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that not all children have been expected to attend school, however, from the start of the autumn term 2020 pupil attendance returned to being mandatory for all pupils. This also applies to the 2021-22 academic year meaning that the usual school attendance procedures apply including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct
- the duty on local authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education

This addendum to the Attendance Policy is to be used and read alongside Unique Academy school's Attendance Policy.

Unique Academy will promote good attendance; thus, enabling and encouraging all pupils to achieve excellence. Attendance has a direct relationship with the attainment of individuals and groups of pupils and the standards thereby achieved by the school. Securing good attendance is a fundamental responsibility within our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our school.

Absence from school remains detrimental to a child's education. Any unexplained absence from school will be followed up in the normal manner as per the existing policy. This is in line with our safeguarding policy and practices.

Our aim is to support all pupils to attend every day. Where there are concerns with attendance, usual support mechanisms will be offered by the school. It is important that parents/carers discuss any concerns fully with staff at the school so that plans can be made to improve attendance for the child.

Absence in circumstances relating to COVID-19

At Unique Academy, we will continue to record absence that is in relation to Covid-19 by using the attendance code identified by the Department for Education (X). This code will be used when 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 COVID-19 from Public Health England (PHE), or its successor UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), 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 COVID-19

As outlined by the Department for Education this category must only be used to record where a pupil is not attending for the reasons set out above. It should not be used to record any other type of non-attendance or absence - for example, where a parent or pupil is anxious about attending school because of COVID-19.

Examples in which 'not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19 could apply

(a) Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should self isolate and get a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then their absence will be recorded as Code I (illness) and parents should follow the usual absence procedures outlined in the Attendance Policy. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.

(b) Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to self-isolate. They should instead get a PCR test, and should only self-isolate if they test positive. If they do test positive, they will be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school. If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance. Code X will be used for the period of self isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive, they will be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

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

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, code X will be used in the register.

(d) Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable when shielding is advised

Clinically extremely vulnerable people are no longer advised to shield. All clinically extremely vulnerable pupils should attend school unless they are one of the very small number of children under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend. If shielding is advised nationally or in a local area again, by DHSC, PHE or UKHSA, then pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable may be advised not to attend school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from DHSC, PHE or UKHSA will be recorded as code X.

In line with the guidance from the Department for Education, we will follow up with families if they we are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. We may request supporting evidence from the family of the pupil in this case. If the reason given for absence is not in line with the guidance above or there is not reasonable evidence to suggest this, absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Further guidance;

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>