# United Learning – Attendance Policy and Procedures

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## Summary – Attendance at a Glance

### Attendance Matters

Here at Avonwood Primary school, we have the highest expectations across all areas of school life including attendance. We value positive relationships between both staff and pupils and want all pupils to feel they belong here and are valued. We work with our pupils to ensure that they have the highest possible attendance at school. We believe that this is the best way for them to succeed and to get the most out of all we have to offer.

There is a clear link between academic outcomes and school attendance. We want all pupils to achieve excellent outcomes to give themselves the very best chance in life.

There are 175 non-school days per year for holidays, shopping and appointments. There is no need, except in extreme circumstances to miss a day's education. If you miss one session in a week (remember, there are two sessions per day) your attendance is 90%. This means you miss 19 days of education in a year and risk not being ready for the next stage of education

It is vital we work together to teach our pupils the value of attending school each and every day. However, we do appreciate that at times, pupils may not be able to attend school. We ask our parents and carers to follow the processes below. They support our safeguarding procedures.

Should you have a concern about your child's attendance, then we ask that you contact us to discuss this. We believe in strong partnerships across all parts of school life. This includes attending school.

It is also important to us that pupils arrive to school on time, and they must be at school by [xx].

### Absence through illness or unforeseen circumstances

Do expect to receive a call back from the school to discuss your child's absence and to see if we can support in any way. If pupils suffer any form of injury, then we ask that you contact the school to make us aware. This is so we can do a risk assessment with you. It will identify impacts of the injury and the support your child may need.

See section 7.3 of the full policy for further information.

### Attending an Appointment

Please schedule dental and non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours. We know this might be tough for hospital visits. If rescheduling fails, your child must bring a medical letter or appointment card. We need it for our records. Pupils must be picked up and returned to school if their appointment ends during the school day.

For more details, check section 6.2 of the full policy.

### Known Absence

Your child may need to miss school for exceptional reasons. If so, parents/carers should ask the Headteacher. They should use the form below. Where possible, this should be made at

least four weeks before the required date. The form should be completed and emailed back to the school office@avonwoodprimaryschool.org.uk. If such a request is made, the school expects it to be short. But even then, they may not be able to approve it.

If the Headteacher does not authorise it, then any absence is 'unauthorised' and may result in legal action being considered, in line with statutory guidance and individual circumstances.

We must follow legal rules. Therefore, term-time leave will not normally be authorised unless exceptional circumstances apply, which are considered on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, we may issue penalty notices.

For more details, please check the Attendance Policy and Procedures (section 6.1).

## Support

We take absence very seriously. We are committed to supporting any child who is finding it difficult to attend school regularly. We will monitor attendance closely and will target support where attendance patterns cause concern, including where attendance falls below 95%.

Further information on support can be found in the full policy.

## Punctuality

The school day starts at 8.40am for Key Stage 2 and 8.50am for Key Stage 1 and EYFS and we expect your child to be in school at that time. Registers close at 9.00am and arrival after that time will mean the child is late. Lateness means they miss out on important routines which help get their day off to a positive start. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons during the day for others.

**How we manage lateness to school and lessons**

Lateness to school

For pupils that arrive after 9.00am they are deemed as being late. Pupils who arrive after this time must enter the School via the Main Office. They must then be signed in using the lateness book located in Reception.

For pupils that arrive after 9.30 am, this is an unauthorised absence mark, and it will affect your child's attendance. A member of the safeguarding team monitors attendance daily and regular reports are run to check on lateness. If you child is late more than three times in a half term period, you will receive a 'spotlight on lateness' letter to inform you of this lateness. If your child's punctuality does not improve, then a meeting with the attendance officer may be necessary.

Parents may face prosecution if their child is often late after the register has closed. We will watch for this and offer support. If the problem persists, we may take action.

When the school day ends the teachers will keep the children with them until 3.20 pm. After this time children are taken to the Main Office where parents will be called, and their child's name will be entered in to the 'Late Collection Book.' If a child is repeatedly picked up late, a phone call will take place from a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The rest of this document outlines our Attendance Policy and Procedures. We encourage all parents to review it. This ensures they understand how we handle attendance. If getting your child to school is hard, please contact us immediately – Kim Williams Attendance Lead or a member of SLT.

# Part A - Policy

## 1. Introduction

This Attendance Policy outlines the culture and approach to supporting good attendance at our academy. The second part of the document outlines the more detailed procedures, roles and responsibilities related to pupil attendance that operate at our academy. Through all that we do to manage attendance, we are committed to creating a positive learning environment, supporting pupil achievement, and complying with legal requirements.

This is a successful academy, and all pupils play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to be proud to belong and to achieve their best. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that parents[1] make sure that children attend regularly, and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Regular attendance at school is of critical importance to a child's education. Evidence tells us that the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. Any absence affects the pattern of a pupil's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts the learning of others in the same teaching groups by disrupting classroom routines.

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**Ensuring your child's regular attendance is your legal responsibility**.

The principles of a 'support first approach' are adopted and we seek to:

[1] *The definition of a parent can be found in the Education Act 1996, and this applies to all the legislation to which this guidance relates. In addition to the child's birth parents, references to parents in this guidance include any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the local authority where it has a care order in respect of the child) and any person (for example, a foster carer) who has care of the child. To reflect this, this guidance uses 'parent' to refer to both parents and carers.*

| Support first approach (as set out in DFE Guidance) | |
|---|---|
| **Expect** | Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school. |
| **Monitor** | Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched. |
| **Listen and understand** | When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. |
| **Facilitate support** | Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues. |
| **Formalise support** | Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order. |
| **Enforce** | Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. |

As a school we also follow the 5 Foundations of Effective Attendance Practice may want to include the summary table provided in Appendix A.

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## 2. Aims

Our aim is to create a school environment where children feel they belong and want to come to school. We believe our school is a great place to learn, and that being in school day in, day out, is in the best interests of all our pupils. However, we recognise that there will be times when there may be barriers that prevent children from attending school. In these instances, we will act early to understand the issue, provide support and work with the child and their family to get them back to regular attendance as quickly as possible.

We believe that one of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and a sense of belonging. To this end, we

strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community.
- Raise our pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Provide support, advice and guidelines to parents, pupils and staff.
- Work in partnership with parents, including regularly informing them about their child's absence and attendance levels.
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality.

This policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents[2] must follow to report their child's absence from school and to remind them of their legal duty, to ensure their child attends school regularly.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, considering the individual needs of our pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. Therefore, in the development of our policy we have considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age. Therefore, the school will encourage parents of children who are not yet of compulsory school age, to send their children to every session that is available to them. If the child is unable to attend the school for any reason, the parent should inform the school of the reason on the first day of absence. If the school is concerned about a pupil's attendance for any reason, we will contact the parent to discuss the matter, in the first instance.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory[3] school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

We want our pupils to come to school every day unless they are not well enough to attend. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our pupils to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the attendance expectations in the workplace.

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[2] *Education law defines parents as: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and any person who has care of a child or young person i.e., lives with and looks after the child. In this policy the term 'parent' includes parents and carers.*

[3] *A child becomes of 'compulsory school age' on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday and ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of Year 11.*

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In April 2017 the Supreme Court clarified the definition of regular attendance to be attendance "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school", therefore if an absence is not authorised by the school, the pupil's attendance is deemed to be irregular.

We will do all we can to encourage our pupils to attend. We will also make available the best provision we can for any pupil who needs additional support in school or who is prevented from attending school, due to a medical condition.

Please see DfE guidance documents 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions', 'Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs' and Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) – or ask the school for printed copies.

### 2.1. Effects of non-attendance

The table below indicates how what might seem like just a few days absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons.

| Attendance during school year | Days lost in a year | Which is approximately | Approximate number of lessons missed |
|---|---|---|---|
| 95% | 9.5 Days | 2 Weeks | 50 Lessons |
| 90% | 19 Days | 4 Weeks | 100 Lessons |

### 3. Safeguarding and Attendance

Our school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare.

### 4. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance (published May 2022 and applying from 19 August 2024) and the accompanying Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (August 2024).

It also reflects the current statutory framework for attendance enforcement, including the National Framework for Penalty Notices introduced in 2024, and replaces reliance on earlier standalone guidance on parental responsibility measures.

This policy is informed by the following legislation, which sets out the legal powers and duties governing school attendance:

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- Education Act 1996 (particularly sections 7, 19 and 444–447)
- Children Act 1989
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Sentencing Act 2020
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024, which establish a national framework for the use of penalty notices for unauthorised absence in England

## 5. Using data to support improvements in attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions across the school year, for whatever reason. Pupils who miss more than 50% of their possible sessions are classified as 'severely absent'

The school will ensure that attendance data is routinely monitored, analysed and acted upon to identify emerging concerns and prevent attendance issues becoming entrenched. Attendance information will be used to:

- identify pupils whose attendance is declining or causing concern;
- identify patterns and trends within groups of pupils, including vulnerable groups;
- understand barriers to attendance and target support effectively;
- evaluate the impact of attendance interventions and support strategies;
- inform discussions with pupils, parents, governors and external agencies where appropriate.

The school will make use of available DfE attendance data tools, including the Monitor Your School Attendance (MYSA) service and the View Your Education Data platform, where available. These tools enable schools to identify attendance trends, analyse attendance among specific pupil groups, compare attendance with local and national benchmarks, and target resources where they will have the greatest impact.

Attendance data will be considered alongside wider information about a pupil's circumstances, recognising that absence is often a symptom of underlying issues. Where concerns are identified, the school will seek to work in partnership with pupils, parents and relevant professionals to understand barriers and provide timely support before attendance deteriorates further. This approach reflects the principles set out in the DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance and its guidance on communicating effectively with parents about attendance.

The school will regularly review attendance data for vulnerable groups, including pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, children in care, previously looked-after children, pupils subject to child protection plans, children in need, and any other groups identified through local analysis. Targeted support will be implemented where attendance data indicates a pupil is at risk of becoming persistently or severely absent.

## 6. Understanding Barriers to Attendance

In relation to understanding barriers to attendance, we will ensure all pupils and parents are treated with dignity and staff will model respectful relationships to build a positive understanding between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance.

We recognise that strong relationships between home and school are fundamental to improving attendance. In communicating with parents, we will highlight the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing and enhance their understanding of what good attendance looks like. Communications will be tailored to individual circumstances where appropriate, will focus on understanding barriers to attendance, and will provide clear information about available support.

We will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily.

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the school to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. In working with parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers these pupils face and will put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

Reduced timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for a limited period and to support pupils to reintegrate back into education to access fulltime provision.

The school is committed to share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe

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## 7. Staff Training on Attendance

Improving attendance requires knowledge of guidance and regulations but also expertise in working with families to remove barriers to attendance and safeguard pupils. Just as those barriers are regularly evolving, so too is the training that school staff require to address them. The school therefore will facilitate training for all staff to understand

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances,
- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers
- the school/trust strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance,
- the processes for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to pupils who need it.

For staff with specialist attendance responsibilities, they will receive training to include

- the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data,
- and any additional training that would be beneficial to support pupils and pupil cohorts overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

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## Part B - What the Law Says and Our Procedures

### 1. Roles and Responsibilities

**This section outlines responsibilities of particular members of staff in relation to attendance.**

- The name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school is Kim Williams, Attendance Officer and Designated Safeguarding Lead.
  Responsibility for identifying unexplained absences on "Day 1" will fall to the office admin team.
- Responsibility for identifying further unexplained absences will fall to Attendance Officer, Kim Williams or any other member of the safeguarding team.
- Information and contact details of the school staff who pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis are class teacher, year leader, teaching assistant or Mrs Sainsbury Family Liaison Officer.

More detailed support on attendance can be requested from the Attendance Officer, Safeguarding team, or Senior Leadership Team.

**This section sets out the action to be taken by staff if a registered pupil fails to attend the school regularly.**

Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school supports and works with the family. Wherever possible, we will keep this person consistent.

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic the school will draw on these relationships and listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, the school will take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support.

In the first instance, the school will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. This may include starting a BCP Fast Track to Attendance plan if your child's attendance drops below 90%. This will be a 10-week contract to support you and your child in improving their attendance.

Where barriers are outside of the school's control, we endeavour to work together with all partners to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need. As a minimum, this will include meeting with parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school, agreeing actions or interventions to address them and keeping those actions under regular review in discussion with families. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. Or where

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absence intensifies, so will the support provided, which will require us to work in tandem with the Local Authority and other relevant partners, as follows:

- If the needs and barriers are individual to the pupil this may include provision of mentoring, 1-2-1 tuition or out of hours learning, or where appropriate an education, health and care plan or alternative provision.
- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include an inter-agency referral with BCP Children's Social Care.
- Where engagement in support is proving challenging, the school will hold more formal conversations with the parents. This is likely to be led by the senior leader responsible for attendance or a member of the safeguarding team and may include the school's point of contact in BCP's Attendance Inclusion Team. The aim of these meetings will be to clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the family and the potential need for legal intervention in future but will also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.
- Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, the school will work with the Local Authority to:
    - Put formal support in place in the form of an education supervision order.
    - Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
    - Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
    - Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

In all cases, the school will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, the school will work together with all parties to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

**The Local Governing Body**

The Chair and Safeguarding Governor -Mrs Lucie Barton-Ridges is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a half termly basis (6 times a year). The Local Governing Body also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

**The Headteacher**

The headteacher/principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

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The headteacher/principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and requests fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

**Attendance Officer**

The name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school is Kim Williams, Attendance officer.

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data daily at the school and individual pupil level.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as appropriate.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Co-ordinates requests for Term-time Leave of Absence (this includes liaison with the DSL and Safeguarding Team) and advises the headteacher as requested.
-

**Family Liaison Officer**

Mrs Sephton is currently the pastoral lead, and she would also be responsible for working with families to discuss attendance issues. Her roles and responsibilities include: -

- Monitoring the attendance data daily after 9.30am
- Carry out home visits for those children who have not attended school with no reason
- Carry out welfare checks for those children who have been absent from school for more than 3 days with illness
- Support the attendance officer by attending meetings to draw up support plans or speaking to children about their barriers to attending school regularly.

**Class Teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct code for present or 'n' code for no reason, and submitting this information to the school office. Class teachers will work closely with the attendance officer to encourage regularly attendance from the children in their class. This may include supporting any actions as part of an attendance contract or completing monitoring charts or informing the attendance officer is they notice patterns of poor attendance.

## 2. Contents of the Admissions Register

The admission register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) must contain specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. The school will enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed with, or been notified by the parent, that the pupil will attend.

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A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 9 of the **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.**

It is vital that the admission register is kept up to date, it is a legal document. Therefore, we encourage parents to inform the school of any changes whenever they occur and ensure the admission register is amended as soon as possible.

## 3. Contents of Attendance Register

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of the morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion the register is taken, the appropriate attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil. Please refer to **Working Together To Improve School Attendance** for the code descriptors and also **Appendix 2** of this document. The school must record whether each pupil is:

- Attending, or
- Absent

Effective and timely use and sharing of register data is critical to safeguard children, improve attendance and is supported using our electronic Management Information System to record attendance information. Our registers will be preserved for 6 years from the date after the last entry was made.

## 4. Attending the School (and Lateness)

Pupils are marked present (/ \) if they are in school when the register is taken. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.

- Our pupils in Key Stage 2 must arrive by **8.40am** on each school day.
- Our pupils in Key Stage 1 and EYFS must arrive by **8.50am** on each school day.
- Our morning register is taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.30am
- Our afternoon register is taken at 1.00pm and will be kept open until 1.10pm

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late (**L**) – which counts as present.

If a pupil arrives after the register has closed they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code "Late after registers close" (U) which is an unauthorised absence mark.

However, if the pupil is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised and coded accordingly. See DfE guidance Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

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## 5. Attending a place other than the school

Pupils are marked as attending a place other than the school if they are present for the assigned session. These codes include:

- Code K Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
- Code V: Attending an educational visit or trip
- Code P: Participating in a sporting activity
- Code W: Attending work experience
- Code B: Attending any other approved education activity
- Code D: Dual registered at another setting

Our school retains responsibilities for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils attending an approved educational activity. Our school must be satisfied that appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil. Our school should ensure that we have in place arrangements whereby providers notify the school of any absence. Our school must record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

If a pupil is attending an alternative education provider such as another school or Pupil Referral Unit for part or all of their education, our school will make arrangements for the pupil to be dual registered at the other setting and mark our registers accordingly.

If a pupil is attending an alternative education provider arranged by the school, which is not a school or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all their education, we will mark the sessions which the pupil attends the alternative setting as code B (any other approved educational activity).

The school expects the alternative provision (AP) to notify us of any absences by individual pupils, to ensure we become aware of any attendance concerns as soon as possible and take follow up action as necessary**.** Attendance updates will be provided on a weekly basis, or more frequently if agreed with the alternative setting. Any attendance concerns will be followed up by us, in conjunction with the Alternative Provision (AP).

## 6. Absent – Leave of absence

A leave of absence means that the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away from the school. These codes are classified for statistical purposes as 'authorised absence' which means the pupil's absence is with permission granted by the school. These codes include:

- Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
- Code M: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
- Code J1: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
- Code S: Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
- Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
- Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
- Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

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### 6.1. Leave of Absence Requests – 'Exceptional Circumstances'

**The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. The school will consider each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. Absence Request | Parents | Avonwood Primary School The form should be completed and emailed back to ***office@avonwoodprimaryschool.org.uk***. If such a request is made, the school expects it to be short. But even then, we still may not be able to approve it.

The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least **four weeks** before the absence.

**Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing.**

Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage, we will follow the necessary protocols.

All term time absence for children in care should be discussed at the child's Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting in advance where possible and agreed with the Social Care and Virtual School. This permission should be gained before school is approached for approval. The school will contact the Virtual School in relation to any requests for term time absence for a child in care.

### 6.2 Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents should schedule dental and non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours, where possible. We know this might be tough for hospital visits. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless necessary, in which case the school will need an

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explanation as to why this is. Pupils must be picked up and returned to school if their appointment ends during the school day.

No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site to attend a medical appointment during the school day without parental confirmation.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter to the front office as we need it for your child's file. – only then will the absence be authorised.

### 6.3 Part-time timetables - Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

Pupils are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have.

Where a pupil is temporarily unable to access a full-time education, the school will work with the Local Authority, parents and relevant professionals to support a return to full-time provision as soon as possible. Meetings will take place with the relevant members of staff eg, attendance lead or SENDco, to complete the BCP Assess, Plan, Do, Review document as all part-time timetables need to be agreed by the school in advance and reviewed regularly.

## 7. Absent – other authorised reasons

Absent due to other authorised reasons means that the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away from the school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence. These codes are classified for statistical purposes as 'authorised absence'. These codes include:

- Code T: Parent travelling for occupational purposes
- Code R: Religious observance
- Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
- Code E: Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

### 7.1. Mobile pupil - Parent travelling for occupational purposes

The school will authorise the absence of a mobile pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In which case the child will be dual registered at that school and this school, which is their 'main' school.

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Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

### 7.2. Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends.

The school will authorise absence for days exclusively set apart for religious observance, in line with statutory guidance and individual circumstances. Additional days taken without exceptional circumstances will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

### 7.3. Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows Department for Education guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)' 2024[4] which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.

Where a parent cannot provide any written evidence, we will endeavour to have a conversation with the parent and pupil, if appropriate, which may itself serve as the necessary evidence to record the absence.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some instances, the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil's GP directly to help support the needs of the individual pupil.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may consider requesting medical evidence where reasonable and proportionate, taking account of accessibility, SEND, and individual circumstances. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. You must call the school office (01202 727910) before 8:25am on the first and subsequent absent days. If you need to leave a message, we ask that you leave your name. Also leave your child's name, their class, and the reason for their absence.

[4] Please ask the school for a printed copy of Working Together to Improve School Attendance if required

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Absences due to illness which have **not** been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised. If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

**Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact our school's Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mrs Kim Williams or Mrs Jessica Sainsbury our Family Liaison Officer for further information on the support available.

Parents should also contact their GP or the NHS Helpline by phoning telephone number 111 for advice if they are concerned. In case of emergency parents should dial 999.

**Pupils taken ill during the school day**

If a pupil needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of the senior leadership team. In such circumstances, no pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

### 7.4. Suspensions (Exclusions)

In this policy, the word 'suspension' is used to refer to what legislation calls an exclusion for a fixed period. Suspensions and permanent exclusions are both types of exclusion, and where this policy uses the word 'exclusion' this includes both suspensions (fixed-period exclusions) and permanent exclusions.

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an exclusion. The school will follow the current DfE's statutory guidance on suspensions and permanent exclusions. The full behaviour and exclusions policy for our school can be found here Exclusion Policy.pdf Behaviour Policy.pdf

Any exclusion **must** be agreed by the Headteacher. The school will notify the parent of the exclusion in writing. If the pupil is a Child in Care, the school will notify the pupil's carer, social worker and the Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

### 8. Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

In accordance with DfE school attendance guidance, our school will record pupils as 'Unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause' in the following circumstances (such circumstances are not recorded as absences and are not counted as possible attendances):

- Code Q: Unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
- Code Y1: Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
- Code Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

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- Code Y3: Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
- Code Y4: Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
- Code Y5: Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
- Code Y6: Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
- Code Y7: Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

## 9. Absent - unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence or no reason for absence was provided.

Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Waiting at home for a washing machine to be mended, or a parcel to be delivered
- Day trips
- Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school)
- In the case of term time leave - if a pupil is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

Unauthorised absences may result in legal action being considered, in line with statutory guidance and the individual circumstances of the case.

The unauthorised absence codes include:

- Code G – Holiday not granted by the school
- Code N – Reason for absence not yet established
- Code O – Absent in other or unknown circumstances
- Code U – Arrived in school after registration closed

## 10. Administrative codes

Where necessary and applicable, our school will use the defined administrative codes. These codes are not collected for statistical purposes and are:

- Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admissions register
- Code #: Planned whole school closure

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## 11. First Day of Absence Response

If no-one contacts the school by 9.30am then the absence code 'N' - no reason will be marked on the child's register. This will then trigger the office staff to try and make contact with any of the other emergency contacts listed for the child. Parents will be asked to supply details of **at least two** people who can be contacted in an emergency, and these details will be reviewed annually and must be updated in the first instance if there is a change of circumstances.

An email will also to be sent to the first contact asking them to call the office urgently. If the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers provided, and is concerned for the welfare of the pupil, we may undertake our own 'safe and well' home visit check and/or request a Welfare Check from the police.

Pupils who make their own way to school as they have walking to and from school permission will be prioritised if they have not arrived at school with no reason. Then Children in Care; children subject to Child Protection Plans; children open to Social Care as a Child in Need; or children who have previously been reported missing will take priority.

Where concerns remain and a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established, the school may escalate concerns in line with safeguarding procedures, including contacting appropriate external agencies.

## 12. Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance

Pupils receive individual rewards for 100% attendance and punctuality at the end of each term. Each week classes are also recognised and rewarded for excellent attendance and punctuality. Classes will receive a star for attendance above 97%, which is our 2026-27 target set by the DfE. When a class reaches 5 stars, 10 stars and a whole terms worth of stars, they will receive class rewards for example extra playtime. We will also recognise those pupils who have the most improved attendance.

To have 100% attendance pupils must be in school all day, every day. Children who miss part of the school day for appointments e.g. medical, dental, speech & language would not be achieving 100%, which is why we strongly encourage parents to make appointments outside of the school day.

## 13. Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave)

Sometimes pupils can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and pupils to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way.

The school will seek to work in partnership with parents, assuming positive intent and recognising that parents want the best for their child. Discussions about attendance will focus on identifying barriers and agreeing practical solutions wherever possible.

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When we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. Where there are no genuine reasons for the absences, parents may be asked to meet with the Attendance officer to discuss the matter. In some cases, this may result in a formal action plan being produced in the form of an Attendance Contract.

If our school refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. This will at least be evidenced via the sending of a Notice to Improve – attendance warning letter.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic approach to the issue and involve other agencies as necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies or fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

## 14. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, it is a criminal offence for a parent to fail to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil of compulsory school age. This applies to resident and non-resident parents, and to any person who has care of the child, each of whom may be subject to legal sanctions if a child does not attend school regularly.

Unauthorised absence from school can lead to a range of outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered on an individual, case-by-case basis, taking account of the reasons for absence, any support provided, and the impact on the child's education and welfare.

Where a child fails to attend school regularly, parents may be subject to legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Where a family has more than one school-aged child, each child's attendance is considered separately and legal action may be taken in respect of each child.

Where unauthorised absence meets the national threshold, the school will normally request that the Local Authority considers the use of a Penalty Notice, unless there are reasonable grounds not to do so following consideration of the individual circumstances and any support provided. The Local Authority is responsible for deciding whether to issue a Penalty Notice or to proceed directly to prosecution.

Penalty Notices are intended to address lower-level offences and to act as a deterrent to improve future school attendance, for example where unauthorised leave of absence has been

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taken during term time. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and will only be used where it is considered the most appropriate response in the individual circumstances. In some cases, prosecution may be pursued without issuing a Penalty Notice.

Unauthorised absence may result in one of the following outcomes:

1. Penalty Notice. In line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices (introduced from 19 August 2024), a Penalty Notice may be issued where a pupil has accrued 10 unauthorised sessions within a rolling 10-school-week period, or in other circumstances where support is not appropriate, such as unauthorised leave of absence in term time.
    - The first Penalty Notice issued to a parent for a child is £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, increasing to £160 if paid between days 22 and 28.
    - A second Penalty Notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period is £160 per parent, per child, payable within 28 days, with no option to pay a lower amount.
    - A third offence within a rolling three-year period will not result in a further Penalty Notice and is likely to result in prosecution.
      Failure to pay a Penalty Notice may lead to prosecution.
2. Prosecution. Prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 may result in a fine of up to £2,500, and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to three months, depending on the offence.

Penalty Notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child and in respect of each individual child. For example, where two parents are responsible for two children with irregular attendance, up to four Penalty Notices may be issued. Penalty Notices must be paid in full and cannot be paid by instalments.

In addition to Penalty Notices and prosecution, a range of other legal interventions may be used where appropriate. Decisions about which intervention to pursue are made in partnership with the Local Authority and take into account the individual circumstances of the family. These include: Attendance contracts (previously known as parenting contracts), Education Supervision Orders, Parenting Orders, Attendance prosecution.

The school will work closely with the Local Authority to ensure that the most appropriate intervention is used, in line with the statutory support-first approach, rather than relying solely on Penalty Notices or prosecution.

### 15. Children Missing Education (CME)

Our school will add and delete pupils from roll in line with the law. A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register if a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The school will make CME and Pupil Tracking referrals as appropriate. The school will seek advice from the local authority representative responsible for children missing education if unsure about any individual cases:

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## 16. Following up Unexplained Absences

Where no contact has been made with the school, the school will contact parents firstly by telephone or email to try and establish the reason for a child's absence. We may contact the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the pupil's whereabouts.

When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence. If we are unable to establish the reason for absence, we will make the absence as unauthorised, using the **O** code. If we are concerned about a pupil's absence and are unable to contact the parent/s, we may feel it necessary to make a home visit.

## 17. Reporting to Parents

Attendance communications will be proportionate, personalised and age-appropriate. The school will recognise and celebrate improvements in attendance as well as high attendance, ensuring that communications remain supportive and inclusive for pupils whose attendance is affected by illness, SEND or other circumstances beyond their control.

Attendance data is monitored on a daily basis and every 3 weeks letters will be sent out to let parents know if their child's attendance has dropped below the expected level of 97%. Where a child's attendance drops below 90%, for whatever reason, this is classed as persistently absent and parents will be asked to engage in an 'Fast Track Attendance Contact' to offer support and to help improve attendance over the coming 10 weeks.

## 18. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence

As a school, we use Arbor to record all information linked to attendance and any information supplied with regards to your child's absence will be added to their attendance register. Such as, who called and what information was provided with regards to why the pupil will not be attending school.

## 19. Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by United Learning Governance and the Attendance officer, or more frequently if there are changes to legislation and guidance. At every review, the policy will be shared with Avonwood's governing body.

## 20. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Behaviour Policy, Inclusion Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.

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**Guidance Documents (include but are not limited to):**

Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, updated June 2026; applies from 19 August 2024

National Framework for Penalty Notices introduced in 2024

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (DfE December 2015)

Mental Health issues affecting a pupil's attendance (DfE February 2023)

Arranging education for children with who cannot attend school because of health needs (DfE December 2023)

Keeping children safe in education (2025, and then 2026 from 1 September)

School census guidance and regulation

Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement (DfE) (July 2026)

Travel to School for Pupils of Compulsory School Age

To be ratified

## Appendix A – 5 Foundations of Effective Practice

As a school we also follow the 5 Foundations of Effective Attendance Practice as set out in the table below.

- **Foundation 1**: *The school has a fully embedded ethos in which excellent school attendance is expected, developed and nurtured. The escalated approach to supporting attendance is built on foundations of belonging and connectedness.*
- **Foundation 2:** *The approach to improving attendance is built on clear policies, systems and processes. This ensures continuous and sustainable improvement drives attendance practice. The attendance policy is understood by all stakeholders and allows the school to set, and maintain, high expectations to improve the culture of attendance.*
- **Foundation 3:** *The school prioritises developing a team of attendance experts, with a shared vision and core purpose. The Attendance Leader delivers bespoke training to support all staff to fully understand their role in improving attendance. External partnerships support attendance improvements through a multi-disciplinary approach for identified children and families.*
- **Foundation 4:** *Data information and analysis direct resources proactively towards key demographic groups and identified individuals. The expert use of data analysis informs decision making at all levels. The attendance process ensures the Attendance Leader understands the reason for attendance concerns, these barriers can then be successfully supported and removed.*
- **Foundation 5:** *Connecting and belonging drives the school approach to supporting attendance. All staff are supported to understand 'deeper roots' regarding poor attendance concerns. The school has developed, and embedded, an effective rewards system to further drive attendance improvements and celebrate success*

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## Appendix B – Department for Education (DfE) Attendance & Absence Codes

| Attending | |
|---|---|
| / \ | Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session |
| L | Late arrival before the register is closed |
| K | Attending education provision arranged by the local authority |
| V | Attending an educational visit or trip |
| P | Participating in a sporting activity |
| W | Attending work experience |
| B | Attending any other approved educational activity |
| D | Dual registered at another school |
| **Absent – Leave of absence** | |
| C1 | Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad. |
| M | Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment |
| J1 | Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution |
| S | Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination |
| X | Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school |
| C2 | Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable |
| C | Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance |
| **Absent – other authorised reasons** | |
| T | Parent travelling for occupational purposes |
| R | Religious observance |
| I | Illness (not medical or dental appointment) |
| E | Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made |
| **Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable causes** | |
| Q | Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements |
| Y1 | Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available |
| Y2 | Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel |
| Y3 | Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed |
| Y4 | Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed |
| Y5 | Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Y6 | Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law |
| Y7 | Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause |
| **Absent – unauthorised absence** | |
| G | Holiday not granted by the school |
| N | Reason for absence not yet established |
| O | Absent in other or unknown circumstances |
| U | Arrived in school after registration closed |
| **Administrative Codes** | |
| Z | Prospective pupil not on admission register |
| # | Planned whole school closure |

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