



Wood End School

Yeomans Avenue, Harpenden, AL5 3EF
Tel No. 01582 761636 Fax: 01582 762823
Headteacher, Mr Richard Boulton



Attendance Policy

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‘Learning Together, Respecting Each Other’

‘Wood End School is an inclusive school and respects and values the diversity of the community’

The SMT with overall responsibility for attendance is Mr Richard Boulton (Headteacher)

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1. Introduction

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual children, individual schools and for Hertfordshire as a whole. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to openness and equality of opportunity in every activity, from the way we employ staff to the way we deliver services. It is a central responsibility of members, managers and employees of the County Council to ensure that every individual that we come into contact with is treated with dignity and respect.

This Attendance Policy is intended to guide, assist and empower schools to meet their responsibilities and to provide an agreed framework within which consistent practices and procedures can be applied.

2. Statement of Intent

Hertfordshire County Council expects the Children's Services and all schools to work closely together in partnership with parents in order to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for all pupils.

3. Responsibilities – Parents and Carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents should:-

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify their child's school if he/she is absent. This should be done as soon as possible - preferably on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence. This explanation should be confirmed - preferably in writing - when the child returns to school
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- not book holidays during term time

4. Responsibilities - Schools

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.

Schools are required to call attendance registers at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity.

For pupils of compulsory school age, schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

Schools should:-

- work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole - as one of their key tasks
- have clear policies in place to address persistent absence
- support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance
- be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this should be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. Schools should recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications. They should also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into school.
- Produce school attendance policies which are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents, pupils and staff

A school attendance policy should:-

- ensure that legal requirements are met
- give a high priority to attendance and punctuality
- name the SMT member with overall responsibility for attendance
- identify clear channels of communication with parents
- ensure that up-to-date attendance data is available
- identify what is considered as authorised/unauthorised absence
- make provision for first-day of absence contact
- contain clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence
- prioritise the importance of early intervention
- identify a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism
- be alert to critical times (e.g. secondary transfer)
- be sensitive to individual pupils' needs
- promote the setting of targets for individual pupils, form groups etc.
- establish systems for rewarding good/improved attendance
- establish procedures for re-integrating long-term absentees
- provide for regular meetings between the school and its allocated Attendance Improvement Officer
- establish clear lines of communication with outside agencies
- ensure that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness
- provide for effective primary-secondary liaison
- inform and involve governors
- ensure that good practice is identified and disseminated
- explain how attendance information will be shared with parents (newsletters etc)

- be reviewed at regular intervals
- make clear to parents that it is the school - not the parent - which authorises an absence.
- make clear to parents what is, and is not, acceptable as reasons for absence
- state how lateness, both before and after closure of registers, is recorded and monitored
- make clear that leave is granted only in exceptional circumstances
- address attendance from a whole school perspective. The link between attendance and achievement should be actively promoted
- encourage all staff - including ancillary and administrative staff - to see attendance as part of their responsibility
- actively address all issues - such as bullying – which may lead to non-attendance
- explain that their allocated Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) will be notified of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly

5. Responsibilities – ISL Attendance Team

The ISL Attendance Team fulfils the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

Maintained Schools

Each maintained school in Hertfordshire will be allocated an Attendance Improvement Officer who will work in close partnership with the school.

In working closely with schools the Attendance Improvement Officer will offer the following services:-

Consultation Visits

Consultation visits by the AIO will be allocated according to need. Need will be identified using the school annual DfE Absence data. The purpose of the consultation visit will be to:-

- identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This will include the regular examination of attendance registers
- agree on focused, time-limited action which needs to be taken by the school and/or the AIO. Before accepting a referral the AIO will expect school staff to have first undertaken some preliminary work themselves, eg action by the class teacher or year head, contact with parents, etc
- feed back and exchange information in relation to work which has been undertaken by the AIO and/or the school
- identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters
- advise the school on strategies for improving attendance
- assist schools in identifying PA pupils and those at risk of becoming PA and ensuring that effective plans of action are in place

Casework

- AIOs may undertake early intervention (pre-referral) work prior to a case being accepted. This may include the following:
- telephoning or writing to the parents about their child's absences or lateness
- attending a meeting with parents arranged by the school to emphasise the need for good attendance and the possibility that, if there is no improvement, the AIO will become formally involved.

Once a case has been accepted, the AIO will undertake direct work with pupils and their parents. This can include:

- arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupils
- making home visits to assess the situation and determine what action needs to be taken
- offering specific support to parents and individual pupils, either at school or elsewhere
- facilitating meetings
- enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies through the use of Integrated Practice/Common Assessment process

The AIO may also arrange for the pupil to receive specialist support such as counselling or group work.

Attendance Improvement Officers will usually work with children whose absences have not been authorised. However, AIOs may work with children whose absences have been authorised (see appendix 1).

In-service training for school staff

Attendance Improvement Officers will offer, or assist with, INSET sessions on a range of subjects related to the attendance or welfare of pupils, including:-

- the promotion of regular school attendance
- working effectively with the AIO
- addressing persistent absence
- legal responsibilities relating to school attendance

6. The Use of Legal Action

If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school). The LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996.

If a pupil, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the

County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance. If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist then cases which remain open for more than 24 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AIO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

The Attendance Team will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance. Education Supervision Orders will not usually be applied for in relation to pupils in Years 10 or 11.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted
- the AIO will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school

7. Penalty Notices for Parents of Truants

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures. It is particularly useful as a sanction at an early stage before attendance problems become entrenched and where the Local Authority considers that a prosecution would not be appropriate as a first action.

Further information on penalty notices is available at www.thegrid.org.uk administration/pupil welfare/attendance or from the local Attendance Team Manager.

8. Attendance Registers

The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 as amended 2010, 2011 and 2013. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Registers must be taken at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. If the register is called at the end of the afternoon session schools should ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils do not leave school between registrations. They

should ensure that pupils can be accounted for in an emergency and that a pupil removed from the school at lunchtime will not go unnoticed.

Registers must record whether each pupil is present; attending an approved educational activity; absent; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent the register must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school.

Registers should open and close at regular, set times and this information should be contained in the school's attendance policy. HCC recommends that registers should not be kept open for longer than 30 minutes. At Wood End the morning register opens at 8.50am and closes at 9am, and the afternoon register opens at 1pm and closes at 1.10pm.

When calling the register the appropriate mark and/or symbol should be placed against each pupil's name - gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. In marking registers, schools should use the national set of symbols as advised by the Department for Education (see Appendix 2). Wood End uses the electronic SIMS system to register the attendance of pupils. The teachers enter present (/a.m. and \p.m.) or N for not known.

When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established. The school office investigate any absence and record the correct symbol accordingly.

Entries in manual registers should be written in red or black ink and any correction made in such a manner that the original entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable (Tippex should not be used).

In order to reduce the possibility of post registration truancy secondary schools are encouraged to take class registers in each lesson and/or carry out regular spot checks.

All schools are required to notify the Local Authority of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason. This duty also extends to academies.

Deletion from Roll

A pupil's name may not be deleted from the attendance register unless it has also been deleted from the admissions register. Full details are contained in regulation 8 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended) When a pupil's name is removed from the admissions register the school must notify their local Attendance Team. This duty extends to academies.

A pupil of compulsory school age should have his/her name deleted from the admissions register when:

- the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a School Attendance Order and another school is substituted by the LA for that named in the Order or the Order is revoked
- the pupil has been registered at another school. (Schools can register Traveller children even if they are on the roll of another school. The school the child normally attends is the base school; the other registration is temporary)
- the school has received written notification from the parent that they are educating the pupil themselves. (Elective Home Education)

- the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer lives within a reasonable distance of the school
- in the case of a pupil granted leave of absence, the pupil has failed to attend the school within the 10 school days immediately following the last day of absence which was granted and the school is not satisfied that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause and both the school and the local authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry to locate him/her
- the pupil is certified by the School Medical Officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age
- the pupil has been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days, the absence is unauthorised, *and* there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause *and* both the school and the AIO have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate him/her
- the pupil is serving a custodial sentence of four months or longer and the head teacher does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return at the end of that period
- the pupil has died
- the pupil will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets *and* the relevant person has indicated that the pupil will cease to attend the school *or* the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements for admission to the school's sixth form. (All registered pupils are required to remain at school until the leaving date - last Friday in June. "At school" includes for these purposes approved educational activities undertaken off site, including work experience).
- the pupil has been permanently excluded and the exclusion has been upheld
- the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education and has not on completing such education transferred to a reception class at the school
- the pupil attends a special school and the LA gives consent for his/her name to be removed
- the pupil is a boarder at a maintained school or Academy and charges for board and lodging are payable by the parent of the pupil; and the charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to which they relate.

If a school is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure should establish the pupil's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Confirmation should then be sought from the receiving school. When this information has been obtained, the school should complete form EWN1 and return it to the local Attendance Team office. Whenever a pupil leaves a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) must be completed.

If a school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has "disappeared" the matter should be drawn without delay to the attention of the Children Missing Education Officer by telephoning 01992 556867 or by written referral to CME Officer, Central Attendance & Employment Support Team, Room 134, CHO 135, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford SG13 8DF. Further guidance and a referral form is available at www.thegrid.org.uk administration/pupil welfare/attendance.

Responsibilities of the AIO – Attendance Registers

If the allocated AIO is concerned that a school's registers have not been kept in accordance with the requirements of the relevant regulations he/she will:

- notify the Headteacher of the concern and suggest that the matter is addressed
- if no appropriate action is taken by the school, and the AIO remains concerned, the Attendance Team Manager will address the concern with the Headteacher
- if the matter still remains unresolved, the Attendance Team Manager will write to the Headteacher formally noting the concern. A copy of this letter will be sent to the relevant ISL Area Manager and the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance.

Registers- Retention

Registers should be kept in a secure place for a period of not less than 3 years.

When computerised registration systems are used a print-out of the register should be made not less than once a month. A print-out of the register relating to a particular school year should be bound in a single volume and retained for a period of not less than 3 years.

Registers should be made available for inspection by Attendance Improvement Officers when requested.

9. Punctuality

Schools should take steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness should be monitored and followed up.

School policies and brochures should clearly state the time at which each school session begins and finishes, including the time at which registers open and close.
School should not keep a register open for the whole session.

When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session using the correct code.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. (Code U)

When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, his/her presence on site should be noted in a book in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation, etc.

10. Authorising Absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Schools should communicate to parents their policies with regard to the notification and categorisation of absence. Some parents, such as those whose first language is not English or who do not read or write may experience difficulty in providing notes. In such cases schools should seek to make alternative arrangements.

Schools are encouraged to keep all absence notes for at least a term and when a pupil's absence is a cause for concern to retain the notes until there is no longer a concern.

Absence should be authorised if:

- the pupil is absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school')
- the pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- the school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home; and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following: the child's transport to and from school; boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school; enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home
- the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision
- there is a close family bereavement
- leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application. (Parents should be reminded that they cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence)
- leave of absence should be granted to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the head teacher.
- Absence should be unauthorised if no explanation is forthcoming from the parents or if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation

11. Administrative Codes

There are a number of administrative codes which are not counted as a possible attendance in the school census. They must only be used in the circumstances described:

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (Code Y)

This code is collected in the school census for statistical purposes but is not counted as a possible attendance It may be used when:

the school site, or part of it is closed due to unavoidable cause; or

the transport provided by the school or the local authority is not available *and* where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or

a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school

- Not required to be in school (Code X)

is used to record sessions that non –compulsory school age children are not expected to attend

- Pupil not on admission register (Code Z)

enables schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

- Planned whole of partial school closure (Code #)

should be used for closures that are planned or known in advance e.g. holidays, curriculum planning/training days (up to five per year) or the use of the school as a polling station

- Different Term Dates for Different Pupils (Code #)

can also be used to record staggered starts or induction days. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.

12. Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

Pupils who are engaged in off-site educational activities should be recorded as attending (or absent from) an approved educational activity using the appropriate code.

The key features of approved educational activity are that they must be:

- educational *and*
- approved by the school *and*
- supervised by the school or someone authorised by the school

(Study leave is NOT an approved educational activity)

A pupil should be recorded as approved educational activity if he/she is attending:

- an approved work experience placement (Code W)
- a field trip or educational visit (Code V)
- an approved sporting activity approved by and supervised by someone authorised by the school (Code P)
- the pupil is attending an interview with a prospective employer, or another educational establishment (Code J)
- an offsite educational activity (Code B)

Note: The B code must not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools are ultimately responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. In using the B code schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils.

- Dual Registered – at another educational establishment (Code D)

Note: This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the school census. This code should be used

were pupils are attending as ESC , hospital or special school on a temporary basis or for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are known to be registered at another school for the session in question.

Each school should only record the attendance/absence for those sessions where the pupil is expected to attend. Schools must ensure that they follow up all absence in a timely manner.

Schools should ensure that in the event of a fire drill or other emergency evacuation they are able to carry out an immediate headcount as to the number of pupils physically present on-site.

13. Flexi-schooling

Head teachers can agree to flexi-schooling arrangements where the parents take on the responsibility for their child's education for part of the school week. Head teachers are advised to consider any such requests from parents very carefully before agreeing to them and are advised to draw up a written agreement with the parent. Where agreement has been reached, pupils should be marked authorised absent from school during periods when they are receiving home education. (C)

14. Part-time time-tables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a part time timetable to meet an individual pupil's needs. A part time timetable must be time limited and must not be treated as a long term solution. The school should mark the sessions were the pupil is not expected to attend as authorised absence. (C)

15. Requests for Family Holidays During Term time

Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which come into effect on 1st September 2013 remove all references to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

At the request from Headteachers the local authority has provided a standard letter to be handed to parents and carers to support the governing body and Headteachers in communicating their decision making regarding individual requests for leave of absence for holidays in term time. This is available on www.thegrid.uk

Further information and advice of school attendance including the use of the correct registration codes is available at www.education.gov.uk

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and subsequent amendments in 2010, 2011 and 2013 is available at www.legislation.gov.uk

Further details information and advice on all aspects of school attendance in Hertfordshire is available at www.thegrid.uk school/ administration/pupil welfare/attendance

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Policy for Attendance Improvement Officers working with children whose absence has been authorised

- if the AIO becomes concerned (through checking the attendance register) that a pupil has accumulated significant amounts of authorised absence this will be discussed with the relevant member of school staff
- if it is agreed that there is a concern about the pupil's attendance the school should share this concern with the parents
- if concerns about the pupil's attendance remain, the AIO will consider accepting the case
- AIO will give priority to those cases when the absence has been unauthorised

(Note: if a pupil's absence has been authorised by the school the LA cannot cite that absence as evidence of non-attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.)

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Present at off site educational activity	Approved Education Activity
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Authorised absence
D	Dual registered at another educational establishment	Not expected to attend this session
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Holiday authorised by the school	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
P	Supervised sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational reasons	Authorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Not required to be in school (non-compulsory school age pupils)	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to all pupils (Planned)	Not counted in possible attendances

Detailed advice on the use of these registration codes can be found at

www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance