HEATHCOTE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Date adopted by Governors:	January 2020
Date for policy review:	January 2021
Person responsible for review:	Senior Leadership Team
Signed by Chair of Governors	January 2020

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.
School attendance (Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities) DfE July 2019

Heathcote Primary School expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved.

Overall Aims:
- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure the school attendance target (at least 97%) is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

We use the following procedures to monitor attendance and punctuality issues:

- Ensure quality first teaching every day; with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners' needs.
- Establish good and effective communication links with parents/carers and work collaboratively in meeting the child's needs.
- Record reasons for absence and updating on-line class registers (registers taken twice a day).
- Raise profile of attendance through leaflet to all parents regularly.
- Carry out and record the outcome of first day text/calls, when a child doesn't arrive at school when no reason has been received.
- The School Administrator must establish a reason for every absence. No absence should be left on the system as an 'N' (no reason given) code. If the SA has not been able to contact parents after 2 days then the absence is recorded as 'O' (unauthorised). The police may be informed.
- Monitor weekly attendance data for year groups, sharing this information with all stakeholders ((weekly newsletter).
- Implement a weekly class based school reward system for attendance - Celebration Assembly every week on Friday. Class with the highest attendance receive "Mr Cote The Badger".
- Work with pupils and their families where attendance is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance and working to overcome these.
- Gates are locked promptly at 8.55. Parents arriving later have to sign in the late book in the school office and give a reason. These minutes late are collated on SIMS.
- Contact parents/carers by leaflet following instances of lateness within a 5 day period or is becoming a concern.
- If no improvement after Attendance/Punctuality leaflets then a letter is sent/an appointment is made with a member of SLT to discuss the issue.
- To feed back to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality regularly and at Parents' Evenings and end of year reports.

We will evaluate the success of these strategies by seeing:

- ✓ Patterns and trends in attendance and punctuality have improved
- ✓ Parental response to absence has improved
- ✓ Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies or personal, social health and economic (PSHE) education lessons

Leave of absence during term time:
The headteacher cannot grant any leave of absence in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
At Heathcote Primary we would interpret 'exceptional' in this context as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, outweighing the loss of teaching time. Leave will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday as a norm.

Examples of what might constitute exceptional circumstance include:

- A sibling/parent/grandparent is seriously/terminally ill and the proposed holiday is likely to be the last such holiday
- There has recently been a death or other significant trauma in the family and it is felt that an immediate holiday might help the child concerned deal better with the situation
- The holiday is a unique, never to be repeated, occasion which can only take place at the time requested.
- Attending the wedding of a very close family member.

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

The fact that a holiday is cheaper during term time will not be considered as grounds for granting authorised absence. In all situations, the child's previous attendance record will be carefully considered and for example if the child's average attendance is below 95%, then it is highly unlikely that the Headteacher will authorise any further absence. Furthermore leave of absence will not be granted retrospectively. If you have exceptional circumstances, which have led you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form (see APPENDIX 2), which you can also obtain from the school office. The Head Teacher will then make a decision, on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.

Fines for unauthorised absence
Please note that unauthorised absence may be subject to a penalty notice fine of £60 payable per parent, per child, increasing to £120 each if not paid within 21 days with possible court proceedings if this fine is not paid within 28 days. **However, the Governing Body at Heathcote Primary School do not currently intend to impose fines but reserve the right to fine on a case by case basis where it will be to the benefit of the children.**

Illness:
At Heathcote Primary, whilst we do our utmost to promote school attendance, we are compassionate about illness. We wish to support families when their child is ill and take measures to prevent the spread of illness. Please follow the following link to the Health Protection Agency

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities

This documentation outlines the most common illnesses and gives guidance on how long the child should be absent from school to assist their recovery and/or reduce the chance of spreading the

infection. We appreciate that looking after your child at home may cause real difficulties to working parents, but these guidelines are in the best interests of all children.

Parents:
Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing. If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, stomach aches etc. parents should inform the school and bring them in. If they don't get any better, school will contact parents straight away, to collect them. If pupils' have a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, parents should let the school know. Pupils' should be brought back to school after appointments. **Pupils should miss as little time as possible.**

Parents will be contacted over:

- Non-communication of a reason of absence, or where circumstances conflict with the reason for absence given by the parent/carer
- Frequent short absences, particularly where a pattern emerges; e.g. every Friday
- Persistent lateness.

Therefore, parents are expected to:
- **Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day.**
- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- Not arrange medical and dental appointments in school time wherever possible.
- Telephone to inform the school on the first and each day of absence for their child and provide an explanation of absence.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.

*Legal duties: SCHOOL

Contents of Admission Register

The admission register must contain the 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 (SIMS).

Children at Risk of Missing Education

We inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

• Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);

• Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;

• Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;

 • Have been permanently excluded.

The local authority should be notified in advance of the deletion, when the school becomes aware that the deletion will be made. All schools (including academies) must agree with the relevant local authority, the regular interval that the school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to

attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

Home Educated Children

On receipt of written notification to home educate, schools must inform the pupil's local authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. Schools should not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding the pupil or because the pupil has a poor attendance record. Schools and local authorities should not seek to prevent parents from educating their children outside the school system. There is no requirement for parents to obtain the school or local authority's agreement to educate their child at home. Parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full time education but this does not have to be at a school.

Contents of Attendance Register

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

• Present; (register close at 9.30, pupils arriving between 8.55 – 9.30 will be marked as late)

• Attending an approved educational activity;

• Absent;

• Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school should follow up any absences to:

• Ascertain the reason;

• Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;

• Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,

• Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census (see appendix).

*Legal duties: PARENTS

The Parent of every child of compulsory school age is required to ensure that the child receive a suitable full time education to the child's ability, age , aptitude and any special education needs the child may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Failure of a parent to secure regular attendance of their school registered child of compulsory school age can lead to a penalty notice or prosecution. Local authorities (LAs) and schools have legal responsibilities regarding accurate recording of pupil's attendance.

Advice on School Day and School Year

Setting school term dates and holidays

School employers are required to set the term dates of their school year. Employers are: the local authority in community, voluntary controlled and community special schools and maintained nursery

schools; the governing body in foundation and voluntary aided schools; the academy trust in academies and Free Schools.

School day and school year

The law regulating the school day and school year applies only to schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority. This law does not apply to academies and Free Schools.

School Day

Every school day must have two sessions divided by a break. The length of each session, break and the school day is determined by the school's governing body. The governing body has the power to revise the length of the school day as it sees fit. There is no requirement to consult parents on revisions to the school day but it can assist parents to do so.
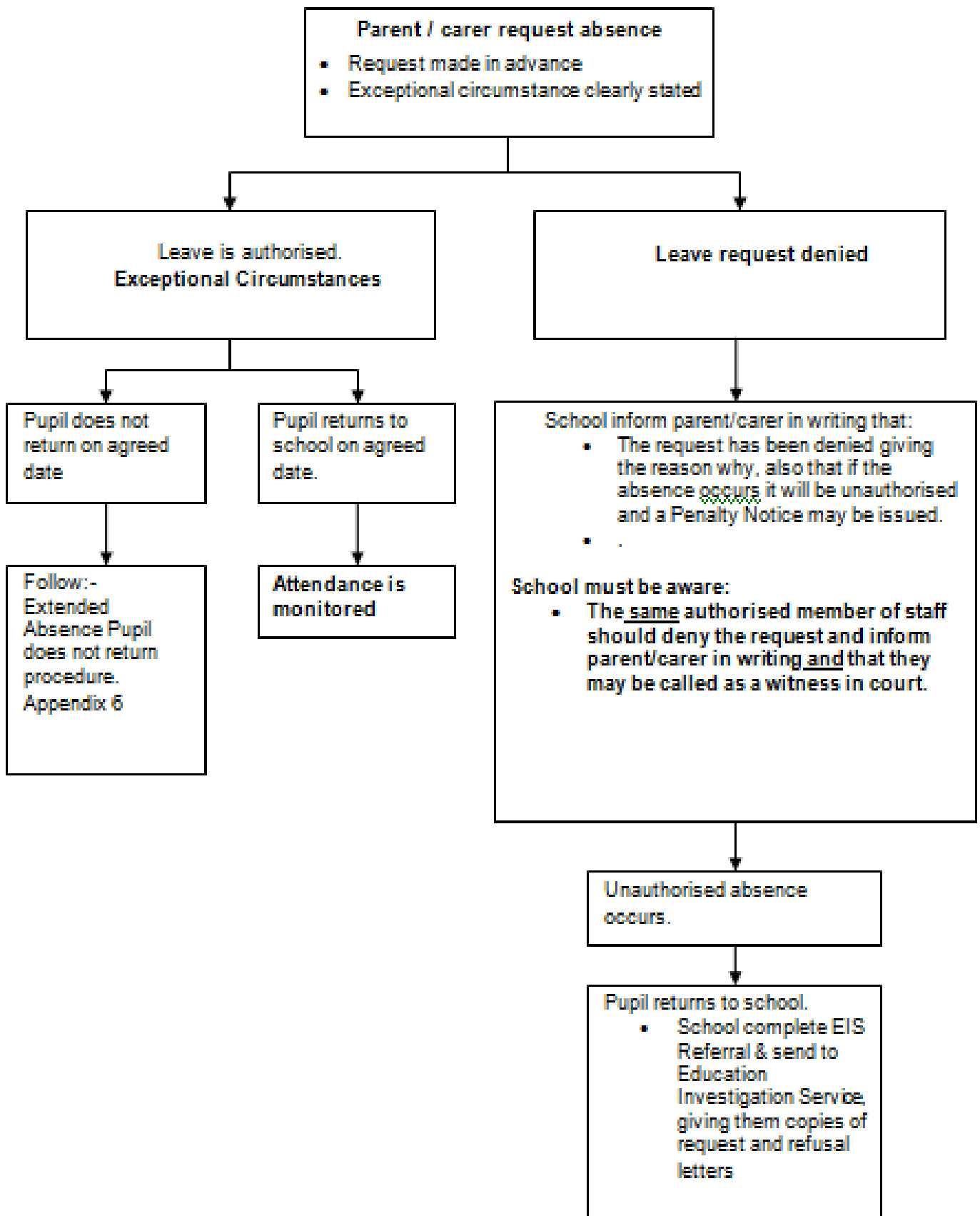
School Year

Schools must meet for at least 380 sessions or 190 days during any school year to educate their pupils. If a school is prevented from meeting for one or more sessions because of an unavoidable event, it should find a practical way of holding extra sessions. If it cannot find a practical way of doing this then it is not required to make up the lost sessions.

Persistent Absence

From September 2015 (start of the 2015/16 academic year) schools will be judged against a persistent absence rate of 10 per cent.

Parent / carer request absence

- Request made in advance
- Exceptional circumstance clearly stated

Leave is authorised.
Exceptional Circumstances

Leave request denied

Pupil does not return on agreed date

Pupil returns to school on agreed date.

Follow:-
Extended Absence Pupil does not return procedure.
Appendix 6

Attendance is monitored

School inform parent/carer in writing that:
- The request has been denied giving the reason why, also that if the absence occurs it will be unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be issued.
- .

School must be aware:
- The <u>same</u> authorised member of staff should deny the request and inform parent/carer in writing <u>and</u> that they may be called as a witness in court.

Unauthorised absence occurs.

Pupil returns to school.
- School complete EIS Referral & send to Education Investigation Service, giving them copies of request and refusal letters

/ \: Present in school

/ = am \ = pm Present in school during registration.

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed (Stratford Primary policy – registers close at 9.30)

A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. 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. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question. Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Authorised Absence from School Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. This code should be used when Traveller families 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 educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative Codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

• The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or

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

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

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register

This code is available to enable 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.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

Different Term Dates for Different Pupils

Schools and local authorities can agree to set different term dates for different year groups – e.g. for 'staggered starts' or 'induction days'. Code # can be used to record the year group(s) that is not due to attend. This is only acceptable where the school ensures that those pupils not attending on that day are still offered a full education over the school year.