



Leigh Academy
Strood

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Attendance Policy

Academic year 2025/26

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Leigh Academy Strood Attendance Policy

At Leigh Academy Strood we believe that high attendance rates are a significant factor in maintaining the quality of education that we provide. If we are to maintain the continuity of education for our students, maximise their potential and prepare them for the world of life and work, we must ensure that absenteeism is kept to an absolute minimum. Leigh Academy Strood works in conjunction and guidance with the Department of Education 'Working together to improve school attendance in order to improve and maintain high levels of attendance'.

What is good attendance?

There is sometimes a perception that an attendance rate of 90% is good. This is because an examination score of 90% means excellence. However, as an attendance rate, 90% is unsatisfactory, it equates to missing 20 days per year. Leigh Academy Strood attendance target is 97% for each student. The table below shows the impact on a students' learning over the course of the academic year if they are not present:

90% attendance = 4 weeks lost

80% attendance = 8 weeks lost

70% attendance = 12 weeks lost

60% attendance = 16 weeks lost

50% attendance = 19.5 weeks lost

40% attendance = 24 weeks lost

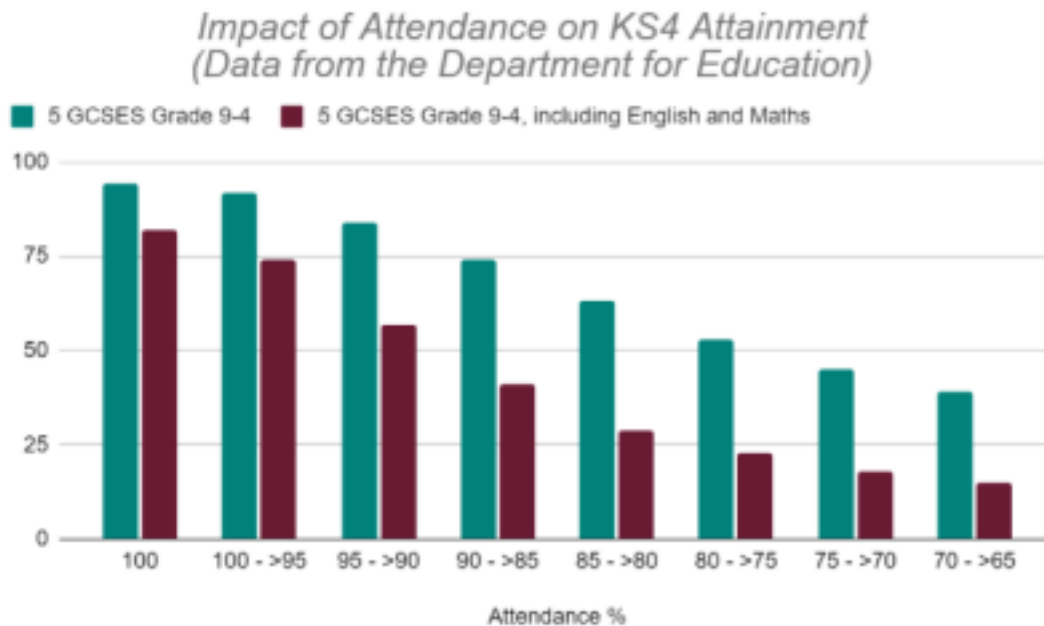
30% attendance = 28 weeks lost

The impact of attendance on attainment

Government research shows students who have less than 90% attendance (20 or more days missed in a year) achieve, on average, a whole grade lower than expected in examinations. The Education Act 1996 states that parents and carers must make sure their children receive an appropriate education by attending academy regularly. If a parent or carer fails to ensure this, they are guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted. Proceedings will take place in a Magistrates Court.

Prosecution is extremely serious and parents or carers will be given the chance to work with the academy and with Medway council's Attendance Advisory Service to School and

Academies (AASSA) in support of their child. Parents and carers must make efforts to improve their child's attendance before prosecution is considered.



Why is having high attendance so important?

- To make new friends and maintain friendship groups.
- To learn and enjoy new experiences.
- To develop skills that you will need in later life.
- To take part in a wide range of activities in and outside of Leigh Academy Strood.
- To learn how to look after themselves and encourage independence.
- To feel safe and listened to.
- To improve their chances of having a good career or life chances.
- To make a positive contribution to Leigh Academy Strood community.
- To learn to establish a habit of punctuality to support students later in life.

How can a parent/guardian/carers support positive attendance?

- Tell your child how important school is and actively promote 100% attendance. Engage with their attendance figure and discuss it around the dinner table.
- Contact the academy whenever your child is absent: on the first day of absence and each day of absence. Contact by calling the absence line directly on tel: 01634 717121 or via email attendance@stroodacademy.org. Failure to do this may trigger a safeguarding referral or a home visit from the academy.
- Praise your child for working hard and attending the academy.
- Provide proof of medical appointments and medical treatment to the academy.
- Organise non-urgent medical appointments where possible outside of academy time.
- Check that your child is organised for school the night before (uniform, PE kit ready, books and bag packed).

- Make sure your child has a good night's sleep and wakes up in good time for the academy day, arriving no later than by 8.30am.
- Take time to talk to your child about what they have done each day at school.
- Talk to someone at the academy if there is a problem or reason why your child finds it difficult to attend regularly.
- Book holidays outside of term time.

The aims and objectives of our academy attendance policy

Aims

1. To provide an academy ethos in which students' attendance is valued as a key component of advancing their educational achievement.
2. To make attendance and punctuality a key priority so that students have the opportunity to make progress and achieve outstanding educational outcomes.
3. To improve the overall attendance percentage of students at the academy and reduce persistent absence.
4. To provide support and guidance to students and parents/carers in matters relating to attendance and punctuality.
5. To provide and regularly review the system of rewards and sanctions.
6. To work closely in an effective partnership with the Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies (AASSA) of the local authority in addressing attendance/punctuality problems.
7. To work in an effective partnership with parents/carers.
8. To provide a 'first day' and 'third day' contact using the ParentMail system and personal telephone calls.
9. To collaborate with College pastoral teams and Attendance Staff.

Objectives

1. The attendance policy objective is to ensure parents/carers and students understand the value and importance of excellent attendance and its direct link with student achievement, progression and opportunities for future learning and employment.
2. To demonstrate the benefits to students of excellent attendance.
3. To demonstrate the link between excellent attendance and success in coursework and examinations.
4. To promote an academy culture/ ethos that celebrates excellent attendance and punctuality.
5. To encourage full participation in Leigh Academy Strood life and ensure that all its students receive a full-time education. Through excellent attendance at the academy, students will be able to maximise their opportunities and be helped to realise their potential. High attendance ensures students are well prepared and supported for their examinations.

Regular attendance at the Academy is a statutory (Education Act 1996) requirement. The register is taken every AM and PM and is designated for attendance reporting. Registers are also taken every period by the subject teacher.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

The Education Act 1996 is extremely clear about absence from an academy. An academy must differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Authorised absence is where the academy has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory academy age to be absent from the academy or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences must be treated as unauthorised. (ref. DFES 0628-2003)

Parents/carers cannot authorise any absence, only the Principal can do this. However parents/carers can provide reasons for absence for the academy to consider.

Parentally-condoned absence can be a problem as it means disruption to a child's education. The academy need not accept a parental explanation for a child's absence whether written, telephoned or given in person.

However all absence, authorised or not, counts against the academy statistics, since the Department for Education publishes in its league tables the total amount of absence an academy/school or incurs. Your child's absence also impacts on their academic and personal development.

The academy's attendance team will closely monitor attendance and punctuality. Ongoing concerns will result in telephone contact/text messages and/or attendance improvement meetings and home visits by the Family Liaison Officer. Should attendance/punctuality not improve, letters from the academy will be sent requesting medical evidence. If this is not received then a referral will be made to the AASSA who then as part of their role could action home visits.

Penalty notices

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) gives the Local Authority and academy the power to issue penalty notices for unauthorised holidays in term time, and for unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions in any 10 week period. (Please note there are 2 sessions in a day AM and PM register).

This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 academy weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 academy weeks can also span different terms or academy years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The **first** penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at **£160** if paid within **28 days**. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A **second** penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of **£160** if paid within **28 days**
- A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Leave of Absence during term time

Parents/carers must not take students out of academy during term time except in exceptional circumstances. Authorisation for leave of absence in term time may only be given by the Principal.

Parents/carers must be aware:

- You can show that the reason for the leave of absence satisfies exceptional circumstances and evidence is required.
- Permission sought after a leave of absence has been taken will not be granted.
- A formal application needs to be made in writing to the Principal prior to the leave of absence and handed in to the academy attendance officer. The Principal will advise their decision in writing. If you are not happy with the decision and feel your request of absence is an exceptional circumstance, you are entitled to appeal through the academy complaint policy which can be found on the Leigh Academy Strood website
- The academy requires evidence for any absence of more than two days, otherwise the entire absence will be unauthorised. Over the counter medication will not be regarded as evidence. This can be in the form of a copy of the prescription or letter from a medical profession etc.
- If a Parent/Carer believes there are valid reasons for a leave of absence that qualify as exceptional circumstances they must write to the Principal in advance including supporting evidence. The Principal will then consider the case.

Illness (physical and mental), medical and dental appointments

As far as possible medical appointments should be made outside academy hours. Medical

appointments can become an authorised absence if evidence is provided. Students should obtain a pass from the Reception before leaving for the appointment. Students should sign back in with the Reception upon their return. Medical appointments do not necessitate a full day of absence unless substantial travel is required. Proof of time and place of appointment may be requested. If medical evidence is not provided by the 3rd day of absence, all absences will be unauthorised. Medical evidence will be requested by the attendance team as proof of absence. Medical evidence may be in the form of appointment card, copy of a prescription note, prescribed medication sticker on packaging, a car parking ticket from a hospital, appointment text message etc. **Please note we are not asking for you to pay for a medical certificate from your Doctors.**

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt and the child has been referred to AASSA, they may in certain circumstances consult the student's GP, once parental consent has been obtained. When a student is sick whilst at the academy, they are to inform a teacher who will if necessary send for the college pastoral manager or first aider to assess them. The first aider may feel it appropriate to contact the parent/carer and discuss their child's illness. **SLT are the only staff members who can approve a student to leave the academy site.** If it is agreed they need to go home they must report to reception and be officially signed out. If Parents/Carers are unable to collect their child and they are of secondary academy age, and have given verbal permission for the student to leave the academy, they will be issued with an exit pass which confirms the student has permission to leave the site. This requires the Parents/Carers to contact the academy as soon as the student arrives home.

Please note students must not contact parents/carers during the academy day requesting collection or permission to leave. All communication between academy and home must be completed through Reception, Attendance staff or through the pastoral teams.

In instance of long term physical and mental illnesses and absences from academy. Pastoral college teams should work closely with the student, parents/carers and any relevant medical professionals to ensure that children with health needs are fully supported at the academy. This might include putting in place a reduced provision (REP), however this is at the discretion of the academy staff.

The academy will operate according to its statutory duties under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 and DfE: Education for children with health needs who cannot attend academy (DfE: Education for children with health needs who cannot attend). The academy will refer to the Local Authority regarding alternative provision where a student cannot attend academy full-time for 15 days or more, consecutive or otherwise, due to a physical or mental health need and cannot access full-time education. Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, an academy may only remove the name of a pupil who is unable to attend academy because of additional health needs from its role in specific circumstances, which include where: the pupil has been certified by a medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend academy, before ceasing to be of compulsory academy age; and neither the pupil nor their parent has indicated to the academy the intention to continue to attend the academy, after ceasing to be of compulsory academy age.

As soon as it is clear that a child will be away from the academy for 20 days or more because

of their health needs (physical and mental), the local authority should arrange suitable alternative provision. The 20 days may be consecutive or over the course of an academic year.

Days of religious observance

This is an absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the student belongs. Parents/carers must give advance notice. This is recorded as an authorised absence.

Interviews with prospective employers/careers guidance/FE provider

The academy asks for advance notice and proof of the appointment, for example a letter of invitation. This absence can be authorised once this has been received.

Suspensions

Leigh Academy Strood aims not to externally suspend students and will always attempt to suspend internally within the relevant College Internal Engagement Room or the Lodge provision.

The Lodge provision has been developed as part of our behaviour management plan as a strategy to avoid the need for external exclusions which are detrimental to the education of our students.

We hope that parents/carers and students will realise that this provision has been put into place to reduce interruptions to learning.

Alternatively students who are placed at an off-site direction (as an alternative to suspension) as part of the academy's behaviour policy. It is an expectation that students arrive at their allocated academy on time and complete the number of days they have been issued. Failure to attend these provisions will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

In situations where suspension is the only option, a student suspended for a fixed term remains on roll and the absence is recorded accordingly.

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure that their child is not present in a public place in academy hours during the first 5 academy days of the suspension. Under the regulations parents/carers may be prosecuted or receive a penalty notice from the local authority if the child is present in a public place on the specified dates without reasonable justification, as these will be recorded as unauthorised.

From the 6th day of a student's suspension until the expiry of their exclusion students will be required to attend another academy provision. Arrangements for this will be made by Leigh Academy Strood.

From this 6th day of exclusion attendance is shown as a 'B' meaning educated off-site. Non attendance at the alternative provision will be unauthorised and if your child does not attend a fixed penalty notice may be issued from the local authority.

Permanent Exclusions

Permanent exclusions are rare but during the period of appeal or review the absence is authorised. A student's name may be removed from the Academy roll on the first

Academy day after the day on which:

- the independent appeal panel upholds the permanent exclusion
- the independent appeal panel does not uphold the permanent exclusion, but does not direct the student's reinstatement
- the prescribed period for lodging an appeal has expired and the parent has not lodged an appeal
- the parent/carer has, before the expiry of the prescribed period, advised the Academy Clerk to the Governors in writing that he/she does not intend to appeal.

Lateness to the Academy

All students are required to be punctual to the academy and should arrive no later than 8.30am in preparation for morning line up. Punctuality to academy is a legal requirement and regular punctuality checks will be undertaken. Students regularly arriving to academy late may incur appropriate sanctions, including an academy same day detention. Repeat offenders may also be placed onto a punctuality report in which their punctuality will be monitored either daily or per lesson by a member of the pastoral staff.

Morning

Students must arrive at the academy in preparation for line up at 8.30am, in which the AM register is taken. Students arriving after 8.30am will report to the 'late gate' and be given a 30 minute detention which is to be sat that day. An automatic text message is sent home to parents of students who receive late detentions before 2.30pm. The students will be escorted to the Internal Engagement Room where they will remain during lesson one and attend their lessons from lesson two onwards.

Registers will close at 9am and students arriving between 8.30am and 9am will receive a late mark (L code). If a child arrives after 9am then the same procedure will apply, however their attendance will be recorded as "U" unauthorised absence.

Afternoon

For the PM session students will register in lessons in the afternoon and registration will close at 12.30pm. Students who arrive late to lessons will be coded as L mark and will receive a 30 minute detention to be sat on that day.

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored and individuals causing concern will be supported by the attendance and college pastoral teams. Further issues will be reported to the AASSA.

The final occasion when students can be given a 30 minute late detention (to be sat that day) is if they are late to lesson six. Late marks to lesson six generate a detention to be set and a text message to be sent before 2.30pm.

Truancy

Registers are taken by the subject teacher every lesson. If your child is identified as being absent due to truanting the teacher will raise an on call truancy alert. At this point the pastoral team will try to locate the child. If the child cannot be located within a reasonable timeframe then the academy will contact parents/carers for their support in locating them as this becomes a safeguarding concern. Appropriate sanctions will be set by the academy to

those students who decide to truant.

Rewards and Incentives

- Students with 100% attendance and 100% termly attendance will be eligible for weekly and termly awards including certificates, sweets, privilege cards and gift vouchers.
- Awards will also be given to celebrate excellent/improved attendance or punctuality.
- Rewards and incentives are regularly reviewed and may be changed.

Pregnancy

In cases where a student is pregnant the student should be advised that the Principal will need to be informed. If the academy finds out a student is pregnant, the academy should arrange a meeting with the student and her parents/carers in order to set up a Risk Assessment and to discuss how her educational needs are to be met.

If a female student is absent with a pregnancy related illness, this will require a medical note. Absence from the academy due to a student being pregnant is at the discretion of the Principal. If health allows, the student should return to the academy with minimum interruption. Absence for ante-natal classes and if the baby is ill, should be classified as 'authorised'.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to secure education of their children of compulsory age either by regular Academy attendance or otherwise. Parents/carers of teenage parents are obliged therefore to ensure their child attends the provision arranged by the academy.

Removing a Student from the Academy Roll

If parents/carers transfer their child to another academy or academy, they should advise the Attendance Advisory Officer and the relevant Head of College, as a matter of priority, providing all necessary details, including any new address (if relevant) and the academy or Academy the child is transferring to.

When in the process of an academy transfer the child must continue to attend Leigh Academy Strood until a start date has been agreed with the new school/academy. This may take place in the Lodge provision. If the academy does not receive this information and it is evident the child has left Medway, he or she becomes a 'Child Missing Education' (CME). Any child in this category is reported to the Child Missing Education Officer at the Local Authority, who will follow up the matter under safeguarding legislation and ensure the pupil is on roll within another Local Authority or abroad.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

If parents or carers take the decision to educate a child at home, they must tell the Academy of this in writing – this letter or email should be addressed to the Principal and include the date of decision to home educate and a brief explanation of the reasons for EHE. The academy will offer a meeting (with the Principal and Head of College) to attempt to resolve any issues first, but should a letter be received they will advise the Elective Home Education Officer of the Local Authority who will make contact with parents or carers. They will only be removed from roll once the LA has confirmed receipt of the required letter. If an EHE request letter or email is not received, the student remains on the academy roll and action may be

undertaken following irregular or non-academy attendance procedures, again this could lead to prosecution or an instant fine under the Anti – Social Behaviour Act 2003 and under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Failing to attend

Where a pupil has failed to attend the academy within 10 academy days, immediately following an authorised leave of absence, and there are no reasonable grounds for the pupil not to attend, the academy and Local Authority will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the pupil is, and if unable to establish the pupil's whereabouts we will remove from roll. (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

Where a pupil has failed to attend the academy for 20 academy days or more and absence is unauthorised, and there are no reasonable grounds for the pupil not to attend, the academy and Local Authority will make reasonable enquiries to ascertain where the pupil is, and if unable to establish the pupil's whereabouts we will remove from roll. (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

Roles and Responsibilities

The Assistant Principal (attendance)

- Implementing the academy's attendance policy.
- Ensuring that the policy is notified to all staff and complied with at all levels.
- Ensuring that the policy is made available to all staff appointees and to parents/carers who request to read it.
- Ensuring that the policy is regularly reviewed and, where necessary, revised.
- Authorising termly attendance reports to the DfE.
- Leading strategies to improve attendance and punctuality placing increased importance on early intervention to avoid a pupil becoming a persistent absentee.
- Responsible for regularly liaising with the academy attendance officers.
- Providing documentation regarding attendance and punctuality as required by the Principal/ Governors and the LA.
- Responsible for rewards and sanctions for attendance and punctuality across the academy.

The Attendance Officer

- Day to day management of the attendance office.
- Communicating with parents/carers in the event of unauthorised absence.
- Communicating with academy staff to promote improved attendance.
- Meeting weekly with ASSAA, keeping a record of the meetings.
- Producing weekly and termly attendance figures as required.
- Producing attendance and punctuality data for the leadership team and the Governing Body.
- Reporting regularly to the Assistant Principal (Attendance).
- Keeping data updated on a daily basis.
- Carrying out first day calling.
- Carry out/Refer 3rd day home visits with the Family Liaison Officer if no communication from parents/carers is received.

Form Tutors

- Ensuring that they report any attendance and punctuality concerns promptly.
- Identifying and celebrating excellent attendance of any designated students.
- Checking and monitoring the attendance register/reports of their mentees and following through contacts with families.
- Ensuring that their form group is aware of the contents of the attendance policy.
- Taking appropriate action within current guidelines to counteract any form of lateness.

Teachers

- Taking an accurate register within 10 minutes of the lesson starting.
- Notifying any attendance and punctuality concerns to the attendance office immediately via phone or email.
- Taking appropriate action within current guidelines to counteract lateness to class e.g. detentions, phoning home etc.
- Celebrating excellent attendance in lessons by issuing reward points.

All Staff

- Supporting and implementing the attendance policy

Attendance Trust Officer

- To oversee and support the whole academy attendance.

Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies (AASSA)

AASSA has the right to consider taking legal action or the issue of a penalty notice against parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to academy on a regular basis. Penalty notices are issued by the Local Authority to each parent/carers of the child in line with the Medway Code of Practice.

The AASSA works closely with the Academy and may convene home visits, send court warning letters and hold Pre Panel Proceeding meetings to which parents/carers and students are invited, in the event of attendance concerns. The AASSA may enforce the 1996 Education Act to S4441/1A instigate legal proceedings if required.

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for ratifying and reviewing the Academy attendance policy and for regularly monitoring attendance and punctuality data. They are in full support of the Academies systems and routines in enforcing high expectations in relation to attendance.

Attendance Codes

Code	Attending the academy
/ \	/ AM present \ PM present
L	Late before 9am (when AM registers close)
U	Late arriving after 9am (when registers close- unauthorised)
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
Code	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
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
C	: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Code	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
Code	Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause
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
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Code	Absent - unauthorised absence
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
Code	Administrative codes
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure