

Maximising School Attendance Bulletin

Full re-opening - 8th March 2021 Update

Following the announcement on the 22nd February 2021 from Boris Johnson advising all schools will be fully re-open on the 8th March 2021, we have developed this bulletin to support you with the return to school on this date.

Please remember to check [ESI](#) for supporting forms and documents you may find useful.

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Attendance Update

From the 8th March 2021, attendance becomes mandatory again for all pupils. Due to time constraints and with a great amount of information available, this bulletin has been designed to provide you with the salient points in relation to attendance, giving you the information you need to hand so you are able to communicate effectively with your school communities and crucially to reduce your workload where possible.

Updated Risk Assessment and Action Plans

The COVID Risk Assessment and Action Plan template for schools has been updated to reflect changes for the full opening on March the 8th 2021, and can be found [here](#), with changes in blue. The risk assessment also states your updated risk assessment should be published on your schools website for parents to be able to access.

Attendance has been added as a theme and asks schools to consider:

1. Their approach to promoting and supporting attendance for all-pupils including those who may be anxious
2. Their approach to support parents where rates of persistent absence were high before closure

Attendance Mandatory again

- Mandatory attendance means that it is a parents legal duty to send their compulsory school age child/ren to school regularly
- The ability to apply for sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with Essex's code of conduct will be reinstated from this date
- For secondary school age children, pupils will be offered asymptomatic testing on site
- Those who consent to testing are able to return to face-to-face, in-school education following their first negative test result
- For those **not** undergoing testing, they should attend school in line with your schools phased return arrangements
- Those children who have continued to attend school physically during lockdown, should continue to attend school throughout, **unless** they receive a positive test result

Attendance Mandatory again continued...

- Testing is voluntary, but strongly encouraged
- Reducing occupancy in schools is **not** required and therefore rotas should not be planned, instead, everyone must follow the system of controls as outlined in your risk assessment
- Pupils confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable are to shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice. They are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally
- For pupils deemed clinically extremely vulnerable, you can request from parents a copy of the child's shielding letter to confirm
- You are only required to provide remote education to pupils who are unable to attend school because they are complying with government guidance or legislation around coronavirus
- You should keep a record of this activity, but do not need to record it in the attendance register
- Where pupils are not able to attend school, as they are following clinical or public health advice related to coronavirus (COVID-19), the absence will not be penalised

Recording Attendance

- The DFE has launched new guidance detailing a **new set of 'sub-codes'**. The guidance can be found here: [Recording non-attendance related to coronavirus \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk), and our team have done a condensed, user friendly version as a separate document to accompany this bulletin so schools are able to print separately should they wish. The DFE advise the new set of sub-codes "*have been introduced into management information systems (MIS) to help you:*"
 - *extract attendance data to complete the daily educational settings status form*
 - *consistently record non-attendance related to coronavirus (COVID-19)*
 - *monitor non-attendance related to coronavirus (COVID-19) for your own purposes*

If you have an existing system for recording and monitoring non-attendance related to coronavirus you can continue to use this if you wish. The use of these sub-codes is not compulsory. For more information about how to use code X, see the [recording attendance in relation to coronavirus \(COVID-19\) attendance addendum](#)."

This information can be found here: [How to complete the educational setting status form - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

- As usual, you are responsible for recording attendance, following up absence and reporting children missing education to the local authority
- Attendance should be recorded in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended) for all pupils
- During the week commencing 8 March, schools should use **code Y** for **secondary** pupils not expected to be attending school for lessons during this week **due to the asymptomatic testing** programme

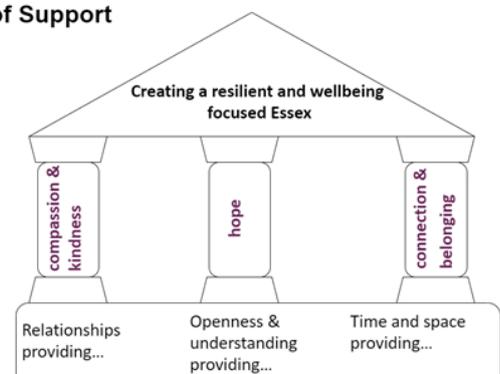
Pupils and Families anxious about attending

- Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable should still attend school or college. Information for parents is available from the [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#)
- Discuss any concerns with parents and provide reassurance on the measures you are putting in place to reduce any risks; share with them your schools updated risk assessment
- Communicate clearly, consistently and regularly the expectations around school attendance to families
- Remind parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies

Encouraging Attendance

- Schools should endeavour to understand individual parents/pupils concerns and reassure them, making reasonable adjustments prior to seeking legal intervention
- Remember the three pillars of Trauma Perceptive Practice: Compassion and Kindness, Hope, Connection and Belonging. Embody these in every action you take and interaction you have; intervene sooner rather than later
- Support families who need additional help to secure pupils' regular attendance, using the additional catch-up funding, existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and pupil premium funding
- Build respectful relationships with pupils and their families in order to secure their trust and encourage engagement and improved attendance
- Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school
- Consider previous attendance, what were the issues and were they satisfactorily addressed
- Take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence
- Use attendance, pastoral and SEND staff who are skilled in supporting pupils and their families to identify and overcome barriers to attendance
- Create action plans in partnership with families. Seek support and work with other professionals, for example, children's social care and early help services. Action plans should details plans to remove barriers, provide additional support and set targets. Action plans / targets could include: lunchtime arrangements, transport, wake up routines or emotional wellbeing
- Provide a safe space at school for pupils to regulate emotions

Pillars of Support



- Identify tailored intervention which meets the needs of the pupil, for example: lesson resources, buddy support, mentors, one to one input, pastoral support etc. to help build confidence and bridge gaps to aid re-engagement
- Meet with pupils to discuss absence, looking for patterns and barriers to attendance. Review the progress and impact of the support regularly, updating and discussing this with the family
- Consider targeted support for small groups of pupils

Being Strategic

- Commission or deliver interventions to improve attendance
- Monitor the impact of any intervention, making adjustments if necessary and using findings to inform future strategy
- Where interventions fail to address attendance issues, identify the reasons why and, where appropriate, change or adjust the intervention
- Follow local authority codes of conduct, policies and procedures and make referrals for statutory intervention when school-based interventions have not resulted in improved attendance and relevant triggers / thresholds are met
- Monitor whole school data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns, attendance of particular groups and the impact of interventions

Key Documents

- [Schools Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Operational Guidance \(February 2021\)](#)
- [Improving School Attendance Advice for Schools and Local Authorities](#)
- [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19](#)
- [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#)
- [How to complete the educational setting status form - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Team contacts

North East Team (incl. Clacton, Colchester, Harwich)
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**Please note new email addresses for the attendance team in your area.
When calling, if there is no answer, please email with a request for a call back.*