



The Spire Church of England Learning Trust

Attendance Policy

Contents

Statement: Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children
1. Introduction
2. Why Regular Attendance is so Important
3. Understanding Types of Absence
4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)
5. Absence Procedures
6. Lateness
7. Holidays in Term Time
8. Summary
Appendix 1: The importance of good attendance.
Appendix 2: Strategies used to improve attendance/punctuality. (Recorded on Provision map)
Appendix 3: Process Flow Diagram
Covid-19 Addendum (Applicable September 2020-August 2021)

Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

Section 175/157 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on schools to make arrangements for its pupils and states that:

“proprietors/governors of independent schools (which include Academies and Free schools) must make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.”

Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government January 2019) requires all schools to follow the procedure for protecting children from abuse. This Attendance Policy was written with reference to Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2020) which defines safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding children is consequently more than contributing to the protection of individual children and the school is committed to the development of policy and practice that supports children, and their families to be safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, contribute positively and achieve economic wellbeing.

The Spire Educational Trust strives to promote the welfare of our pupils by:

1. Creating and maintaining a safe learning environment
2. Identifying child welfare concerns and taking appropriate action
3. Using the curriculum to enable our children to develop keep safe strategies
4. Operating safe recruitment and selection procedures to prevent unsuitable people working with our children.

It also states that “Governing bodies and proprietors should put in place appropriate safeguarding responses to children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation, and to help prevent the risk of them going missing in future.”

This policy also follows the DfE [School attendance parental responsibility measures: statutory guidance](#) which states that “Local authorities and all schools have legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address poor attendance and behaviour in school. In addition to using these powers, local authorities and schools can develop other practices to improve attendance. Local authorities, police constables, school governing bodies, school head teachers (and staff authorised by the head) and teachers-in-charge of pupil referral units are required by law to have regard to the relevant parts of this guidance when carrying out their functions in relation to parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices. This means that while the guidance does not have the force of law, there is an expectation that it will be followed unless there is good reason to depart from it.”

The school policies including this attendance policy are designed to meet these needs and are available on request or via the school website. This policy applies mostly to points 1 and 3 above and reflects current legislation, accepted best practice and complies with government guidance.

1. Introduction

For your child to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

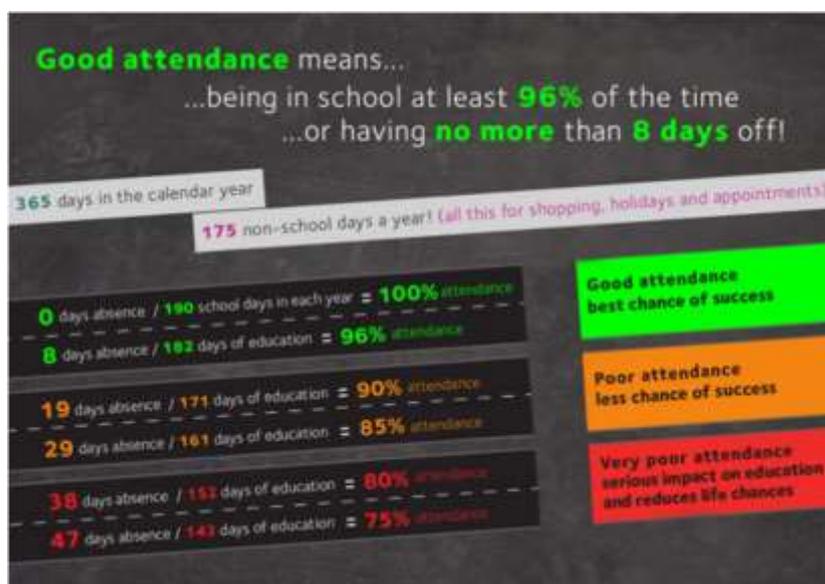
It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

For the purpose of this policy the definition of a parent is:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; or,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

2. Why Regular Attendance is so Important

Learning: Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. (See appendix 1)



Absence disrupts the education of the individual pupil and the whole class. Children who do not attend regularly:

- do not achieve well
- find it difficult to maintain friendships
- are more likely to become involved in crime
- miss out on opportunities in further education and the world of work

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child is paramount. Therefore, failing to attend school on a regular basis may be considered a safeguarding concern.

3. Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school must legally be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

It is recognised that any child may be off school, provided school has been notified, because they are ill. However, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for other reasons. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. Instead contact should be made initially with the form tutor or school office. (see the school's [Early Help offer](#) and [Behaviour for Learning and Positive Relationships Policy](#) as these outline how school can support.)

4. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

For every day of school missed by a pupil it will reduce their attendance by 0.5%.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are offered support from our Social Inclusion and support Manager with a view to tackling any barriers to good attendance.

Q When is **90%** NOT considered to be a positive outcome?

A When it is linked to **attendance**

- ▶ **90%** attendance = **1/2 day** missed every week!
- ▶ **1 school year** at 90% attendance = **4 weeks** of learning missed!
- ▶ Over **5 years** of school = **1/2 school year** missed!

Poor attendance = less chance of success

Good attendance means...

BEING IN SCHOOL At least **96%** of the time Best chance of success

5. Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Telephone the school office (selecting option 1) or message (via ParentMail) **by 9:20am** on the first day of absence.
- Unless the date of return is known, please update the school office on a daily basis.
- Send a note to explain the reason for absence on return to school

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone, text or send a message via ParentMail on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Conduct a welfare visit* to the home if we cannot make contact with you. Parent Mail and Epraise are our Primary contact methods. It is the Parent's duty to notify school immediately of any change in contact details or address and ensure that we have more than one person that we can contact on our system. (Anyone with Parental Responsibility should be on our contact list unless documentation, such as a court order, has been seen by school.)
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with your child's Form Tutor and/or Pastoral Leaders if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Pastoral Team if attendance continues to cause concerns.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the form tutor, or most appropriate staff, in resolving any problems together (E-praise is the preferred way to make initial contact.) This is nearly always successful. It relies upon a positive relationship between school and the parent. If difficulties cannot be sorted out, or there is a lack of engagement in the supportive processes and procedures offered by school and unauthorised absences persist, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer who may issue sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school.

** 2 members of the pastoral team visiting the home to ensure that the child is 'safe and well'*

6. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

Did you know that being 15 minutes late each day is the same as missing two weeks of school over the year. Lateness is just as serious as non-attendance and could also lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice. The start of the school day is an important time for children to develop their social skills with their peers, as well as preparing them for their learning.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:50 am and we expect your child to be on school premises at that time.

If your child arrives after 8:50 am, they will receive a late mark on the electronic signing in system.

At 9.15am the registers will be closed. In accordance with Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a late mark on the electronic system that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of staff to resolve the problem but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

7. Holidays in Term Time

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Government regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purpose of a term time holiday. **Headteachers are not allowed** to grant any leave of absence during term time for holidays **unless there are exceptional circumstances**.

In **exceptional circumstances**, pupils may be granted leave of absence during term time for **not more than one week (5 school days) in any calendar year**. If you wish to make an application for a planned absence **please obtain a form from reception**. The form should be completed and forwarded to the school **not less than six weeks before** the planned absence is due to begin.

Where the application for planned absence has been submitted within the timeframe, all carers with 'Parental Responsibility' will be notified in writing of the decision.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

8. Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Appendix 1: The importance of good attendance.

Attendance during one school year	Equals this number of days absent in year	Which is approximately this many weeks	Which means this many lessons missed	Action
100%	0 days	0 weeks	0 lessons	Rewards. If attendance is greater than 96% and punctuality is 100% in a given week, 10 house points automatically awarded.
96%-99%	No more than 8 days	Up to 1 ½ Weeks	No more than 37 lessons	
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons	Attendance Officer Identification and prioritisation. Form Tutor/HOY Monitor and appropriate supportive actions – Improvement needed
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons	Attendance Officer Identification Intervention needed, if not in place already. (Signs Of Success process started if downward trend identified below 95%)
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons	Next steps dependent on improvement, situation and engagement. Could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice or Court Prosecutions
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons	

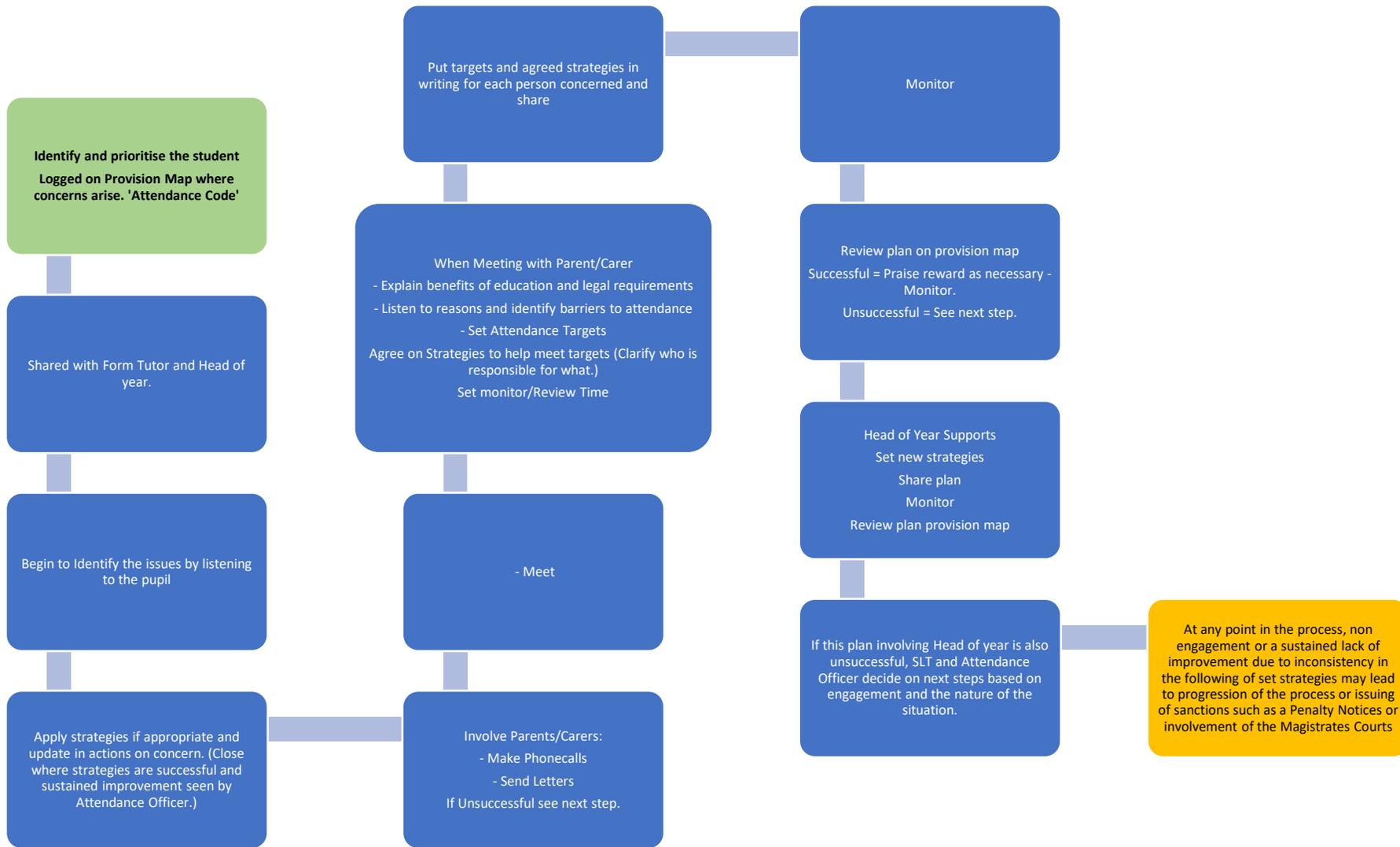
NB – Although percentages monitored, sudden changes in attendance or patterns are raised as an attendance concern to allow early intervention.

Appendix 2: Strategies used to improve attendance/punctuality. (Recorded on Provision map)

This is not an exhaustive list but outline some examples of what strategies/provisions may be considered.

Strategy/Provision – Office/SLT	Strategy/Provision – Form Tutor/Head of Year
Targeted First Day Response	Customised Reward/Privilege
Reminder that parents must notify of absence by specified time	Highlight benefits of good attendance to child (See Child friendly policy)
Letters home	Ensure parents are on, and can use e-praise for attendance.
Remind of the Attendance policy (parents)	Ensure pupil is on, and can use e-praise for attendance.
Highlight benefits of good attendance to parents	Ask parents to bring pupil to a designated person by a set time each day.
Remind of Legal responsibility regarding attendance	Safe Place
Letter from Attendance Officer to outline concerns and explain how to support.	Self-regulation/time out card
Request GP certificate/letter from parent	Buddy (Peer)
Contact School Health Nurse	Assign special responsibility/task suited to the pupil
Extra-Curricular Activities /Breakfast Club	Signs of Success Plan
Involving Parents (Attendance Meeting)	Incentives
Starting Well Partnership (Parenting Support)	Attendance Charts
Referral to other agencies (See Early Help Offer)	Motional Assessment and Pastoral support Plan put in place.
Write to GP	On Attendance Report
Attendance Improvement plan	Assistance to catch-up with work
Welfare checks	Positive Reporting
Refer to Child Missing Education Team (CME)	Link person/mentor
Modification of Curriculum/Timetable	
Staged Reintegration	
Change of Tutor Group	

Appendix 3: Process Flow Diagram. (This process is linked closely to that followed in the Behaviour For Learning and Positive Relationships Policy as well as the Early Help Statement.)



This flow diagram is for use with each student whose attendance is causing concern. It suggests a process of action which may lead to an improvement in attendance. Intervention is likely to start with form tutors and progress as appropriate.

Covid-19 attendance addendum September 2020 to August 2021

Attendance expectations

From the start of the autumn term 2020 pupil attendance is mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

New for 2020 to 2021 – not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

To make sure schools record this accurately and consistently, we have made changes to the regulations governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'.

This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for **following official public health advice** for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

Examples in which 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' could apply

- 1. Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19.)** Further detail can be found [here](#).
Pupils who have symptoms should self-isolate and get a test.

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I – illness, as would usually be the case. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.

If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test.

If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result when the pupil can return to school.

If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms. Code X should be used during this period.

In all cases of self-isolation, schools should ask **parents to inform them immediately** about the outcome of a test. Schools should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

2. Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) Further detail can be found [here](#) and on the [NHS test and trace](#) site.

Pupils may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).

The NHS test and trace guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 14 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious. Code X should be used for these pupils during this period.

3. Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine

For further information view Government guidance on [how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK](#).

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, code X should be used in the register.

4. Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only

View [guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable persons from Covid-19](#) for further detail.

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period where rates remain high. Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school. Non-attendance **in accordance with guidance from Public Health England or the Department for Health and Social Care** should be recorded as code X.

Schools should contact parents of pupils who are shielding when measures in the local area are lifted and shielding is paused again, to set out the expectation that they can return to school. **Code X should not be used for sessions after the pupil has been advised to return to school.**

5. Local lockdown

If rates of the disease rise locally, schools may need to prevent some pupils from attending. Schools should follow Public Health England or the Department for Health and Social Care guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of local lockdown. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X - should be used for pupils **who are asked not to attend.**

Remote education

If a pupil is not attending school **due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)**, schools should be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with this activity.

Data collection

Collection of school attendance data as part of the school census will resume in January 2021, collecting data for the autumn term 2020. Subject to the necessary legislation being made, from January 2021, the census will collect attendance codes in addition to absence codes.

Further information will follow on what, if any, additional attendance data will be required during the 2020 to 2021 academic year to monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and support the government's planning.