

# The SENAD Group

## Section 7 Attendance Policy

**Updated for Covid-19 guidance @ 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020**

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## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

There is a strong correlation between attendance and progression for students. Periods of absence disrupts the rhythm of learning and prolonged patterns of absence or lateness for lessons can result in significant under achievement and diminished life chances in adulthood.

To improve the life chances of young people in our schools, SENAD will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Accordingly SENAD expects:

- Parents<sup>1</sup> to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age<sup>2</sup> who are registered at school attend regularly;
- Attendance targets will typically be set at 95% unless there is a structured attendance plan to the contrary; and
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

Given this expectation, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is profound. During the pandemic, the **attendance Y code** is used for any student who is not able to access education due to:

1. School being closed due to PHE/PHW direction
2. Student being directed to medically shield at home (then use **I**)
3. National direction not to travel
4. Local PHE direction not to travel
5. Student not accessing education due to a family member shielding

Parent's choosing not to access education due to COVID-19 concerns will need to be either an authorised absence based on risk assessment, or an unauthorised absence if Local Authority and the School agree the student should be in but the parent says no and declines to follow the agreed risk assessment. This second position is expected to be 'unusual' as a risk assessment for non-attendance can normally be agreed.

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<sup>1</sup> Parents includes Corporate Parents, namely Registered Managers of SENAD's children's homes

<sup>2</sup> Compulsory school age is 16, year 11. Legislation therefore focuses on **ages 5-16** attendance. Young people are expected to be in some form of education or training until 18.

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, penalty notices are not being issued to parents of children of statutory schooling age.

## **Framework for student attendance**

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Departments for Education in England and Wales. The legislation is set out in the following regulations:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013

The legislation outlines the seriousness of the offence if a young person does not attend regularly and its penalties that may be levied by the young person's Local Authority<sup>3</sup>. It also indicates the range of possible recordings of the different types of reasons for non-attendance.

Each school within the SENAD Group of Schools has developed its own approach to managing attendance but this policy provides the framework for their approaches.

## **Government policy**

It is an English Government priority<sup>4</sup> that children of compulsory school age and who are registered at school attend school regularly. School absence should be reduced to a minimum. This is because there is clear evidence that any absence from school can and does impact on children's education attainment. This position is supported by the Welsh Government too.

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<sup>3</sup> Only a Local Authority may prosecute a parent for student non-attendance. SENAD schools are obligated to provide information to the Local Authorities on student attendance.

<sup>4</sup> <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/49640>

The law places a duty on parents of every school-registered child of compulsory school age (5-16) to secure their regular attendance at school. The courts have interpreted regular attendance to mean a pupil attending school every day it is open for education. Failure of a parent to ensure their child attends school regularly may constitute an offence, which can lead to a parent being fined or prosecuted.

In England, the previous law on leave of absence allowed schools to authorise up to ten days leave for the purpose of family holiday in special circumstances if a parent applied in advance. This was interpreted by some schools and parents to mean that parents had an entitlement to take their children on an annual two week family holiday during term time. This was a misconception; the law was not intended to create any perception of an entitlement. The Government has now changed the law<sup>5</sup> to remove any ambiguity.

**In English Schools,** Head teachers will still have the power to authorise leave of absence but only in exceptional circumstances<sup>6</sup>. If a head teacher grants leave, it will be for them to determine the length of time the child can be away from school. There are 190 days in a school year and enough opportunities during school breaks for parents to plan their holidays. Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

**In Welsh Schools,** the Head Teacher may grant up to 10 days holiday but this must be exceptional and neither a norm, nor an expectation from parents/carers/guardians. Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

Parents must seek permission to withdraw their child for a holiday from the Head Teacher before they take the holiday.

### **Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register**

Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register may be held in electronic form

### **Coronavirus: Covid-19**

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<sup>5</sup> From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013

<sup>6</sup> Exceptional circumstances does not mean annual holidays or birthdays in additional DfE guidance notes

A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020.

Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. There is no evidence that children are more affected than other age groups – very few cases have been reported in children.

If a confirmed case occurs in an educational setting the local Health Protection Team will provide the school with advice and will work with the head teacher, principal and or management team of that setting.

- if they become unwell with cough, fever or shortness of breath or loss of smell/taste they will be asked to self-isolate and should seek medical advice;
- if they are unwell at any time within the 14 days of contact and they are tested and are positive for COVID-19 they will become a confirmed case and will be treated as such.

The absence codes that would be used are as follows:

<b>Reason for absence</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Mark</b>
<b>Authorised absence marks</b>		
Pupil told to self-isolate by Health Protection Team (HPT) awaiting COVID-19 results	Illness	<b>I</b>
Pupil has got Covid-19 and absent	Illness	<b>I</b>
School closed as part of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic	School closure	<b>Y</b>
Student educated off site due to medical issues (e.g. a family member with a COVID-19 vulnerable condition) <b>Programme of distance learning is robust</b>	Off-site educational activity (approved)	<b>B</b>
Pupil removed from school due to particular health reasons that makes them high risk vulnerable to Covid-19 (typically medically directed)	Illness	<b>I</b>
<b>Unauthorised absence marks</b>		
Parent withdraws child without direction to self-isolate or without the child having an underlying vulnerable medical condition to make withdrawal prudent or a risk assessment agreed with school/local authority and parent	Unauthorised absence	<b>O</b>

## **Code Y is more fully explained as follows:**

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

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/818204/School\\_attendance\\_July\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818204/School_attendance_July_2019.pdf)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>

## **General Principles**

Each school is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

They work hard to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Medical/dental/sight appointments will be booked outside of the school day wherever possible by parents and Corporate Parents

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. All schools will work consistently towards a goal of **100% attendance for all children**. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

It is likely that in schools with relatively small numbers of pupils those targets will be differentiated to meet the ongoing needs of individual students. This may be the most valid response where the outcomes for a single student can skew whole school outcomes. The school will, however, also look at whole school issues within that context.

We will review attendance against the benchmarks as follows:

- **95% expectation** (bench mark – secondary<sup>7</sup>)
- **90% floor** (the persistent level of absenteeism which requires intervention)
- **Sub 90%** requiring a specific attendance management plan

## **English Schools**

All young people in English Schools, irrespective of their home Local Authority are expected to attend 100%. Head Teachers will not grant leave of absence in term time as a principle, unless the circumstances are exceptional. A family holiday or a child's birthday is typically not seen as being exceptional by the DfE, although it is up to SENAD and the Head Teacher to determine on a case-by-case basis.

Permission is determined by the young person's historical attendance, rate of progress and ability to catch up any missed work.

## **Aran Hall – Wales**

All young people at Aran Hall, irrespective of their home Local Authority are expected to attend 100%. The Principal will typically not grant leave of absence in term time as a principle, unless the circumstances are exceptional. Permission is determined by the young person's historical attendance, rate of progress and ability to catch up any missed work

## **Children Missing From Education: Links with PREVENT**

There is statutory duty on all Local Authorities in England and Wales to have systems and procedures in place to monitor Children Missing in Education. This now links into the anti-radicalisation duty under PREVENT (see SENAD policy 506.8).

The duty applies in relation to children/young people of compulsory school age who are not receiving a suitable education. (It does not apply to children registered at a school who are not attending regularly).

Children and young people may fall out of education by:

- Failing to start appropriate provision and never entering the system
- Ceasing to attend due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal
- Failing to complete a transition after moving to a new local authority

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term-2016>

Examples of those most at risk are:

- Young offenders
- Those with homeless parents or parents living in refuges
- Young people in public care
- Young people who are privately fostered
- Those who have been permanently excluded
- Those at risk of radicalisation (**see policy 506.8**)

Each local authority has a named contact for Children Missing from Education. We are aware of our responsibility to contact the named person in relation to any child / young person who fall into this category for whatever reason. **The golden rule in safeguarding needs to be followed:**

***"if in doubt tell someone"***

This is set out in policies <b>506A (adults)</b> and <b>506C.1*** (children)</b>
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### **Attendance registers<sup>8</sup>**

SENAD schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. **Attendance data will be periodically shared with a student's placing Local Authority.** On each occasion over the 380 sessions in a year for KS1 to KS4 (post 16 may have fewer sessions), schools must record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent;
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- 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 paper or electronic register, or management information system which is used to support information for the School Census.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>



To aid analysis for our placing Authorities, SENAD will use the national attendance codes as follows:

<b>Attendance Marks</b>	
/ \	AM and PM attendance
L	Late before register closed <sup>9</sup>
B	Off-site educational activity (approved)
J	Interview with prospective employer, school, college, HE provider
P	Approved supervised sporting activity
V	Education visit or trip
W	Work experience
<b>Authorised Absence Marks</b>	
C	Leave of absence authorised by Head Teacher
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
H	Holiday authorised by the Head Teacher
I	Illness (not medical check-ups)
M	Medical or dental appointments <sup>10</sup>
R	Religious observance (for designated groups)
S	Study leave for Year 11/12/13 pupils
T	Gypsy, Roma, Traveller absence
Y	School closure – snow/Health & Safety/failure of day-pupil taxi Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic issues
<b>Unauthorised Absence Marks</b>	
G	Holiday not authorised by Head Teacher prior to being taken
O	Unauthorised absence for session
U	Arrived into school after registration (L code) has closed

### **School days and academic holiday periods**

Each SENAD school will set its own academic term dates and we teach 190 days a year which is 380 sessions. Each school will determine its school day/week to best meet the needs of the school's community.

Typically the Head Teacher will plan to align holiday periods with those of neighbouring Local Authorities as far as possible<sup>11</sup>. Normally, SENAD schools aim for a shorted summer holiday given our young people's SEN needs making the long break problematic.

<sup>9</sup> Session will *typically* close 45 minutes after registration has started for the session

<sup>10</sup> The expectation is that they should be booked **outside** of school day where possible

<sup>11</sup> Where there is a misalignment, this is not an exceptional reason for a parent to not send their child to school. Children not present will be marked as unauthorised absence, in line with DfE and WAG guidance.

## **Part-Time timetables for students of a compulsory age<sup>12</sup> (5-16)**

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

In agreeing to a part-time timetable a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence under code C or code I (illness).

## **Study Leave for students of a compulsory age (5-16)**

Study leave is typically not granted by default once tuition of the exam syllabus is complete; study leave should only ever be granted to pupils in year 11. If schools do decide to grant study leave, provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

All pupils are different and have different requirements and preferences when preparing for examinations. Some schools do seek alternatives to study leave as they recognise that some pupils do not have the skills, or are not inclined, to make the best use of unsupervised and unstructured revision time. However, many schools also recognise that study leave is a chance for pupils to develop their independent study which will help them when they move to post-16 provision, where a self-study approach is commonly used.

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<sup>12</sup> Key Stages 1 to 4 inclusive