



ANNEX TO ATTENDANCE POLICY – COVID-19 2020/21

During the reopening period it is vitally important that parents/carers following the guidance set out by the school in respect of illness and absence. Please refer to Reopening Guidance for Schools 13.8.20 below.

Section 7 - Pupil Attendance

Pupil Attendance

- We will follow the guidance on attendance for pupils who have health conditions and those who live with people with health conditions or are pregnant. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the school and inform them of any medical needs /shielding and seek advice from their medical consultants to ensure it is safe to return to school.

Schools should follow latest guidance on attendance for children and young people who have health conditions, who live with people with health conditions or who are pregnant.

- Pupils who are clinically vulnerable are those with pre-existing conditions who have been advised to stringently follow the social distancing guidelines and should learn from home where possible. A small minority of pupils will fall into this category. **Parents should contact the school to discuss.**
- Pupils who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, can attend their education or childcare setting. **No risk assessment necessary.**
- Pupils who were previously shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people). These restrictions eased over time and as of 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Pupils should follow the guidance of their hospital consultant or General Practitioner (GP) if in doubt and **should have an individual risk assessment** conducted.
- Pupils living with someone who was previously shielding. These restrictions eased over time and as if 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Such pupils **should have an individual risk assessment** conducted.

Pupils Who Are Clinically Vulnerable

- All schools should follow the latest guidance on attendance for children and young people who have health conditions or who live with individuals who have health conditions or are pregnant. Current guidance on these categories is published on NI Direct and by PHA here. If in doubt, specific advice should be sought from a Hospital Consultant or GP.
- In light of the Minister’s statement 6th August, clarifying “that having taken account of the scientific and medical evidence, it is now appropriate for all pupils to return to school during the week commencing 31 August” we would consider attendance to be mandatory.
- There will be a small number of children where medical guidance would be to refrain from school. The school should satisfy themselves, through evidence provided by the family that the pupil is shielding due to underlying medical conditions. If evidence is not received then an unauthorised absence should be recorded.

Pupils Who Live with Someone Who is Clinically Vulnerable

- If a child or young person lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable as above), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting. If in doubt, advice should be sought from the Hospital Consultant or GP of the clinically vulnerable person.

Pupils Who Were Shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people)

- Advice with regard to shielding eased over time and as of 1 August 2020 ‘shielding’ has been paused. Pupil should follow the guidance of their hospital consultant or GP if in doubt about school attendance.
- When planning for the return of pupils, education settings should consider the distance learning and support the needs of any pupils who are unable to return to school either all or some of the time.
- The most up-to-date guidance and list of underlying health conditions that necessitate shielding should be checked on the NI Direct website under the shielding section.

Pupils Who Are Living with Someone Who Was Shielding

- Pupils who have household members who were considered clinically extremely vulnerable (at high risk of severe illness and requiring 'shielding'). These restrictions eased over time and from 1 August 2020 ‘shielding’ has been paused. Such children should have an individual **risk assessment conducted before the most appropriate place of care is determined.**

Pupil Who Develop Symptoms on Site

- If a pupil develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school follow the procedures set out in the flow chart in appendix 1.
- Enhanced cleaning should be carried out within any classroom in which an individual who has developed COVID-19 has been to minimise risk of the spread of the virus. This should be clearly communicated to staff, parents and pupils to provide assurance that the environment is safe.
- It is essential that all staff follow this guidance, as by doing so staff will not only protect themselves but limit the spread of the virus to educational settings and the wider population.

Recording Attendance

- Specific guidance in respect of pupil attendance whether at school or at home will be issued separately see Circular DE2020/08 on the DE website.
- Decisions regarding the recording of pupil attendance will be down to schools and the individual circumstances of each child. It may be possible for some children to continue to learn from home due to being clinically vulnerable if they are able to provide evidence of an underlying medical condition as well as learning at home. If evidence cannot be provided in terms of either the specific medical condition or that learning is not being completed then school should record attendance as an unauthorised absence (Codes D, H or N) where appropriate.
- We would suggest that registration of pupils working from home would happen once a day (rather than twice a day) for example provided that work was being completed as required. We appreciate that for some schools, this may be very challenging therefore schools may have to rely on a combination of their professional judgement and pupil's work on whether or not pupils have engaged with learning at home.