

Subject:**Pupil Attendance: Absence Recording by Schools****Circular Number:
2010/07****Date of 2nd Issue:
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- Principals and Boards of Governors of all primary and post-primary grant-aided schools;
- Education and Library Boards;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Governing Bodies Association;
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education; and
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

Summary of Contents:

This Circular advises schools of changes to the C2k Attendance Module pupils' absence codes which are being introduced from the beginning of the 2010/11 school year. A revised version of the booklet 'Absence Codes: Guidance for Schools' is attached at Appendix A.

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Governor Awareness:

Essential

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INTRODUCTION

1. This Circular advises schools of the changes to the pupils' absence codes within the C2k Attendance Module which will come in to operation from the beginning of the 2010/11 school year and re-states current practice on other aspects of absence recording. Details of the codes and how they should be used are set out in the booklet 'Absence Codes: Guidance for schools' at Appendix A.
2. The changes follow from a review by the Department of the information collected about pupils' absences and the coding system used to record these in the C2k Attendance Module. This review has identified a need to clarify when existing codes should be used and to create new codes so more detailed information can be obtained.
3. This circular replaces DE Circular 2006/14 'School Attendance: Absence Recording by Schools' and should be used in conjunction with Circular 2010/08 'Guidance on the Enrolment Status of Pupils, including those subject to SEN Referrals, using Dual Registration'.
4. The purpose of this circular is to provide information on the absence codes which the Department requires schools to use for the purposes of the collection of statistical data on the reasons for pupil absences. Schools can use their own discretion regarding how data on absences should be used for the purposes of their own records in determining how they will recognise or reward good attendance.

CODING CHANGES

5. The main changes are as follows:
 - **Code A** – New Code for 'Artistic Endeavour'
 - **Code D** – New Code for 'No reason provided for absence' (after 5 school days have passed following return to school)
 - **Code E** (Educated off site) is no longer operational and has been fractured into a series of new numerical codes, which provide detail on where a pupil is receiving education during that period. Those codes are as follows:
 - **Code 1** - Alternative Education Provision (organised by the ELB)
 - **Code 2** - Home/hospital tuition (organised by the ELB)
 - **Code 3** - Elective Home Education– this is a temporary code. It should be used to cover the period of absence between the notification by parent(s) of the decision to elect for home education of their child and the Principal issuing the certificate of attendance (Form SA1) to parents.

- **Code 4** - Pupil Referral Unit
 - **Code 5** - Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework - EF)
 - **Code 6** - Training Organisation (under Entitlement Framework - EF)
 - **Code 7** - FE College (under Entitlement - EF)
 - **Code 8** - Intensive Support Learning Unit (Groomsport or Glenmona)
 - **Code 9** – Placement in Beechcroft Regional Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

 - **Code N** is retained for use as a temporary code only. If the pupil has returned to school and, after 5 school days no reason has been provided for the absence, the absence should be moved to the new code D.

 - **Code T** (Traveller Absence) is no longer operational. The absence of pupils regardless of ethnicity should be coded in the same way.
6. There are also a few additional minor changes to the statistical meaning of some existing codes.
7. Specific information about each individual code is set out in the Guidance, including examples of reasons for absence covered by each code to assist schools and ensure consistency.

RETENTION OF RECORDS

8. All schools must continue to hold copies of pupil attendance records and pupil registration records for not less than ten years from the date on which the register ceased to be used. This can be in the form of a printed version of the data held on the system or alternatively the documentation can be retained on disc. Paper copies of such information may be required for purposes of verification, for example audit of pupil numbers.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGES

9. Attendance/absence of pupils should be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon registration sessions.
10. The codes contained in the attached guidance should be used to record pupils' attendance and absence with effect from the beginning of the 2010/11 school year.

REMOVAL OF PUPILS' NAMES FROM THE REGISTER

11. A pupil's name may be removed from a school's register only in the following circumstances:

	Reason for Removal	Date of Removal
i.	Confirmation that pupil is registered at another school in Northern Ireland	Day following last attendance
ii.	Departure from Northern Ireland	Day following last attendance
iii.	Expulsion	Day following expulsion
iv.	Death	Day following death
v.	Leaves school after having completed his/her compulsory education	Day following last attendance
vi.	Parent advises that child is being removed under Regulation 6(2) of The Registration and Attendance of Pupils Regulations (NI) 1974 [No. 78], for example elective home education.	Day following last attendance

APPENDIX A

ABSENCE CODES
GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

September 2010

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ABSENCE CODES: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	STATISTICAL MEANING	PAGE
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C	Suspended	Authorised Absence	4
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M	Medical/Dental Appointments	Authorised Absence	11
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REGISTRATION CODE: / \

Brief Description	Present / = (AM) \ = (PM)
Statistical Meaning	Present
Physical Meaning	In for whole session
DE Definition	Present at registration.

Additional useful information:

If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration he/she would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

For health and safety reasons, schools need to be aware of the whereabouts of all pupils, particularly those leaving or arriving on the premises during a session.

REGISTRATION CODE: A

Brief Description	Artistic Endeavour
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Attending an event which relates to a pupil's artistic endeavour which has not been organised through the school.

Additional useful information:

This code may be used when a pupil is absent from school to pursue an artistic endeavour which has not been organised by the school as part of normal school activities.

Examples would include attending an audition; participating in a performance or recording; competing in a speech festival, sitting a music exam; attending an award ceremony; involvement in visual arts events etc.

Where a pupil is absent because they are taking part in a public performance, it is the school which decides whether to authorise the absence, even if the pupil is being employed under a licence issued by an Education and Library Board.

REGISTRATION CODE: B

Brief Description	Bereavement
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Death of close relative.

Additional useful information:

Death of close relative - father, mother, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, nephew, niece, or other relative who is a member of the household.

REGISTRATION CODE: C

Brief Description	Suspended
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A pupil who is suspended for a fixed period remains on the school register. The absence should be treated as authorised as it results from decisions made by the school.

REGISTRATION CODE: D

Brief Description	No reason provided for absence
Statistical Meaning	Unauthorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	No reason for absence has been provided 5 school days following the pupil's return to school.

Additional useful information:

Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence from school. However, after a period of 5 school days following the pupils' return to school, if it has not been possible to obtain a reason, the absence should be coded using Code D.

During the absence and in the initial 5 school day period after the pupils' return, Code N (no reason yet provided for absence) may be used as a temporary code.

Code D should only be recorded on a pupil's attendance record in exceptional cases, such as when the absence has occurred at the end of the school year.

REGISTRATION CODE: F

Brief Description	Family Holiday (agreed)
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Only in very exceptional circumstances should family holidays be considered as authorised.

Additional useful information:

The majority of family holidays taken during term time should be categorised as unauthorised absence (Code G).

However, in very exceptional circumstances schools may authorise a family holiday during term time. Such circumstances may include:

- A family holiday judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.

In very exceptional circumstances, absence may be authorised using Code F.

A family holiday classified under the 'authorised absence' (Code F) should **not** include such reasons as:

- The availability of cheap holidays
- The availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced during school holidays
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or end of term.

Where a school's prior agreement is not sought and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorised (Code G). If parents keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is recorded as unauthorised (Code G).

REGISTRATION CODE: G

Brief Description	Family Holiday (NOT agreed)
Statistical Meaning	Unauthorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Parents should not normally take pupils on holidays in term time.

Additional useful information:

The majority of family holidays taken during term time should be categorised as unauthorised absence (Code G). A family holiday classified under the 'unauthorised absence' category would be for such reasons as:

- The availability of cheap holidays
- The availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced during school holidays
- Holidays that overlap the beginning or end of term.

Where a school's prior agreement is not sought and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorised (Code G).

If parents keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is recorded as unauthorised (Code G).

However, it is acceptable under very exceptional circumstances for schools to authorise a family holiday during term time. Such circumstances may include:

- A family holiday judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.

In very exceptional circumstances, absence can be authorised using Code F.

REGISTRATION CODE: H

Brief Description	Other Absence
Statistical Meaning	Unauthorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Other absence not covered by any other code.

Additional useful information:

Other absences which are not covered by any other code where the reason is not acceptable to school.

Examples:

- Un-notified illness or false allegation of illness
- Pupil's/parent's/sibling's birthday
- Shopping
- Having hair cut
- Couldn't get up.

Please note that unexplained absences should be recorded under code N (initially) and then Code D (see pages 5 and 12).

REGISTRATION CODE: I

Brief Description	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	This code is to be used when parents phone to say that their child is ill or when parents send a letter after the period of illness to explain the child's absence.

Additional useful information:

Parents should be advised to notify the school as soon as possible when a child is ill.

If a pupil is present for registration but returns home because of illness, no absence need be recorded for that session. Schools should keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to school in case of an emergency.

Schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support absence on the grounds of illness. While schools can request medical evidence to support absence on the grounds of illness, they are advised not to request medical certificates unnecessarily (particularly retrospective certificates), especially if the illness was not treated by a doctor at the time.

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can record the absence as other absence (Code H) but should advise parents of its intention.

A pupil receiving medical treatment on site should be marked 'present'.

Absence at registration due to a medical, dental or hospital appointment should be recorded using Code M.

REGISTRATION CODE: L

Brief Description	Late (before registration closed)
Statistical Meaning	Present
Physical Meaning	Late for session
DE Definition	<p>Schools should actively discourage late arrival. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open.</p> <p>In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.</p>

REGISTRATION CODE: M

Brief Description	Medical/Dental appointments
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is authorised absence. Parents and pupils should be encouraged to make appointments out of school hours.

Additional useful information:

Medical appointments include:

- Attendance at a GP's surgery
- Attendance at a dentist's surgery
- Hospital appointments (not a stay in hospital, for which Code I should be used).

If a pupil is present for registration but has a medical appointment later, no absence need be recorded for that session. For Health and Safety reasons or in case of emergency, a system must be in place to record that a pupil has either arrived at school or left the premises during the session.

Sight of an appointment card is advisable if a pupil has irregular attendance.

Code M can be used for part session, ie, AM or PM.

A pupil receiving medical treatment on site or arranged by school should be marked 'present'.

REGISTRATION CODE: N

Brief Description	No reason yet provided for absence
Statistical Meaning	Unauthorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	No reason yet provided for absence – temporary code which can only be used during the absence and in the initial 5 school day period following the pupils' return to school.

Additional useful information:

This code should be used to cover an unexplained absence and will be used until the pupil returns. After 5 school days following the pupil's return to school, if no explanation for the absence has been provided, the code should be changed to D.

REGISTRATION CODE: O

Brief Description	Other exceptional circumstances
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Special occasions at the discretion of the school or an exceptional event outside control of pupil.

Additional useful information: (These examples are illustrative and not meant to be exhaustive)

Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking the following into account:

- The nature of the event
- Its frequency (is it a one-off, or likely to become a regular occurrence?)
- Did the parent give advance notice?
- The pupil's overall attendance pattern.

Examples might include occasions such as attending the wedding of an immediate family member, making a court appearance or travelling for cultural reasons.

Young Carers

- In a genuine crisis, a school can approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made.

Birth of a Child

- Support should be directed to keeping the pupil in school wherever possible, and to return her to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth.
- Further information about School Age Mothers can be obtained at www.deni.gov.uk/departments_of_education_statement_on_school_age_mothers-4.doc.

Other examples where Code O may be appropriate would include exceptional events preventing attendance which are outside the pupil's control, for example:

- Failure of Board Transport
- Pupil unable to travel due to heavy snow.

Where an exceptional event such as snow or flooding has forced the whole school to close and declare an exceptional closure day, Code Y should be used to record the absence of all pupils.

REGISTRATION CODE: P

Brief Description	Approved sporting activity
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	The pupil is participating in or attending an approved sporting activity.

Additional useful information:

Participation as an amateur in school-organised sport or as a representative at country, provincial or international level.

The statistical meaning Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

REGISTRATION CODE: R

Brief Description	Religious observance
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent(s)/carers belong, including religious festivals. Parent(s)/carers should be encouraged to give advance notice.

REGISTRATION CODE: S

Brief Description	Study leave
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Study leave should be applied only to certain public examination candidates during the examination period as agreed by the school.

Additional useful information:

The statistical meaning Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

REGISTRATION CODE: U

Brief Description	Late (after registration closed)
Statistical Meaning	Unauthorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Late for session
DE Definition	Schools should actively discourage late arrival. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.

Additional useful information:

This code should be used when a pupil has arrived after the close of registration with no relevant reason to code it otherwise. For example, if a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) because they couldn't find their shoes/their school uniform was drying in the tumble dryer/their younger sibling was playing up etc, the code U should be used.

If a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) due to a doctor or dentist appointment, the code M would be used.

For Health and Safety reasons, schools need to be aware of where pupils are, particularly those leaving or arriving on the premises during a session. This might be achieved through a paper system in the school office to record that a pupil has arrived on the school premises during the session.

REGISTRATION CODE: V

Brief Description	Educational Visit
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	School-organised trips and visits, including residential trips. Can also be used for other trips of a strictly educational nature, which are arranged by other organisations, provided they are supervised.

Additional useful information:

Code V can also be used for academic interview. The school should be satisfied that the interview is linked to future education.

The statistical meaning Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

REGISTRATION CODE: W

Brief Description	Work experience
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Schools must ensure that they check on the attendance of the pupil at the work experience placement and mark the register accordingly.

Additional useful information:

Work experience should be arranged by or in conjunction with the school.

Only supervised work experience can be counted as Approved Educational Activity.

Code W can also be used for a job interview. The school should be satisfied that the interview is linked to job prospects.

The statistical meaning Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

REGISTRATION CODE: X

Brief Description	Only staff should attend
Statistical Meaning	Attendance not required
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	Days on which teachers are in school however there is no requirement for pupils to attend, for example, staff training/INSET/school development days.

Additional useful information:

Code X can be used for part session, ie, AM or PM.

REGISTRATION CODE: Y

Brief Description	Exceptional closure
Statistical Meaning	Attendance not required
Physical Meaning	Not required to be in school
DE Definition	The Department will consider an application for a reduction in the days on which a school is in operation to take account of specific exceptional circumstances where the closing of the school is outside the control of the school authorities.

Additional useful information:

Examples of specific exceptional closures are:

- The death of a teacher or pupil at the school
- Flooding or burst pipes at the school
- Electricity failure
- Damage to school
- Severe weather conditions eg, heavy snowfall
- School being used as a polling station for parliamentary/local government elections.

Code Y can only be used if the whole school is closed.

Schools must have applied in writing and been granted permission to take an exceptional closure day/s by the Department's Curriculum Support Team before using this code - Circular 2005/08 refers and can be accessed at http://www.deni.gov.uk/79_circular_2005-08_school_closures.pdf.

REGISTRATION CODE: *

Brief Description	Not on roll
Statistical Meaning	Attendance not required
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	None

Additional useful information:

If a pupil joins or leaves a school during the academic year then the system will generate the * code for dates when the pupil was not on roll.

Note: This is a system code and cannot be selected by the user.

REGISTRATION CODE:

Brief Description	Holiday for all
Statistical Meaning	Attendance not required
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	School vacations where pupils and staff are not required to attend.

Additional useful information:

Examples are:

- Between terms
- Half terms
- Occasional days when the whole school (including staff) are on holiday
- Weekends.

The following should **not** come under Code #:

- Teacher INSET days (use Code X)
- Exceptional closures e.g. use of schools as polling stations (use Code Y).

REGISTRATION CODE: !

Brief Description	No Attendance Required
Statistical Meaning	Attendance not required
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	None

Additional useful information:

Code ! should specifically be used for part-time nursery units where attendance may not be required in either the morning or afternoon session.

REGISTRATION CODE: 1

Brief Description	Alternative Education Provision (organised by the ELB)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A registered pupil who is attending an Alternative Education Provision (AEP) setting by approval of the Education and Library Board (ELB).

Additional useful information:

Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

AEP is for pupils at Key Stage 4 only. A pupil's placement in AEP must be arranged through the relevant Education and Library Board.

REGISTRATION CODE: 2

Brief Description	Home/hospital tuition (organised by the ELB)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site by receiving education at home or in hospital under arrangements approved by the Board.

Additional useful information:

Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

Tuition received whilst a pupil is an in-patient in a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) facility should be coded using code 9.

REGISTRATION CODE: 3

Brief Description	Elective Home Education
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A registered pupil whose parents/carers have elected to educate at home and have advised the school or ELB of the position.

Additional useful information:

Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes. This code should be used from the date a parent advises the Principal that they have decided to educate their child at home until the Principal provides a certificate of attendance (Form S.A.1) to the parent, which states the reason for removal as “elective home education”. When Form S.A.1 is issued, the pupil can be removed from the General register and there will no longer be a requirement to record their attendance.

REGISTRATION CODE: 4

Brief Description	Pupil Referral Unit
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at a Pupil Referral Unit as organised and approved by the Education and Library Board (ELB).

Additional useful information:

Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

REGISTRATION CODE: 5

Brief Description	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework - EF)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at another mainstream school (under the EF).

Additional useful information:

The pupil may be attending days or sessions at other post primary schools for selected courses through arrangements made under the Entitlement Framework.

Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

REGISTRATION CODE: 6

Brief Description	Training Organisation (under Entitlement Framework - EF)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at another training organisation (under EF).

Additional useful information:

Pupils attending days or sessions at a training organisation through arrangements made under the Entitlement Framework.

Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

REGISTRATION CODE: 7

Brief Description	Further Education (FE) College (under Entitlement Framework - EF)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at a FE College (under EF).

Additional useful information:

Pupils attending days or sessions at a FE College under the arrangements of the Entitlement Framework.

Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

REGISTRATION CODE: 8

Brief Description	Intensive Support Learning Unit
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at an Intensive Support Learning Unit (ISLU).

Additional useful information:

Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

This code should be used for pupils who are being educated in Groomsport ISLU or in Glenmona.

REGISTRATION CODE: 9

Brief Description	CAMHS
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DE Definition	A registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site whilst an in-patient at a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) facility.

Additional useful information:

Approved Educational Activity will count as present for statistical purposes.

This code should be used for pupils who have been placed in Beechcroft Regional Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).