

## Addendum to the Attendance Policy of Beckfoot Trust schools

Version 5.1 1 March 2021

### Context

On 22 February, the UK government announced that all pupils in England should return to school from 8 March 2021. Secondary school pupils will be offered Covid-19 testing on their return to school.

We are committed to complete reopening of our schools in line with the Government's intention, based on sound medical and scientific evidence that it is safe to do so. We want our children back in school so that we can support them more effectively from an academic, social and welfare perspective.

This addendum supports our school's attendance policy in clearly outlining the processes that will be followed in recording attendance, in line with the Government's guidance, as well as ensuring school attendance is maximised for all. In many ways, this addendum is a reiteration of the policy in place during the autumn term 2020; however, there are some differences.

This addendum applies from 8 March 2021 for Trust schools. It will be in operation until further notice.

*There may again be circumstances where it is necessary for the school to close to some or all groups of pupils, i.e. where we are instructed to close by the DfE in the event of a localised Coronavirus outbreak. In the event of this, the provisions of this addendum will be suspended in part or whole for the duration of the school closure and will be guided the government's [contingency framework](#). In all circumstances, and in all settings, priority should continue to be given to vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers to attend full time.*

### Our Guiding Principles

1. We will follow Government guidance on the full reopening of our school; we have undertaken rigorous risk assessments to ensure that it is safe to do so for our pupils and staff.
2. Attendance in school is mandatory and the usual rules apply:
  - a. parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil;
  - b. schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence;
  - c. the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.
3. We will follow the Trust Attendance policy, national and local government guidance on supporting attendance and reducing absence.
4. We will follow the Government's guidance in recording and reporting on attendance as our school reopens its doors to all pupils; see [here](#) for further details.

### **Links to relevant Government guidance and legislation**

[Operational guidance for schools](#) (applies from 8 March 2021)

[Additional operational guidance for school schools](#)

[Attendance guidance for schools, including DfE Covid-19 addendum](#)

[Improving attendance: guidance for schools and local authorities](#)

**Testing in secondary schools in w/c 8 March**

During the week commencing 8 March, pupils will be offered asymptomatic testing on site in secondary schools. Pupils who consent to testing should return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result. Pupils not undergoing testing should attend school in line with your phased return arrangements. **Vulnerable children and children of critical workers in secondary schools should continue to attend school throughout, unless they receive a positive test result. Testing is voluntary, but strongly encouraged.**

**Recording pupil attendance on the school’s attendance register**

From the date the school opens to all pupils, schools will resume recording pupil attendance on registers in accordance with DfE Attendance guidance, the Covid-19 addendum and local protocols outlined in the Trust Attendance policy. We work closely with BMDC to ensure that Trust schools follow local protocols in supporting the full opening of our schools and maximising attendance.

**Testing in secondary schools in w/c 8 March**

During the week commencing 8 March secondary school pupils will be offered asymptomatic testing on site. **Schools should use code Y for secondary pupils not expected to be attending during the testing period and use normal attendance codes for pupils who are attending.**

Schools will continue to use code X if a child is shielding, self-isolating or quarantining because of coronavirus in accordance with relevant legislation or guidance published by PHE or the DHSC.

We have identified a number of scenarios that may impact on pupil attendance in the short term, the majority of which are also identified in the Government guidance. Schools will have strategies in place to support pupils and families in returning to school as soon as possible, high quality remote learning plans that ensure those pupils who cannot attend do not fall further behind, and plans to robustly deal with continued poor or non-attendance. In these circumstances, it is incumbent on schools to follow all avenues available to them, up to and including legal ones.

Schools should use the attendance subcodes facility in SIMS to confirm which category or categories the pupil’s absence falls into, where (a) the X code is used, and (b) where the I code is used for Covid-19 related reasons.

I01	I02					
Illness	Illness - Confirmed case COVID-19.					
X01	X02	X03	X04	X05	X06	X07
non-compulsory school age	Self-isolating - COVID-19 symptoms	Self-isolating - COVID-19 contact inside school	Self-isolating - COVID-19 contact outside school	Quarantine - self-isolating	Shielding as advised	Government advice not to attend

**Self-isolation and shielding**

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because they:

1. Are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable.
2. Have symptoms or have had a positive test result.

3. Live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact.
4. Are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19).
5. Have to quarantine after a period of time outside of the UK.

### **Clinically Extremely Vulnerable pupils**

We know from growing evidence that many children identified at the start of the pandemic as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are not at increased risk of serious outcomes from coronavirus (COVID-19) and children are gradually being removed from the shielding patient list (SPL) as appropriate, following review with a clinician. The advice for pupils who have been confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable is 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. All 16- to 18-year-olds with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality will be offered a vaccine in priority group 6 of the vaccination programme. At present, these children should continue to shield, and self-isolate if they have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a positive case, even if they have been vaccinated.

You will be able to request from parents a copy of the shielding letter sent to CEV children, to confirm that they are advised not to attend school or other educational settings whilst shielding guidance is in place.

As normal, you should not encourage parents to request unnecessary medical evidence such as doctors' notes from their GP when their child is absent from school due to illness. This is already set out in school attendance guidance but is especially important in the context of the pandemic and the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme. If evidence is required, it can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, text or email confirmation of appointments, etc. rather than a doctors' note. As usual, input from GPs should only be sought where there are complex health needs or persistent absence issues.

**Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from PHE or the DHSC should be recorded as code X.**

### **Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

**Pupils who have [symptoms](#) of Covid-19 should self-isolate and get a test.** Parents should not send their child to school if they exhibit symptoms; schools will follow agreed protocols where a pupil exhibits Covid-19 symptoms whilst at school. **Use the X code during this time.** Parents should inform school immediately of the outcome of the test; however, schools must not request evidence before the pupil returns to school.

If the test is negative, the pupil can return to school if they are well enough.

If the test is positive, the pupil should self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of symptoms. **Use the I code in the register.** Following the 10 day period, pupils can return to school if their only remaining symptoms are a cough and/or anosmia (loss of taste and/or smell); if they are experiencing other symptoms they may need to be absent for longer. This should be reviewed on a case by case basis, supported by the pupil's GP and the Trust Clinical Lead Practitioner.

**If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test.** As above, parents should not send their child to

school if someone in the household exhibits symptoms and parents should inform school as soon as possible if this happens during the school day. **Use X code during this time.**

If the household member's test is negative, the pupil can return to school.

If the household member's test is positive, the pupil should continue to self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms. **Use the X code during this time.**

### **Non Covid-19 related illness**

Where a Covid-19 test result is negative but the child is too ill to attend school, **use the code I** as normal. For instances of illness with no suspicion of Covid-19 the provisions of the school's Attendance Policy applies.

Medical appointments at GP surgeries, hospitals, etc., should be recorded as **code M** as normal.

### **Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

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 10 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 10 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.**

### **Remote Education**

You are required to provide remote education to pupils who are unable to attend school because they are complying with government guidance or legislation around coronavirus (COVID-19), in the circumstances provided for in the Remote Education Temporary Continuity Direction. You should keep a record of this activity but do not need to record it in the attendance register.

You should offer pastoral support to pupils who are:

- self-isolating
- shielding
- vulnerable

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.

Where pupils have to remain at home in one of the scenarios outlined above and they are well enough to learn, it is important that access to appropriate curriculum materials is available and engagement is monitored by the school. This may be delivered online (virtual learning) or using paper materials. Parents or carers must support pupils' learning at home and this can form part of a home school agreement.

### **Elective Home Education**

Schools must be clear that parents cannot opt into remote learning and that the expectation is that all pupils attend school full time, unless exempt for one of the reasons above. If parents express any interest in Elective Home Education (EHE), they should be informed that they will not receive support from school or from the LA, and that they will lose their school place.

Further guidance from BMDC can be found [here](#) regarding EHE. Schools will notify the LA<sup>1</sup> where EHE has been discussed; further information regarding schools' responsibilities can be found [here](#). Pupils with SEND who attend a special school cannot be removed from a school's roll and educated at home without permission from the Local Authority; schools should contact the BMDC SEND team in this eventuality.

Where schools require specialist support in engaging with pupils and their families, including managing concerns around returning to school, they can make a referral to the Trust's Clinical Lead Practitioner should they need to do so.

### **Term time holidays and pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine**

Trust schools do not authorise holidays during term time. For a small number of families, holidays arranged for the Easter, half term or summer holidays have been postponed to later in the year. Evidence of this rearrangement should be collected from parents. In these circumstances, schools will not seek to remove pupils from the school register should the 20 days absence threshold be reached. Any additional/unexplained absence following a holiday for which evidence has been provided will be treated as unauthorised and will count towards the 20-day threshold and, where applicable, will trigger the referral process for Children Missing from Education. For the holiday absence itself, schools should use code G (unauthorised holiday). If a quarantine period applies following the holiday, the onus is on parents to make arrangements for remote learning at home and as part of the home school agreement. **Use the X code in the attendance register.**

Holidays originally arranged in term time and postponed to the 2020/21 academic year will be treated as unauthorised absence and the normal provisions of the Trust Attendance policy will apply, i.e. the school could remove a pupil from the register if absent for 20 days or more and/or school will follow the Local Code of Conduct, up to and including requesting a Penalty Notice.

### **Other reasons for absence**

#### **No clear or consistent reason for absence**

Schools should have oversight of pupils whose attendance has been historically poor and/or have had limited engagement with remote learning during the period of national lockdown from 5 January to 28 February 2021. Schools should have established contact with the parents or carers of pupils who are at risk and remind them of the need for all children to return to school in March. Schools should apply attendance codes as applicable, usually **an O code for unauthorised absence**, and in line with the Trust policy. Schools should have processes in place to (a) encourage better attendance of these pupils, and (b) escalate, where necessary, attendance support intervention from the school and LA.

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<sup>1</sup> LA contact email: [ElectiveHEducation@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:ElectiveHEducation@bradford.gov.uk)

Where schools require specialist support in engaging with pupils and their families, including mental health, they can make a referral to the Trust's Clinical Lead Practitioner should they need to do so.

### **Parents or carers are uncontactable**

Where schools are unable to contact a parent regarding pupil absence from school, the [Children Missing from Education referral process](#) should be initiated. Please refer to the school's Safeguarding and Attendance policies. Schools should risk assess based on prior levels of engagement with families, whether contact was established or sustained during lockdown, and the age and/or vulnerability level of the child or children concerned. The child should remain on the school roll while the LA conducts their investigations. A pupil should only be removed when the LA contacts schools to inform them of the outcome or they receive confirmation from the child's new school that they have been admitted.

### **Pupils and families who are anxious about returning to school**

There is likely to be a significant minority of pupils and/or families who are anxious about a return to school. Schools should identify these pupils before the start of the autumn term, this may include:

- Pupils who have previously been shielding;
- Pupils living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable;
- Pupils with existing anxiety (supported by CAMHS or on the school's SEND register with Social, Emotional, Mental Health needs);
- Pupils with relevant medical conditions, e.g. diabetes, severe asthma, or who are immunosuppressed;
- Pupils from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background who are anxious about the comparatively increased risk from Covid-19;
- Pupils who have suffered lasting effects from being ill with Covid-19;
- Pupils who are vulnerable but have not attended school between March and July 2020;
- Pupils who have suffered a bereavement or significant changes at home.

This list is not exhaustive and individual schools may need to identify additional or different groups of pupils. Schools should contact families to reaffirm the need for children to return to school, to reassure them that they or their children will be safe in school, and to provide clarity on how school may be different from September. Anxiety is caused, in large part, by the perception of uncertainty and/or lack of control over situations. Schools can mitigate much of the uncertainty related to returning to school through timely and clear communications to pupils and their families. Schools should also remind families of the support structure in school for pupils, including class teachers, tutors, pastoral support, etc. and share high quality resources relating to what parents can do to support children's transition back to school<sup>2</sup>. This is also an opportunity to communicate expectations related to behaviour in school following their return.

Where schools require specialist support in engaging with pupils and their families, including signposting for mental health support, they can make a referral to the Trust's Clinical Lead Practitioner should they need to do so.

### **Disadvantaged pupils**

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<sup>2</sup> [All change: a back to school guide for parents](#)

We continue to be deeply concerned that the enforced closures of schools will have had a disproportionate effect on our disadvantaged pupils, i.e. those eligible for the Pupil Premium or Children Looked After 'in care', as well as those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) or who are otherwise vulnerable. We also know that, on average, the attendance of these pupils is historically below that of their peers, both in our schools and nationally. In recognition of the importance of good attendance on closing the Disadvantaged gaps, schools will:

- Have a plan to ensure the majority of Disadvantaged or otherwise vulnerable pupils are back in the classroom as soon as possible;
- Closely monitor the impact of this plan, any interventions, and the resources needed to deliver it; and
- Use data and information effectively to identify issues and assess the impact of changes made to provision to support pupils' attendance and engagement with school.

### **Reporting on pupil attendance and absence to DfE, Beckfoot Trust and the Local Authority**

Schools should continue to provide information to DfE by midday on a daily basis via the online form<sup>3</sup>. Further guidance is available [here](#).

The Trust will monitor and report on pupil attendance as outlined in the Trust Attendance Policy. The LA will monitor schools' attendance through its usual channels.

Special schools will continue sharing of information with the LA via the DAP as agreed.

We will track attendance data more regularly than set out in the Trust policy during the autumn term, including data by school, phase and pupil group, to allow the trust and school leaders to intervene early to stop poor attendance becoming entrenched. We will invite feedback on the effectiveness of schools' strategies through the Trust Attendance Network and other appropriate channels. We will keep a very close eye on the attendance of Disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, and those who are otherwise vulnerable and hold school leaders to account.

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<sup>3</sup><https://onlinecollections.des.fasst.org.uk/fastform/index.jsp>