

Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) 2026 Update

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The Department for Education (DfE) published an updated version of Working Together to Improve School Attendance in July 2026. The DfE has stated that the changes are primarily technical clarifications and improvements to existing guidance rather than a change in attendance policy (updated Model Attendance Policy: Moodle:Model Attendance Policy) or the wider attendance framework.

Key Changes for Schools

1. Attendance Registers
Schools must ensure that attendance registers are taken:

- At the beginning of the morning session.
- Once during the afternoon session.
- At the same time for all registered pupils within each session.

Schools should review local registration arrangements and Management Information System (MIS) settings to ensure compliance with this requirement.

2. Attendance Codes
The DfE has provided additional clarification regarding several attendance codes to support consistent application across schools.
Code E: Suspended or Permanently Excluded
Use Code E when a pupil:

- Has been suspended or permanently excluded.
- Remains on the school roll.

- Has not yet been placed in alternative provision for the session concerned.

Statistical classification: Authorised absence.

Code Q: Unable to Attend Because of a Lack of Access Arrangements

Use Code Q only when a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The local authority has a legal duty to arrange home-to-school transport and has not yet done so; or
- Other specific legal transport/access arrangements have not been put in place.

Statistical classification: Not a possible attendance.

Code Y6: Unable to Attend in Accordance with Public Health Guidance or Law

Use Code Y6 where:

- A pupil is well enough to attend school; but
- Government public health guidance or legislation relating to infection or disease means they should not attend.

This code should not be used where no such public health restrictions apply.

Statistical classification: Not a possible attendance.

Code Y7: Unable to Attend Because of Any Other Unavoidable Cause

Use Code Y7 when:

- An exceptional and unavoidable circumstance prevents attendance; and
- The reason is not covered by another attendance code.

Examples given by the DfE include:

- Bail conditions preventing attendance.
- Court attendance where the pupil is legally required to attend.
- A community-based element of a detention, referral or youth rehabilitation order that requires absence from school.

Schools must record the nature of the unavoidable cause.

Statistical classification: Not a possible attendance.

3. Clarification of Code C2

Code C2: Leave of Absence for a Compulsory School Age Pupil Subject to a Part-Time Timetable

The DfE has clarified the use of Code C2 for pupils of compulsory school age who are subject to a temporary part-time timetable agreed between the school and parent in exceptional circumstances.

The guidance reiterates that:

- All pupils are entitled to a full-time education.
- Part-time timetables should only be used exceptionally and for the shortest time necessary.
- Registration must still take place at the same time as for all other pupils.

Statistical classification: Authorised absence.

4. Approved Educational Activities

The July 2026 update provides additional clarification regarding supervision requirements for approved educational activities. The DfE reminds schools that pupils can only be recorded as attending an approved educational activity where the activity has been authorised by the school and is supervised by a person authorised by the proprietor or headteacher. Schools remain responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site and should ensure that appropriate supervision arrangements are in place whenever approved educational activities are recorded in the attendance register.
Important Note: The DfE update specifically describes this as a clarification of existing requirements. The guidance does not introduce a new supervision standard or new attendance code, but seeks to ensure consistent interpretation of the existing legal requirements surrounding approved educational activities. Schools should review existing arrangements to ensure they align with the expectations set out in the updated guidance.

5. Medical Evidence
The July 2026 update provides further clarification regarding medical evidence. Where medical evidence is deemed necessary, schools should not be rigid about the form of evidence requested and should be mindful that requesting additional evidence from health professionals can place unnecessary pressure on health services, particularly where the illness would not routinely require treatment by a health professional. Schools should begin by discussing the absence with the parent and, where appropriate, the pupil. This conversation may be sufficient to identify the appropriate attendance code. Schools may also consider other available evidence, including prescriptions, medication, evidence of appointments and letters from medical professionals relating to an ongoing health condition. Where a parent cannot provide the evidence originally requested but can provide alternative evidence, schools should take this into account.

What Has Not Changed
The DfE confirms that the update does not introduce a new attendance framework and does not change the existing statutory approach to improving attendance. Expectations remain in place regarding:

- Whole-school attendance culture;
- Early identification of attendance concerns;
- Working with families;
- Targeted support for pupils at risk of persistent and severe absence; and
- Partnership working with local authorities and other agencies.

Hampshire Key Message
The July 2026 WTTISA update is primarily a clarification of existing expectations. The most significant operational change for schools is the requirement to take attendance registers at the same time for all registered pupils in each morning and afternoon session. Schools should also familiarise themselves with the

revised guidance relating to attendance codes, approved educational activities and medical evidence.