

MAXIMISING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BULLETIN

APRIL 2024 – HALF TERM (5)

Written by The Attendance Specialist Team for Schools

Welcome back, we hope you had a restful Break. This bulletin is a brief update. Previous issues of the bulletin can be found on Essex Schools Info Link (ESI). Please remember to check ESI for supporting forms and documents you may find useful.

In this issue:

- Updated Working together to improve school attendance statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities – effective from 19 August 2024
- Requirement to share attendance data
- Granting leaves of absence
- Contents and legal requirements of registers – key points including N Codes
- DFE Attendance data – update
- DFE Action for schools
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- Current training Offer
- We Miss You sessions and other training
- DFE Guidance - Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools DfE Campaign resources and Hubs
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Updated Working together

On 29 February 2024, the DfE published updated guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#). This guidance becomes statutory and applies to maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities from 19 August 2024. It is important schools read and digest the updated guidance in full.

DfE Attendance Data – requirement to share

All schools from 19 August 2024 will be legally required to share information from their registers with the local authority. It is crucial therefore all schools review the information on their systems for accuracy. To sign up and for more information on the data collected, click [here](#). Please ensure you do so before 19 August 2024.

New – user guide to the DfE Monitor your school attendance tool

[Monitor your school attendance: user guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Granting leaves of absence – key points

- Schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Leaves of absence must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with
- Schools are expected to consider each application individually taking account of the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request
- Schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion
- If granted, it is for the school to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school
- Generally, the DFE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance
- A school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence should not be granted

Attendance registers – key points

- Schools must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day
- Schools must take the attendance register once during each afternoon session
- Usually, a substantial break such as a lunchbreak separates one session from the next
- Lessons that take place after the lunchtime break will therefore be a different session from the ones before the break
- An important reminder – registers are legal records, and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance and/or admissions registers for 6 years from the date the data was entered
- Where amendments are made, all schools must ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, and the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment

Code N – Reason for absence not yet established

- Schools must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence in a timely manner
- Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence
- When the reason for absence has not yet been established before the register closes, the absence must be recorded with code N
- Where absence is recorded as code N (reason not yet established) in the attendance register, the correct absence code should be entered as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no more than 5 school days after the session (regulation 10(7) to (9))
- Code N must not therefore be left on the pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if a reason for absence cannot be established within 5 school days, schools must amend the pupil's record to Code O
- Further details can be found in the [statutory guidance](#).

DFE Attendance Data

The latest data can be viewed [here](#). It is important schools use this monitoring tool to focus their attendance improvement efforts strategically. Please be aware you need to change the drop-down box to select the appropriate phase and time on the dashboard tab. The official statistics for last academic year have now been released. The current data does not provide a severely absent figure for comparison (SA – attendance of 50% or below). Please therefore be advised of the following national SA percentages for last academic year:

- Primary – 0.7%
- Secondary – 3.4%
- Special – 6.2%

Primary level attendance and absence year to 22 March 2024

- 94.6% of sessions were recorded as attending (5.4% of sessions were recorded as absence)
- 3.3% of absence sessions were recorded as illness
- 15.7% of pupils were recorded as persistently absent

Secondary level attendance and absence year to 22 March 2024

- 91.3% of sessions were recorded as attending (8.7% of sessions were recorded as absence)
- 4% of absence sessions were recorded as illness
- 25.4% of pupils were recorded as persistently absent

Special school attendance and absence rates year to 22 March 2024

- 87.1% of sessions were recorded as attending (12.9% of sessions were recorded as absence)
- 5.7% of absence sessions were recorded as illness
- 37.1% of pupils were recorded as persistently absent

DFE Action for schools: back to school preparation to ensure strong attendance next year.

The DFE have revised their attendance toolkit with tips for schools on preparing for next academic year. They also have guidance on putting support in place for individual needs for families facing complex barriers, which can be found [here](#).

AST Aims for next academic year

Following the updated [Working together to improve school attendance](#) which becomes statutory from 19 August 2024, AST are looking at ways to meet the expectations placed upon us and other teams as well giving advice and guidance on the expectations placed upon schools. One of the expectations is delivering 'Targeting Support Meetings' (TSMs) to schools. Information on this can be found within the guidance, and more information on our specific response will be provided in due course. For the TSM's to be most effective, the school's lead for attendance will be expected to attend.

Attendance Specialist Team Training Workshops:

All workshop sessions will continue to be held ONLINE via Teams and are free for schools. Sessions can be booked via [Education Essex Online Booking System](#). This link will take you to



instructions on how to register an account for your school. If you already have an account, please click 'Register/Log In' to be able to browse full details and book your space.

If you would like any support with creating an account or booking training, please contact the Workforce Development team by emailing WorkforceDevelopment@esex.gov.uk or calling 03330 139 891. Please keep an eye on the online booking system for future AST training.

Other useful training

- [ADHD Training](#) - delivered by SEND Inclusion Partners and Educational Psychologists. Please contact your link SEND Quadrant Team
- [Solution Oriented Meetings](#) – delivered by the Educational Psychology Service.
- [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Let's talk we miss you – maximising school attendance training. For more information and to book please visit [Education Essex Online Booking System](#).
Tuesday 14 May 2024
 - 9.30am-12pm at Hamptons
 - Or
 - 1-3.30pm at Hamptons

DFE Guidance – Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges

- [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#)

Attendance Specialist Team Contacts:

Each school in Essex has a named point of contact in the Attendance Specialist Team who can support with queries and advice and with whom Attendance Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs) will be held. Each quadrant in Essex has a Senior Attendance Specialist and an Attendance Specialist, details of which can be found below.

Mid Quadrant (incl. Chelmsford, Braintree, Maldon)

Senior Attendance Specialist – Simone Webb

Attendance Specialist – Elizabeth Newman

midattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968 - option 2

North East Quadrant (incl. Clacton, Colchester, Harwich)

Senior Attendance Specialist – Susan Thomas

Attendance Specialist – Emily Marks

neattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968 - option 1

South Quadrant (incl. Brentwood, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford)

Senior Attendance Specialist – James Moir

Attendance Specialist – Jennifer White

southattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968 - option 3





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West Quadrant (incl. Harlow, Saffron Walden, Waltham Abbey, Ongar)

Senior Attendance Specialist – Daisy Alexander

Attendance Specialist – Joanne Pavlou

westattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968 - option 4

Early Help Drop-In

Don't forget to take advantage of a your quadrants weekly early help drop in session. For more information please visit [ECC Early Help Drop-in Poster 2022.pdf](#)

Essex County Council

EARLY HELP DROP-IN SESSIONS

4 quadrant specific weekly drop-in sessions

These sessions are designed to give partners across Essex who work with children, young people & families the chance to: discuss anonymised cases, gain peer support, be signposted to advice & help to answer general questions

These sessions will be facilitated by one of the 4 Partnership Delivery Leads, who will be regularly supported by our panel of subject experts including:

Children & Families Hub / Family Solutions / ECFWS / EWMHS Team Around the Family Support Officer (TAFSO) / Health Liaison Officer/ Senior Attendance Specialists and others

North Essex drop-in session - Tues 15:00-16:00pm Click [Here](#) to Join
Email [Lee Bailey](mailto:Lee.Bailey@essex.gov.uk) Partnership Delivery Lead (North) Lee.Bailey@essex.gov.uk for more details

Mid Essex drop-in session - Wed 12:00-13:00pm Click [Here](#) to Join
Email [Paul Mitchell](mailto:Paul.Mitchell@essex.gov.uk) Partnership Delivery Lead (Mid) Paul.Mitchell@essex.gov.uk for more details

South Essex drop-in session - Wed 12:30-13:30pm Click [Here](#) to Join
Email [Harriet Pickering](mailto:Harriet.Pickering@essex.gov.uk) Partnership Delivery Lead (South) Harriet.Pickering@essex.gov.uk for more details

West Essex drop-in session - Thurs 12:00-13:00pm Click [Here](#) to Join
Email [Fiona Bailey](mailto:Fiona.Bailey@essex.gov.uk) Partnership Delivery Lead (West) Fiona.Bailey@essex.gov.uk for more details

PLEASE NOTE - These sessions DO NOT replace work undertaken by the Children & Families Hub as outlined in [Effective Support for Children & Families in Essex](#)

virginicare Believe in children Barnardo's Children and Families Hub Family Solutions

Leads for Partnership Delivery North, Mid, South, West