

Education Welfare Service school attendance COVID-19 update January 2021 - Key messages from the Government guidance for schools: Restricting attendance during the national lockdown:

The latest DfE guidance says:

During the period of national lockdown, primary, secondary, alternative provision and special schools will remain open to vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers only (recognising that the characteristics of the cohorts in special schools and alternative provision will mean these settings continue to offer face to face provision for all pupils, where appropriate). All other pupils should receive remote education.

Attendance expectations

Children of critical workers:

Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.

Where a critical worker parent or carer notifies a school that their child requires full-time on-site provision, the school should make this available. It is important that on-site provision is provided for these pupils, and there is no limit to numbers of these pupils who may attend and schools should not limit attendance of these groups.

Vulnerable children and young people:

The definition of vulnerable children and young people includes children who have a social worker, an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or who may be vulnerable for another reason at local discretion ("otherwise vulnerable").

Schools are expected to allow and strongly encourage vulnerable children and young people to attend. Parents/carers of vulnerable children and young people are strongly encouraged to take up the place.

If vulnerable children and young people do not attend, schools should:

- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) to follow up with the parent or carer to explore the reason for absence, discussing their concerns using supporting guidance considering the child's circumstances and their best interests
- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) and other relevant partners to encourage the child or young person to attend educational provision, particularly where the social worker agrees that the child or young person's attendance would be appropriate

Where schools grant a leave of absence to a vulnerable child or young person they should still speak to parents and carers, and social workers (where applicable) to explore the reasons for this and any concerns raised. The discussions should focus on the welfare of the child or young person and ensuring that the child or young person is able to access appropriate education and support while they are at home.

High quality remote education should be provided for all other pupils.

With regards to a pupil failing to attend their provision. The Government has announced the disapplication of Section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996 (England) Notice 2021 this means that the Local Authority cannot undertake any attendance related legal process where the period of evidence includes the 7th January 2021 until end of 6th February 2021.

[Disapplication notice: school attendance legislation changes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/disapplication-notice-school-attendance-legislation-changes)

Attendance recording

All pupils who are not eligible to be in school should be marked as Code X. They are not attending because they are following public health advice.

Vulnerable children: As vulnerable children are still expected to attend school full time, they should not be marked as Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). If the parent of a vulnerable child wishes their child to be absent, the parent should let the school know. The Department expects schools to grant applications for leave of absence given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

Children of critical workers: As with vulnerable children, critical worker parents and carers should let schools know if their child will not be attending an arranged session. This should be recorded as code C (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

Alternative provision schools: We expect AP schools to actively encourage those they consider to be vulnerable – identified in partnership with local services - to attend provision. They should provide robust remote learning for those who are not attending.

Special schools: We want children and young people in special schools, including residential special schools, and special post-16 institutions to continue to receive high-quality teaching and specialist professional support. This is because we know that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and their families, can be disproportionately impacted by being out of education.

Special schools should continue to welcome and encourage pupils to attend full-time where the parent/carers wishes for their child to be able to attend. Special post-16 settings should continue to welcome and encourage students to attend as per their usual timetable where the young person wishes to attend.

On occasion AP schools and special schools may encounter circumstances where they cannot provide their usual interventions and provision at adequate staffing ratios, or with staff with vital specialist training. In these circumstances they should seek to resume as close as possible to the child or young person's specified provision as soon as possible.

Opening hours:

Schools are expected to operate for their normal hours. Where possible, we would encourage breakfast club and after school provision, to help support the children of critical workers.

The full guidance can be found at:

[Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak)

Should a school have a concern about the visibility of a child or young person, the Early Help Advisors and the Youth and Community Engagement Workers from within the Transition Team can be directed to undertake home visits if necessary.

Support can be requested by emailing Transition.Team@derbyshire.gov.uk