# RETURN TO SCHOOL STRATEGY

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## School Attendance

### London Borough of Newham

Education, Inclusion and Achievement
Attendance.Management@newham.gov.uk

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# RETURN TO SCHOOL STRATEGY – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

# FOREWORD

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your teams for the work have been doing with parents, carers and children to minimise Covid 19 risks at your schools as far as possible.

As a Council, we have listened to the concerns of parents and our young people recognising the serious impact that COVID 19 has had on our community. We know that school is the best place for our children and young people to be in September and recognise the benefits that 100% school attendance provides. The government has made it clear that school attendance will be compulsory again from 1st September. This means that parents or carers have a legal duty to send their child to school and there is a range of powers that local authorities and schools have to enforce attendance where there is no valid reason for the absence.

However, we want to be clear that in Newham **we do not intend to implement measures such as penalty notices or fines for non-attendance from the beginning of the term**. Where there are any specific issues the local authority will be working closely with schools to support families and children to return to school and will be taking a carefully managed approach by encouraging, supporting and facilitating attendance. Future decisions about the need for any enforcement measures will be made on a case-by-case basis, recognising individual circumstances.

The Council supports the actions you are taking to encourage children to attend school and we will work together to provide the necessary support assurance to our diverse communities that have been hit hard by Covid 19.

Our best wishes for a new academic year with no doubt a new "norm". Stay safe.

Cllr Zulfiqar Ali                                         Cllr Jane Lofthouse
Lead Cabinet Member for Education        Deputy Cabinet Member for Education

# RETURN TO SCHOOL STRATEGY – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

## Introduction

The government announced on 2nd July 2020 its intention for all pupils in England to return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term.  The purpose of this document is to provide information, advice and guidance to Newham's education providers to help ensure that as many pupils as possible return at the start of the new term.  The term "education providers in this context relates to:

- Primary Schools
- Secondary Schools (including sixth forms)
- Infant, Junior, Middle and Upper Schools
- School-based nurseries and boarding schools

To aid mass school re-opening, the government has published guidance to help minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission and to aid school operations; curriculum, behaviour and pastoral care; assessment and accountability; and contingency planning to provide continuity of education in the case of a local outbreak.  This strategy document will focus specifically on the actions that schools can take to help ensure as many pupils as possible return to school as quickly as possible.  The DfE guidance document can be accessed via this link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools

The government has outlined its view that it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.  Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school.

The government has announced its intention to make school attendance mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term, which means that legally the following apply to all compulsory school aged children from 1st September 2020:

- A parent's duty to secure their child's regular attendance at the school where the child is a registered pupil;
- The school's responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence.
- The ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authority codes of conduct.

In Newham, our strategy is aimed at providing a clear and consistent plan that all Newham schools can utilise to ensure we support and engage with our families.  By engaging positively with families, parents will feel comfortable, confident, and reassured that their child will be returning to a safe, hygienic, and secure school environment.  Newham's parents, schools and professionals believe that sanctions at this time would not be appropriate, and that providing information, advice and guidance to families will be more successful.

For those families that fail to engage with the information advice and guidance offered by schools and professionals, parents will initially receive warnings instead of legal sanctions during the first half term.  However, sanctions must remain in place for families who decide to use this opportunity to take their children away from school during term-time due to an unauthorised leave of absence, such as for the purposes of taking a holiday.

This strategy has been written in two parts, one looking at the actions schools and the council can take in early September to maximise the chances of as many children as possible returning to school on that first day, and another looking at the strategies schools and the council can put in place during the first few weeks of term to encourage families to send their children to school.

Finally, Newham Council has organised a **COVID-19 Health Champions Network**, which aims to empower thousands of Newham residents to remain up to date on the latest advice about COVID-19. The council will keep residents informed of the latest advice and guidance so that they can help their family, friends and other community members to make sense of the latest facts about the virus.

We would encourage all members of school staff and parents/carers to apply to become a **COVID-19 Health Champion** via https://www.newham.gov.uk/covidhealthchampions

# Part One: Possible School Reopening Strategies

It's important that all those involved in ensuring that children return to school in September focus on these key areas as soon as they can in September:

1. Understanding which pupils/families may be self-isolating
2. Understanding which pupils/families may be anxious about returning to schools
3. Understanding which families traditionally present some challenge in ensuring their children return to school when required
4. Understanding the local pressure points that may impact on the ability for children to attend school

It is acknowledged that schools have limited resources available which may not allow for all or some of the following strategies to be undertaken quickly. The current view is that it would be positive for these strategies to be in place as early as possible in September, however there is also an awareness that realistically it may take up to two weeks into the new term for these strategies to put in place. It is also recognised that some schools may have already put in place some or all the following strategies.

A generic school reopening date of 1st September has been referred to in the strategies below, however schools may have different return dates, staggered return dates etc.

Schools who have signed up for an SLA with Newham Attendance Management Service also have access to Attendance Management Officers who are employed during the school holidays, therefore, schools find that Attendance Management Officers have already started to conduct some of the following strategies.

*Understanding which pupils/families may be shielding or self-isolating*

Shielding precautions are due to cease to be in effect from the 1st August 2020.  The government guidance discusses possible future scenarios where shielding and self-isolation may be necessary, and what to do:

*We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:*

- *a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)*

- *shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August 2020, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the* [current advice on shielding](#)

- *if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below).*

- *some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at* [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#).

*Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity.  Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.*

## POSSIBLE ACTION:
It is therefore important that schools, together with professionals such as SEND officers, children with disability social workers and school health nurses identify which children may

still be required to isolate, or may need to isolate in the future, and ensure that those children have access to remote education which complements the learning they would have received at school.

*Understanding which pupils/families may be anxious about returning to school*

The government guidance in regard to pupils and families who are anxious about returning to school states:

*Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.*

*If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc).*

## POSSIBLE ACTION:

It is acknowledged that some schools have already started to identify some of these pupils already and some schools will start in September following initial contact with a wider range of families.  In any case, schools should consider continuing to work with their communities to identify families who may be anxious about returning.  They may be able to identify these families based on conversations the school has already had with families, especially with those families whose children have already had opportunity to return school, such as those in Reception, Year 1, Year 6, Year 10 and Year 12.

For those pupils moving from primary to secondary schools, the new school should consider contacting the previous school to share information that hasn't been shared already about possibly anxious children and families.  Where children and families are identified, they should be targeted to ensure that they benefit from the strategies outlined in this document.

*Understanding which families traditionally present some challenge in ensuring their children return to school when required*

The government also suggests that disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic are identified too and are also specifically targeted to ensure that they benefit from the strategies outlined in this document.

*Understanding some of the local pressure points that may impact on the ability for children to attend school*

Now is the perfect opportunity for schools and professionals to start to think about what issues may arise that may act as a barrier to children returning to school and attending regularly.  An example of a potential barrier may be the inability of the currently reduced public transport infrastructure to cope with a significant increase in children, parents and staff members using buses, trains, and other methods of public transport.  In light of this, Transport for London have produced guidance to support all members of the school community returning to school in September: https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for-schools-and-young-people/travel-guidance-for-schools , however TfL's advice is that public transport should be avoided where possible, and that those returning to school in September should walk or cycle if they can.

## ACTION:
Schools and the council should start, as early as possible, encouraging families to discuss any potential barriers that may prevent their children from attending school, providing parents with opportunities to share concerns via social media, email, direct messaging (WhatsApp etc), telephone etc.  The council can support this via a possible social media campaign encouraging open discussions around barriers to children returning to school.

*Undertake a risk assessment and make a version publicly available to parents*
(*https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#A*)

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19). This means school employers and leaders are required by law to think about the risks the staff and pupils face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising they cannot completely eliminate the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Schools must therefore make sure that a risk assessment has been undertaken to identify the measures needed to reduce the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) so far as is reasonably practicable and make the school COVID-secure.

Schools should share the results of their risk assessment with their workforce and publish it on their website to provide transparency of approach to parents, carers and pupils (HSE would expect all employers with over 50 staff to do so).  Risk Assessments should be published in a way that are accessible to all parents, and may take the form of a Frequently Asked Question Page, online video etc.

A free example of a COVID-19 risk assessment, provided by The School Bus is available here: https://www.theschoolbus.net/article/coronavirus-risk-assessment/7613

*Social Media Campaign – #NewhamNewTerm, #SchoolsBack*

The idea of a Social Media Campaign is to highlight that schools in Newham will be re-opening on the 1st September, and to build confidence and reassurance in the environments pupils will be returning to, and that any potential increased infection risks receive a prompt, effective response.  It is proposed that the council leads the social media campaign, focusing on things such as:

- what pupils will be looking forward to on the return to school, i.e. lessons, socializing;
- achievements linked to attending school i.e. better grades, career prospects etc;
- systemic / process improvements that have taken place to ensure safe, secure and hygienic environment, i.e. Risk Assessments, Pupil group "Bubbles", links to Public Health / Health Protection etc;

Schools may then wish to get involved by sharing, retweeting/reposting the council posts, adding comments, photos, documents, links of their own which also demonstrates how they are meeting the challenge of providing a COVID-19 Secure environment.

# Part Two: Autumn Term

By mid-September, schools should be fully aware of the children they may potentially have difficulty securing immediate and regular attendance.  As stated previously, the usual legal sanctions will not be available unless there are exceptional circumstances.  The approach by schools needs to continue to be one focused on engaging with families and providing the support, encouragement, and reassurance they will need.

## Strategies to support schools and families

There are some time-specific strategies that schools should employ, which are covered in the next section, however there are also some strategies that schools could consider employing from the start to help manage some of the issues they may experience.

*Coronavirus Resources provided by Newham Education Psychology Service (EPS)*

Schools have a key role in supporting children and young people through the recovery and transitioning phase of the COVID-19 response.  To support schools with this, Newham EPS have circulated two booklets which have been produced by the Educational Psychology Team that responded to the Grenfell fire in Westminster in 2017. They have applied their hands-on experience and learning from that traumatic incident to the current context. The booklets apply from early years through to post 16. They include:

- How staff can look after themselves, so that they can then look after the CYP (see tips to manage stress)
- How to provide 'psychological first aid' for non-psychologists/counsellors
- Tips for the classroom as a place of safety, connectedness, and reassurance
- Helping children to acknowledge and regulate their emotions
- How to be aware of those with significant needs because of their experiences
- Supporting children and young people to see their strengths and capacity to succeed with practical activities

These booklets, together with a list of extensive resources are available on Newham Connect at: www.newhamconnect.uk/Article/75523 .  Newham EPS aim to continually update the list of resources available.

*Parent Advice Phone-In with an Educational Psychologist (EP)*

The EPS Parent Advice sessions are offered to any Newham parent or carer who would like to discuss concerns about their child with an educational psychologist (examples may include: your child's emotional well-being, challenging behaviours, learning progress, your relationship with your child or some of your own worries).

The sessions aim to be supportive, confidential, and informal. Each session is 40 minutes.  They are free one-off sessions and open to all parents and carers of Newham children and young people. There is no criteria or threshold to access these sessions.

To book a session email or phone susan.gowans@newham.gov.uk  07747 103817

*Phased approach to full re-opening*

The Local Authority, working together with school representatives, have agreed that schools can put in place a phased approach to a full reopening.  This is an attempt to prevent all pupils and staff arriving on the first day of term without a full test of the control measures and the "new normal" within schools and the surrounding areas.  The agreed expectation is that by the end of week 2, all pupils and staff will return to school.  One example of how this may work is that all teachers and essential school staff return in the first few days of term, followed by a manageable small number of year groups i.e. Y7 and Y11, or Reception/Year 1 and Year 6, towards the end of week 1.  During the following week, further year groups would return i.e. Year 8 and 10, or Years 1, 3 and 5, at the beginning of the week and then Year 9, or Years 2 and 4, towards the end of week 2.

The practicalities around the attendance/absence coding of this will be covered at the end of this document.

*Registration times and approach to lateness*

Some children will be late for school.  It is likely that there will be issues with public transport, traffic is likely to increase as a result of this, and parents may experience significant changes to their routines, all of which will impact on pupils arriving at school on time.  It is recommended, therefore, that registration times are expanded and registers remain open for at least an hour.  Children who arrive late for school should not be challenged but listened to, acknowledged and allowed to enter lessons with minimum disruption.

Schools may also wish to consider staggering morning start times and afternoon finish times to minimise waiting times and traffic outside of school.  Schools may also want to think about activities to encourage children to walk to school, such as "Walking Buses", to help reduce traffic further and minimise disruption - https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/stuff-to-do/organise-a-walking-bus .

*Local Authority Support – Attendance Management Service (AMS)*

The Attendance Management Service plans to make some level of support available to all schools during the autumn term.  AMS will be available over the telephone via our AMS Autumn Term Hotline to provide schools with support, strategies and answers to any queries that crop up.  The hotline number is **07766 071941.**

AMS will continue providing a weekly training webinar on areas of interest identified by feedback provided by schools via the hotline and other means.  The webinar will also benefit from input from Public Health Consultants, Education Psychology, SEND, headteachers and other professionals that can provide support to schools on school reopening and attendance management.  We will also ensure other sources of information such as an FAQ section are provided.  More details on our offer is available via our website - http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Services/4749.

The AMS is also providing a short-term service offer to schools that do not currently hold a service level agreement to support them to carry out some of the strategies outlined in this document.  Please email attendance.managment@newham.gov.uk or call the AMS hotline **07766 071941** if you would like to discuss this further.

Where schools have signed up to a Service Level Agreement with AMS, your Attendance Management Officer will be available to support you in undertaking the strategies outlined in this document.

**School Attendance Sweeps aka Truancy Sweeps**

Conversations will be initiated with colleagues from the Metropolitan Police to investigate the viability of regular School Attendance Sweeps taking place during the autumn term.  Sweeps are a joint initiative between the police and local authority which involve the patrolling of hotspots where children and families may congregate by representatives from both organisations.  Where officers encounter children, conversations will take place to find out why that child is absent from school, and consider the most appropriate response, either allowing that child to remain with their parent or carer, transport them home, or to a place of safety i.e. their school.

Schools will be made aware about a decision regarding School Attendance Sweeps during September.

**Children Missing Education (CME)**

From 1st September pupil attendance will be reset, which means that any absence that occurred prior to the start of the national lockdown on Monday 23rd March 2020 will not be considered as part of any CME notification.  This means that 10 days+ of continuous absence must be recorded before a CME notification can be submitted to the local authority.  All notifications must be accompanied by evidence of completed interventions and investigations, as per pre-lockdown CME notifications.

We understand that the undertaking of home visits may be a particular "pinch point" in terms of resources, therefore Children's Centres have kindly offered the support of Family Support Workers to undertake these visits where necessary.  To access this service please email BSiL@newham.gov.uk requesting support with a CME Home Visit.

High numbers of CME notifications are expected, therefore, it may take longer than usual to respond to requests for help. To ensure that we get a response to you as soon as possible, please ensure that all email addresses and contact details are entered correctly and that requesters who receive "requests for information" from the CME team via email provide the additional information via the link provided in the email.

### Home Visits – COVID-19

The government has provided guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care . The following information is taken directly from government guidance:

**What care should staff visiting families in their own homes take?**

Social workers, other children's social care staff and anyone else considering the need for a home visit should follow the children's social care services guidance and make a judgement about visiting which balances considerations of the:

- risks to children and young people
- risks to families
- risks to the workforce
- national guidance on social distancing and hygiene
- statutory responsibilities, including safeguarding

Staff and their managers are best placed to make professional judgements of risk in each case and decide what form of contact they need.

There are many ways to keep in touch with a child, young person or family without physical face-to-face contact. It is expected that these will be utilised appropriately and proportionately, including in response to any risk assessment undertaken for the child on a case by case basis.

Prior to undertaking a visit, an attempt should be made to ascertain whether any member of the household is suffering from symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). An initial risk assessment, where possible, should take place by telephone.

Where households report no coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, no PPE is required, but a distance of 2 metres should be maintained where possible, and the meeting should take place outside / at the door-step. Where this is not possible, you should undertake a risk assessment. Good basic hygiene should be followed, such as handwashing or use of sanitiser before and after the visit, and not touching your face during the visit.

Where households are reporting coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, home visits should be avoided. If there are significant safeguarding concerns that leads to a school feeling that a home visit should be undertaken despite the presence of COVID-19 symptoms, a conversation should take place with MASH/Children's Social Care to decide whether or not the threshold for statutory safeguarding intervention is met. If a school feels that it is left with no choice but to

undertake a home visit and there is no choice but to enter the home, PPE should be worn if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

Where it is not possible to ascertain whether any member of the household is suffering from symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) prior to face to face contact, steps should be taken where practical to mitigate risk. These steps include but are not restricted to:

- knocking on the front door or ringing the doorbell and then stepping back to a distance of 2 metres in adherence to social distancing guidelines;
- having the conversation outside or at the doorstep;
- taking PPE as a precautionary measure;

## Week 1: Week Commencing 31st August 2020 – Schools Reopen

| Action / Activity | For Schools / LA / Both | Outcome / Timeframe | Links that may help |
|---|---|---|---|
| Daily absence phone calls to be made, reassuring parents that it is safe to return, outlining the measures that schools have implemented to ensure the safety of all pupils, parents and staff. | Schools | Parents feel reassured, confident, comfortable.  Daily calls | https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/five-keys-successful-parent-teacher-communication/ https://www.waldenu.edu/online-bachelors-programs/bs-in-elementary-education/resource/nine-ways-to-improve-parent-teacher-communication |
| Offer access to remote working for pupils who are unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice. | Schools | Children unable to attend are still able to engage in learning and maintain relationship with school. | https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adapting-teaching-practice-for-remote-education |
| Daily contact with parents and pupils of children on the generally vulnerable and vulnerable to isolation/anxiety lists to review the Vulnerable Pupil Return Plans. | Schools | Parents and Children feel reassured, progress is demonstrated and evidenced, vulnerable pupil attendance is maintained | |
| In cases of pupils with agency involvement not attending, alert allocated professional (i.e. social worker) of the non-attendance and agree plan of action. | Schools / Professionals | Prompt safeguarding of vulnerable children.  Raise awareness of issues with multi-agency group.  Action plan initiated to secure regular attendance. | |
| Social Media Campaign changes focus to look at how children and staff are getting on back at school, new hashtag agreed representing change in focus, i.e. #TodaysLesson, #NewhamLearnsAgain, #Gr82bBk. | Schools / LA | Focus on welcoming children and staff back to school, show happiness at being back but also commitment to control measures, i.e. hand hygiene, social distancing etc. | https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-campaigns https://www.bigcommerce.co.uk/ecommerce-answers/what-is-a-social-media-campaign/ https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/digital-media/blog/schools-and-social-media |

| Week 2: Week Commencing 7th September 2020 – Reinforce the "New Normal" | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Action / Activity** | **For Schools / LA / Both** | **Outcome / Timeframe** | **Links that may help** |
| Continue with daily absence phone calls, reassuring parents that it is safe to return, outlining the measures that schools have implemented to ensure the safety of all pupils, parents and staff. | Schools | Parents feel reassured, confident, comfortable.  Daily calls | https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/five-keys-successful-parent-teacher-communication/ https://www.waldenu.edu/online-bachelors-programs/bs-in-elementary-education/resource/nine-ways-to-improve-parent-teacher-communication |
| Remote Education Delivery is monitored via phone / video conferencing etc. | Schools | Children unable to attend are still able to engage in learning and maintain positive relationship with school. | https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adapting-teaching-practice-for-remote-education |
| Continue daily contact with parents and pupils of children on the generally vulnerable and vulnerable to isolation/anxiety lists to review the Vulnerable Pupil Return Plans. | Schools | Parents and Children feel reassured, progress is demonstrated and evidenced, vulnerable pupil attendance is maintained | |
| In cases of pupils with agency involvement not attending, alert allocated professional (i.e. social worker) of the non-attendance and agree plan of action. | Schools / Professionals | Prompt safeguarding of vulnerable children.  Raise awareness of issues with multi-agency group.  Action plan initiated to secure regular attendance. | |
| Where children have failed to attend regularly, CV19 Letter 1 to be issued to parents. | | Continued reassurance to parents that it is safe to return and to outline the expectations in line with local authority and government guidelines. Families should be encouraged to contact school to discuss any potential barriers. | http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/18119 |
| Social Media Campaign continues to focus on pupil achievements and adherence to control measures since schools have re-opened, together with information on infection/reproduction rates. | Schools / LA | Raise awareness and reinforce success of reopening schools | https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-campaigns https://www.bigcommerce.co.uk/ecommerce-answers/what-is-a-social-media-campaign/ https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/digital-media/blog/schools-and-social-media |
| Reward Raffle for children with 100% attendance for first two weeks back. | Schools | Reward children who attend for first two weeks, attendance at this stage will help re-establish routines and likely lead to continued attendance throughout the term. | |

| Week 3: Week Commencing 14th September 2020 – Forming the "New Normal" | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Action / Activity** | **For Schools / LA / Both** | **Outcome / Timeframe** | **Links that may help** |
| Absence phone calls move back towards normal school practice, but still reassuring parents that it is safe to return, outlining the measures that schools have implemented to ensure the safety of all pupils, parents and staff. | Schools | Parents feel reassured, confident, comfortable, but schools can start to provide some challenge where necessary.  Daily calls | https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/five-keys-successful-parent-teacher-communication/ https://www.waldenu.edu/online-bachelors-programs/bs-in-elementary-education/resource/nine-ways-to-improve-parent-teacher-communication |
| Involve school family support workers /support staff to try and engage hard to reach parents, possible Skype/ Zoom and face time contact. | Schools | Develop more specific and robust plans for re-engagement and attendance. | |
| Weekly+ contact with parents and pupils of children on the generally vulnerable and vulnerable to isolation/anxiety lists to review the Vulnerable Pupil Return Plans. | Schools | Parents and Children feel reassured, progress is demonstrated and evidenced, vulnerable pupil attendance is maintained | |
| In cases of pupils with agency involvement not attending, alert allocated professional (i.e. social worker) of the non-attendance and agree plan of action. | Schools / Professionals | Prompt safeguarding of vulnerable children.  Raise awareness of issues with multi-agency group.  Action plan initiated to secure regular attendance. | |
| Consider CME referrals for children who have failed to attend for 10 continuous days, where contact has not been established, and pre-referral expectations have been met. | Schools | LA are notified of children at risk of missing education quickly providing the LA with the opportunity to successfully trace families. | http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/6705 |
| Social Media Campaign continues to focus on pupil achievements and adherence to control measures since schools have re-opened, together with information on infection/reproduction rates. | Schools / LA | Raise awareness and reinforce success of reopening schools | https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-campaigns https://www.bigcommerce.co.uk/ecommerce-answers/what-is-a-social-media-campaign/ https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/digital-media/blog/schools-and-social-media |

| Week 4: Week Commencing 21st September 2020 – Normalising the "New Normal" | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Action / Activity** | **For Schools / LA / Both** | **Outcome / Timeframe** | **Links that may help** |
| Absence phone calls move back towards normal school practice, but still reassuring parents that it is safe to return, outlining the measures that schools have implemented to ensure the safety of all pupils, parents and staff. | Schools | Parents feel reassured, confident, comfortable, but schools can start to provide some challenge where necessary.  Daily calls | https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/five-keys-successful-parent-teacher-communication/ https://www.waldenu.edu/online-bachelors-programs/bs-in-elementary-education/resource/nine-ways-to-improve-parent-teacher-communication |
| Send CV19 Letter 2 for children who recorded absence in Week 3 and Week 4, and have received Letter 1 already. | | Parents feel reassured, confident, and comfortable, however, they are made aware of the impact of poor attendance on their child in terms of progress.  Families should be encouraged to contact school to discuss any potential barriers. | http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/18119 |
| School family/pupil support workers /support staff continue to work with hard to reach parents, possible Skype/ Zoom and Facetime contact. | Schools | Monitor, review and reward progress against specific and robust plans for re-engagement and attendance. | |
| Reduced contact with parents and pupils of children on the generally vulnerable and vulnerable to isolation/anxiety lists to review the Vulnerable Pupil Return Plans. | Schools | Parents and Children feel reassured, progress is demonstrated and evidenced, vulnerable pupil attendance is maintained | |
| In cases of pupils with agency involvement not attending, alert allocated professional (i.e. social worker) of the non-attendance and agree plan of action. | Schools / Professionals | Prompt safeguarding of vulnerable children.  Raise awareness of issues with multi-agency group.  Action plan initiated to secure regular attendance. | |
| Continue to consider CME referrals for children who have failed to attend for 10 continuous days, where contact has not been established and pre-referral expectations have been met. | Schools | LA are notified of children at risk of missing education quickly, providing LA with opportunity to successfully trace families. | http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/6705 |
| Social Media Campaign continues to focus on pupil achievements and adherence to control measures since schools have re-opened, together with information on infection/reproduction rates. | Schools / LA | Raise awareness and reinforce success of reopening schools | https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-campaigns https://www.bigcommerce.co.uk/ecommerce-answers/what-is-a-social-media-campaign/ https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/digital-media/blog/schools-and-social-media |

| Week 5: Week Commencing 28th September 2020 – Normalising the "New Normal" | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Action / Activity | For Schools / LA / Both | Outcome / Timeframe | Links that may help |
| Absence phone calls move back towards normal school practice, but still reassuring parents that it is safe to return, outlining the measures that schools have implemented to ensure the safety of all pupils, parents and staff. | Schools | Parents feel reassured, confident, comfortable, but schools can start to provide some challenge where necessary.  Daily calls. | https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/five-keys-successful-parent-teacher-communication/ https://www.waldenu.edu/online-bachelors-programs/bs-in-elementary-education/resource/nine-ways-to-improve-parent-teacher-communication |
| School family/pupil support workers /support staff continue to work with hard to reach parents, possible Skype/ Zoom and face time contact. | Schools | Monitor, review, and reward progress against specific and robust plans for re-engagement and attendance. | |
| First Review of Vulnerable Pupil Return Plans.  Telephone/Video Conferencing with parents and pupils of children on the generally vulnerable and vulnerable to isolation/anxiety lists to review the Vulnerable Pupil Return Plans and decide which plans can end and which plans should continue to the end of the half term. | Schools | Parents and children feel reassured, progress is demonstrated and evidenced, vulnerable pupil attendance is maintained.  Children who have returned without issue are praised and rewarded. | |
| In cases of pupils with agency involvement not attending, alert allocated professional (i.e. social worker) of the non-attendance and agree plan of action. | Schools / Professionals | Prompt safeguarding of vulnerable children.  Raise awareness of issues with multi-agency group.  Action plan initiated to secure regular attendance. | |
| Continue to consider CME referrals for children who have failed to attend for 10 continuous days where contact has not been established and pre-referral expectations have been met. | Schools | LA are notified of children at risk of missing education quickly providing the LA with the opportunity to successfully trace families. | http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/6705 |
| Social Media Campaign continues to focus on pupil achievements and adherence to control measures since schools have re-opened together with information on infection/reproduction rates. | Schools / LA | Raise awareness and reinforce success of reopening schools | https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-campaigns https://www.bigcommerce.co.uk/ecommerce-answers/what-is-a-social-media-campaign/ https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/digital-media/blog/schools-and-social-media |

www.newham.gov.uk

| Week 6-8: Week Commencing 5th October 2020 – Working within the "New Normal" | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Action / Activity | For Schools / LA / Both | Outcome / Timeframe | Links that may help |
| Absence phone calls move back towards normal school practice but still reassuring parents that it is safe to return outlining the measures that schools have implemented to ensure the safety of all pupils, parents and staff. | Schools | Parents feel reassured, confident, comfortable, but schools can start to provide some challenge where necessary.  Daily calls. | https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/five-keys-successful-parent-teacher-communication/ https://www.waldenu.edu/online-bachelors-programs/bs-in-elementary-education/resource/nine-ways-to-improve-parent-teacher-communication |
| School family/pupil support workers /support staff continue to work with hard to reach parents, possible Skype/ Zoom and face time contact. | Schools | Monitor, review, and reward progress against specific and robust plans for re-engagement and attendance. | |
| Weekly+ contact with parents and pupils of children on the generally vulnerable and vulnerable to isolation/anxiety lists who continue to have in place Vulnerable Pupil Return Plans.  Consider any amendments to the plans where necessary. | Schools | Parents and children feel reassured, progress is demonstrated and evidenced, vulnerable pupil attendance is maintained.  Children who have returned without issue are praised and rewarded | |
| In cases of pupils with agency involvement not attending, alert allocated professional (i.e. social worker) of the non-attendance and agree plan of action. | Schools / Professionals | Prompt safeguarding of vulnerable children.  Raise awareness of issues with multi-agency group.  Action plan initiated to secure regular attendance. | |
| Continue to consider CME referrals for children who have failed to attend for 10 continuous days where contact has not been established and pre-referral expectations have been met. | Schools | LA are notified of children at risk of missing education quickly providing the LA with the opportunity to successfully trace families. | http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/6705 |
| Social Media Campaign continues to focus on pupil achievements and adherence to control measures since schools have re-opened, together with information on infection/reproduction rates.  Publicise attendance rates since the start of term and identify areas for praise / challenge. | Schools / LA | Raise awareness and reinforce success of reopening schools. | https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-campaigns https://www.bigcommerce.co.uk/ecommerce-answers/what-is-a-social-media-campaign/ https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/digital-media/blog/schools-and-social-media |
| CV19 Letter 3 issued to families of children who have hit criteria for possible issuing of poor attendance penalty notice | Schools | Parents feel reassured, confident and comfortable, however are made aware of the impact of poor attendance and | http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/18119 |

| | | possible consequences should attendance continue at this low level. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **(WEEK 8)** All schools can request a warning letter/email from the Local Authority in relation to pupil poor attendance during this half term.  Warning Letters will only be issued to children with 20+ sessions (10+ days) of unauthorised absence. | Schools / LA | Expectations of regular attendance and the support measures put in place by schools are reinforced by the LA and parents made aware of possible consequences should poor attendance continue into the next half term. | http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/18119 |

# Process for Managing Absence Concerns During Autumn Term

To support the attendance management strategies mentioned in the Autumn Term strategies highlighted above, we have included a possible flow chart that schools could use to help manage pupil attendance.  We envisage that nationally, levels of pupil attendance will be below expectations for this time of year, therefore the usual thresholds for intervention have been lowered.  It is suggested that poor attendance intervention is targeted at pupils with attendance below 80%, tackling those children who would, on average, miss more than 1 day a week.  This threshold would ensure that the workload on attendance and family support staff remains manageable.

> **NB:** Unfortunately, this document cannot predict every eventuality, and it falls to the school to use their discretion to decide if, and what point, these letters and this process is followed.  The aim of this process and the letters is to reassure parents and remind them of the positives of their child attending school.  If this has been achieved and a pupil's attendance is improving, then we would advise schools to monitor the situation and not to use the letters.

Within the first two weeks, should the strategies detailed above fail to lead to improvements in pupil attendance about the 80% intervention threshold, COVID-19 Letter 1 would be issued by a senior member of school staff to relevant parents.  Letter 1 is aimed at providing the parent with an awareness of the child's level of attendance, reassurance around the measures put in place to minimise the risk of infection, information about the support on offer from the school and LA (see Education Psychology Support above) and contact details for someone within the school that the parent can talk to.  An offer of a Vulnerable Pupil Reopening Plan should also be offered if the family have not been offered one by the school so far.

The family is given a further two weeks to achieve the required improvement in attendance.  If the letter and the strategies detailed above fail to lead to the pupil achieving above 80% attendance in the weeks after Letter 1 is issued **(NOT 80% attendance cumulatively since the start of term),** then COVID-19 Letter 2 should be issued.  Letter 2 will be similar in tone to Letter 1, but will also cover the consequences of continued poor attendance on routines, physical and mental health, socialisation etc.

The family is then given a further two weeks to achieve the required improvement in attendance. If the letter and the strategies detailed above fail to lead to the pupil achieving above 80% attendance in the weeks after Letter 2 is issued **(NOT 80% attendance cumulatively since the start of term)**, then COVID-19 Letter 3 should be issued.  Letter 3 will re-iterate the points covered in Letters 1 and 2, but families will also be warned that Newham Council will be notified of their child's poor attendance if the situation does not improve.
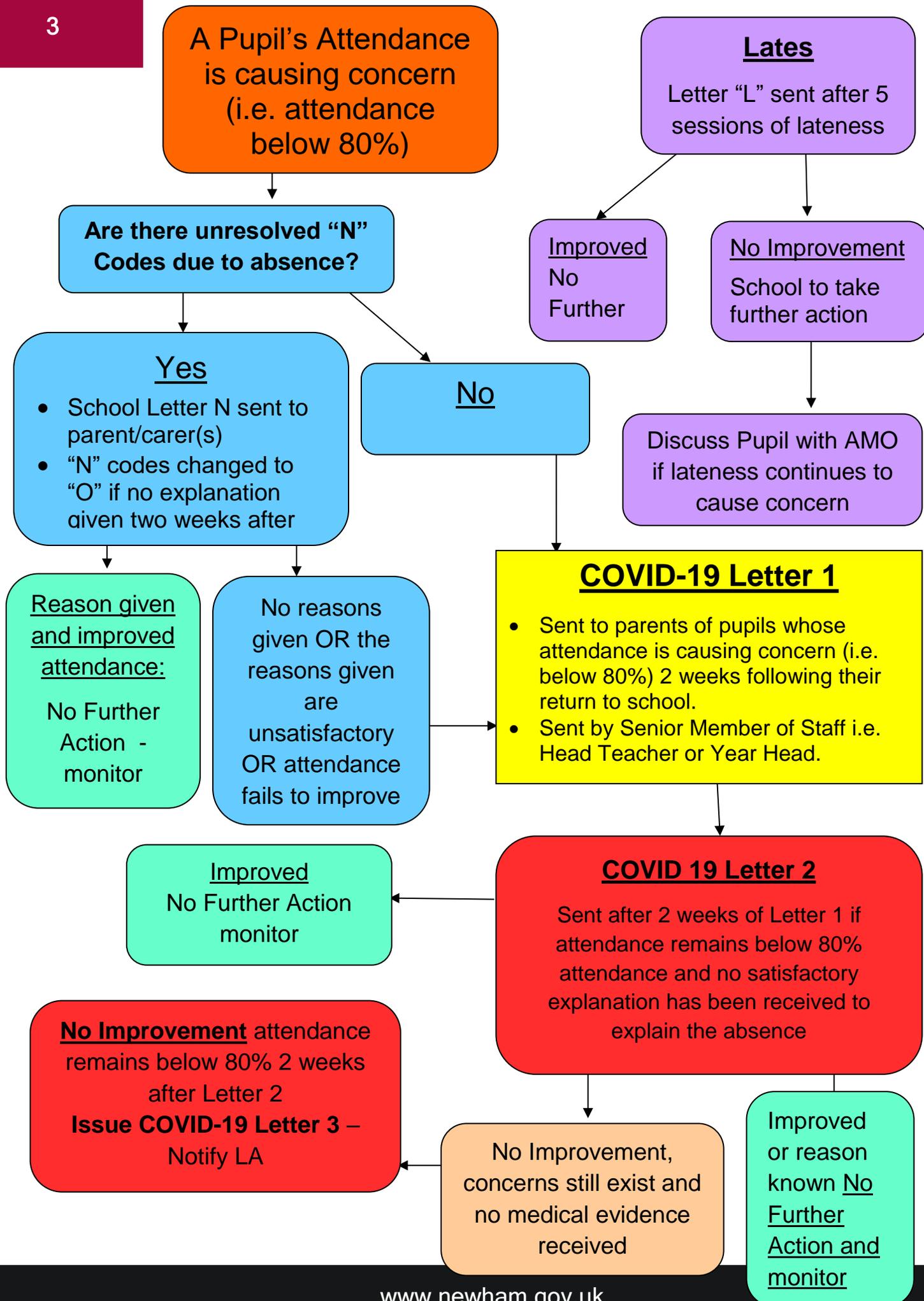
The family is then given a further two weeks to achieve the required improvement in attendance. If the letter and the strategies detailed above fail to lead to the pupil achieving above 80% attendance in the weeks after Letter 3 is issued **(NOT 80% attendance cumulatively since the start of term)**, the school should notify the local authority via our COVID-19 Poor Attendance E-Form via this link (https://secure2.sla-online.co.uk/v3/Resources/Page/18119).  The council will

issue a WARNING only, and will not take any punitive action.  However, **term-time leave requests should be managed as normal.**

All absences without reason (referred to as "N" code absences) and absences due to illness should be managed as usual.  All template letters listed here and, on the flowchart, overleaf can be accessed via the Attendance Management Service website here:
http://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/18119

**A Pupil's Attendance is causing concern (i.e. attendance below 80%)**

**Lates**
Letter "L" sent after 5 sessions of lateness

**Are there unresolved "N" Codes due to absence?**

Improved
No Further

No Improvement
School to take further action

**Yes**
- School Letter N sent to parent/carer(s)
- "N" codes changed to "O" if no explanation given two weeks after

**No**

Discuss Pupil with AMO if lateness continues to cause concern

Reason given and improved attendance:

No Further Action - monitor

No reasons given OR the reasons given are unsatisfactory OR attendance fails to improve

**COVID-19 Letter 1**
- Sent to parents of pupils whose attendance is causing concern (i.e. below 80%) 2 weeks following their return to school.
- Sent by Senior Member of Staff i.e. Head Teacher or Year Head.

Improved
No Further Action monitor

**COVID 19 Letter 2**

Sent after 2 weeks of Letter 1 if attendance remains below 80% attendance and no satisfactory explanation has been received to explain the absence

**No Improvement** attendance remains below 80% 2 weeks after Letter 2
**Issue COVID-19 Letter 3** – Notify LA

No Improvement, concerns still exist and no medical evidence received

Improved or reason known No Further Action and monitor

# Attendance / Absence Codes

The government provided further guidance on the coding of attendance and absence ready for the reopening of schools in September, including technical guidance on how to record attendance and absence and any possible data returns.

This guidance will not cover all circumstances, and schools are reminded to also refer to the existing school attendance guidance published by the government: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance

*Absence and Coronavirus:*

**My school has decided to stagger the return dates for our pupils.  How should I record this?**
Code # is available for schools to use for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned.  Code # has no statistical meeting, so does not count as neither an absence nor attendance code, therefore neither schools nor parents are penalized by using this code.
.
**The parent of a pupil has reported that their child has symptoms of COVID-19 and are self-isolating pending taking a test and waiting for the results, how should I record this?**
Code X can be used from the date the pupil stops attending to school for the purposes of self-isolation, up until the date they get the results of the test.  If a pupil receives a negative test result, they should return to school as soon as possible.  The X code cannot be used after the test result has been received, therefore if the pupil still cannot attend school, the appropriate absence code should be used.

Code X has no statistical meeting, so does not count as neither an absence nor attendance code, therefore neither schools nor parents are penalized by using this code.

**How should I code the absence of a pupil who has a confirmed case of COVID-19.**
Once a pupil tests positive, the current government guidance is that the pupil should continue to self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of their symptoms.  They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone.  After the pupil tests positive they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

**A member of the pupil's household has symptoms and/or has tested positive for COVID-19, what does this mean for the pupil?**
If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test.  If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result when the pupil can return to school.

If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms. Code X should be used during this period.

**A parent has informed my school that they're worried that either they or their child has coronavirus and needs to self-isolate, but they haven't provided medical evidence. What should I do?**
The guidance on self-isolation is updated regularly, and will change as the situation develops. The current guidance on self-isolation can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can get a free test to check if they have the virus. Some people without symptoms can have the test too. Children of any age can be tested, and tests should be carried out in the first five days of symptoms being displayed. Tests can be carried out at home, or via a drive-in test centre. Tests can be booked via https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test

If a parent is worried that either themselves or a member of their family has coronavirus, **they should arrange for a test as soon as possible**, and a child should not return to school unless the result of the test has been confirmed as negative**.**

In any situation, the government advises that anyone who is ill should stay at home, and therefore any absence due to illness should be recorded as "I" for illness.

**We have a pupil who has been unable to travel back to the UK, or has had to quarantine on return to the UK. How should we code this absence?**
Dependent on the circumstances, you may need to apply one or all of the following absence/attendance codes:

"I" Code – Pupil has suffered from COVID-19 and this has prevented them from travelling home.

"Y" Code – The pupil has had to self-isolate whilst abroad, or the pupil has been prevented from travelling due to the illness of a close family relative.

"Y" Code – The pupil has been unable to travel due to disruption to their mode of travel because of the situation caused by Coronavirus.

"X" Code - If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, code X should be used in the register.

**Our school has had to close for 1 or more days due to deep cleaning, or for any other reason linked to Coronavirus and/or COVID-19, how should I code this?**
The "Y" code can be applied as per any other enforced school closure. Please remember that the Y code can also be used where there is a partial school closure, i.e. when the school has been closed to Years 7 to 9, the "Y" code can be recorded on the days/sessions these year groups were unable to attend.

Code Y has no statistical meeting, so does not count as neither an absence nor attendance code, therefore neither schools nor parents are penalized by using this code.

**We have a parent refusing to send their pupil into school because they are scared that they, their pupil, or an "at risk" person may contract Coronavirus – What should the school do?**

This is an understandable reaction given the seriousness of Coronavirus and COVID-19.  As of the 7 days ending 19/08/2020 4 additional people per day were diagnosed with COVID-19 in Newham, and it's important that the school community is kept updated about reproduction rates and new cases – remember to sign up to become a COVID-19 Health Champion for the most up-to-date figures in Newham.

Test, Trace and Contain is the UK government's current approach to Coronavirus and COVID-19, and the advice remains that the best way to avoid infection is to prevent the spread of the virus.  With this in mind, Public Health England's guidance to schools includes general principles helping to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare

The government has stated that from September, it is expected that all pupils should attend school unless guidance states that they should self-isolate, usually due to a positive coronavirus test.  Unnecessary self-isolation can cause stress and alarm for children and young people, and self-isolation should only be used when either guided to by NHS 111, or in compliance with government guidance, usually via Public Health England.

# Coronavirus related absence – Quick reference guide

| What to do if… | Action needed | Code | Return to school when… |
|---|---|---|---|
| …my child has coronavirus symptoms | • Do not come to school<br>• Contact school daily<br>• Self-Isolate<br>• Get a test<br>• Inform school immediately about the result | Code X | …the test comes back negative |
| …my child tests positive for coronavirus | • Do not come to school<br>• Contact school daily<br>• Self-isolate for at least 10 days<br>• Inform school immediately about the test result | Code I | …they feel better.  They can return to school after 10 days even if they have a cought or loss of smell/taste.  These symptoms can last for several weeks once the infection is gone |
| …somebody in my household has coronavirus symptoms | • Do not come to school<br>• Contact school daily<br>• Self-Isolate<br>• Household member to get a test<br>• Inform school immediately about the result | Code X | …the household member test is negative |
| …somebody in my household has tested positive for coronavirus | • Do not come to school<br>• Contact school daily<br>• Self-isolate for 14 days | Code X | …the child has completed 14 days of self-isolation |
| …NHS or Local Authority test and trace have identified my child as a "close contact" of somebody with symptoms or confirmed coronavirus | • Do not come to school<br>• Contact school daily<br>• Self-isolate for 14 days | Code X | …the child has completed 14 days of self-isolation |
| …we/my child has travelled to a country which is not on / no longer on the list of exempted  countries and now has complete a period of quarantine | • Do not come to school<br>• Contact school daily<br>• Self-isolate for 14 days | Code X | …the child has completed 14 days of self-isolation |
| …we have received medical advice that my child must resume shielding. | • Do not come to school<br>• Contact school as required by the pastoral team<br>• Shield until you are informed that restrictions are lifted and shielding is paused again | Code X | …restrictions have been lifted and your child can attend school again |