

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEETHURSDAY 9 JUNE 2016Report by Director of EducationSTANDARD CIRCULAR 5: ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek elected member approval for departmental guidance to schools on recording and reporting on attendance at school.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to:
- a) comment on the draft Revised Standard Circular 5; and,
 - b) instruct the Director of Education to take the necessary steps to ensure its implementation in all schools.

BACKGROUND

3. The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on parents to provide education for their children. Where a child of school age has attended a public school, fails to attend regularly, the parent shall be deemed to have failed to secure regular attendance of their child at school.

4. By and large the attendance of our children and young people at school is exceptional. The department encourages all establishments to ensure that all children and young people feel happy, safe and secure at school. Attending and taking part in learning is fundamental to making sure that our young people become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

5. The Scottish Government produced *Included, Engaged and Involved - Part 1 (2007)* to reflect the changed and changing landscape in this field and provide advice and guidance for local authorities on the recording of attendance and absence from school. This document has informed the revision of the Education Department's 2006 policy, Standard Circular 5.

6. As a result of the issue of regulations by the Scottish Government there are statutory obligations to report on pupil absence statistics, which require inclusion in school handbooks.

REPORT

7. Members will be aware that more pupils are now learning in a variety of settings, gaining specific support for learning or accessing learning provided by other agencies or providers, in partnership with schools.

8. Many of our young people's achievements out with school lead to them being absent from school, for example representing their club or country in a sporting event.

9. The draft revised Standard Circular 5 allows all schools to be in a position to accurately account for all of these situations and consistently record pupils present within the campus or indeed out with.

10. The computerised SEEMIS Click & Go registration system installed in our schools ensures that the following requirements are met:

- a register of admissions and withdrawals from the school; and
- a daily register (including period by period registration in secondary schools) containing the name of each pupil and recording whether the pupil was present or absent (authorised or unauthorised).

11. The revised Standard Circular 5 sets out guidance for staff working in educational settings and advises staff on:

- Hours of attendance;
- Recording of attendance and absence;
- Maintenance of school registers;
- Exemption from attendance;
- Alerting schools and parents about non-attendance;
- Exceptional closures;
- Exclusion;
- School leaving dates.

EQUALITIES

12. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of this policy process.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

13. There are no financial or efficiency implications associated with this report.

RECOMMENDATION

14. Elected members are asked to:

- c) comment on the draft Revised Standard Circular 5; and,
- d) instruct the Director of Education to take the necessary steps to ensure its implementation in all schools.

Mhairi Shaw
Director of Education
9 June 2016

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KEY WORDS

SEEMIS
Click and Go

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**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

The Council Offices
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TO: HEADS OF ALL EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Dear Colleague

**REVISED STANDARD CIRCULAR 5
ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL**

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1. The school year

The school year for pupils will consist of 190 days of attendance at school.

The school year for teachers will consist of 190 days with pupils present and a further five days for in-service training purposes.

The Authority, following consultation with staff representatives and Parent Councils, will publish the dates of holidays and in-service days one year in advance.

2. Hours of attendance

The working hours of teachers were agreed by SNCT in “A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century” implemented on 1 April 2001. This has effected no change to the working hours of teachers in the agreement on conditions of service dated 2001.

2.1 Secondary

The hours of attendance are currently 27.5 hours per week for secondary pupils. Transport should be arranged to reflect the arrangements for opening and closing schools.

2.2 Primary

The hours of attendance are currently 25 hours per week for primary pupils, in line with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

Transport should be arranged to reflect the arrangements for opening and closing schools.

2.3 Special

As per the guidance detailed in the Scottish Government’s circular 4/2002, Length of School Week: Pupils in Special Schools and Units (2002), the hours of attendance for pupils in special education establishments should match that of mainstream primary and secondary sectors accordingly. Naturally, for some children and young people, a shorter school week may be essential and in such circumstances there is scope for flexibility to accommodate the special needs of the individual child; the needs of the individual child are always paramount.

In some circumstances, children who follow a shortened school week may legitimately be recorded as receiving teaching time equivalent to that delivered in a mainstream establishment as a result of undertaking activities during:

- break times;
- lunch time; and
- at the end of the school day.

Further guidance is available in [circular 4/2002](#).

2.4 Configuration of the school day

Schools should make their own arrangements for the configuration of the school day and changes should only be made after wide consultation with Elected Members, parents, parent councils, local communities, school staff and pupils and taking account of school transport arrangements. Standard Circular 32: Alteration of School Hours provides further advice on this process.

The Education Committee also agreed the following arrangements for all school children:

“All moves to change school hours or to have closures before the specified time should be referred to the Director of Education/Head of Education Services with responsibility for the geographic area. This would not apply to emergency closures. Arrangements are detailed in Standard Circular 10a.”

3. Recording of attendance and absence in education establishments

Further advice and guidance on the recording of attendance and absence from school is given in *Included, Engaged and Involved - Part 1 (Scottish Government, 2007)*.

The Education Department supports children and young people leading varied and active lifestyles and encourages participation in sporting and other non-sporting activities which provide a multitude of benefits to the child. These include activities not organised by individual schools or the Education Department.

3.1 Maintenance of school registers

As a result of the issue of regulations by the Scottish Government there are statutory obligations to report on pupil absence statistics, which require being included in school handbooks.

It is clear also that schools must be in a position to account for all those present within the campus at any given time.

The computerised SEEMIS Click & Go registration system installed in our schools will ensure that the following requirements are met:

- a register of admissions and withdrawals from the school; and
- a daily register (including period by period registration in secondary schools) containing the name of each pupil and recording whether the pupil was present or absent (authorised or unauthorised).

In addition, particularly in secondary schools where there is a lot of pupil movement, teachers should keep a class register to identify discrepancies from the whole school register.

In all schools attendance must be recorded at least twice daily, morning and afternoon.

3.2 Recording of attendance

For the purposes of this circular, attendance is defined as participation in a programme of educational activities arranged by the school.

3.2.1 Attendance at events organised by the school

Children and young people who attend events during the school day, that have been arranged by the school, should have their attendance recorded using the appropriate attendance codes. These attendance codes include:

- *'school visit'* (VIS/V);
- *'field trip'* (FLD/F);
- *'other attendance out of school'* (OAT/O); and
- *'work placement'* (WRK/W).

Attendance at events organised by the school encompasses a range of activities within the category of attendance (out of school but marked present), such as:

- work experience;
- educational visits;
- day and residential visits to outdoor centres;
- college/consortium school study;
- attendance at assessment centres, unless taken off the school roll;
- interviews and visits regarding further and higher education;
- debates, sports, musical or theatrical productions arranged by or in conjunction with the school;
- activities connected to Psychological Services;
- off-site school medical examinations;
- study leave;
- receiving tuition via hospital or outreach teaching services; and
- interviews with prospective employers.

3.3 Recording of authorised absence

3.3.1 Participation at events not organised by the school, but approved by the school

Naturally, there will be occasions when parents request that their children and young people be given permission by the head teacher to attend during the school day events, training sessions or performances, which have not been arranged by the school. Head teachers should evaluate the merits of requests on a case by case basis to determine whether approval should be given by the school for the child or young person to attend such events or activities.

When permission has been given by the head teacher, it is important that **all educational establishments record the absence in a consistent manner**, thus ensuring that all children and young people are treated fairly.

For children or young people who attend an event during the school day, which has not been arranged by the school but is approved by the head teacher, the appropriate opening(s) must be recorded as **'other authorised absence' (ABS/A)**. The student's attendance figure will decrease as a result of his/her attendance at the event.

Of course, the Education Department will continue to support and encourage all children and young people to be actively engaged in all manner of activities, arranged by schools or otherwise, which furthers their development in line with the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. However, the guidance on attendance at approved non-school organised events is clear.

The category of authorised absence includes absence deriving from reasons such as:

- illness where no learning provision is made;
- medical and dental appointments - to be recorded as permission (per) in SEEMIS Click & Go;
- meetings prior to and in court;
- attendance at, or in connection with, a Children's Hearing or Care Review, or appointment with another service provider, e.g. Social Work;
- religious observance;
- bereavement;
- weddings or funerals of close family members;
- arranged absence in relation to children in gypsy/traveller families;
- participation in non-school debates, sports, musical or drama activities agreed by the school;
- lack of transport – including due to bad weather;
- exceptional domestic circumstances;
- only those family holidays agreed by the school to be taken in exceptional circumstances; and
- period of exclusion - to be recorded in a separate category in SEEMIS Click & Go as Exclusion (exc)

3.3.2 Awarding of attendance certificates

Naturally, children, young people and their parents/carers are proud of their high levels of attendance and rightly wish to celebrate, and have recognised, their achievement. Those children whose attendance rate does not meet the threshold for receiving a certificate, as a direct result of attendance at approved non-school organised events, will receive a certificate.

3.4 Recording of unauthorised absence

The category of unauthorised absence includes absence deriving from reasons such as:

- unexplained absence;
- truancy (unauthorised absence from school for any period as a result of premeditated or spontaneous action on the part of pupil, parent or both); and
- most family holidays during term time.

3.5 Sickness

Section 40 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 requires education authorities to make special arrangements for sick pupils to receive education elsewhere than at an educational establishment, if the pupil is deemed unable to attend school due to prolonged ill health.

Previously, where a child was receiving tuition in hospital, this was defined as attendance. In keeping with the 2000 Act, sickness where an appropriate level of educational provision is being provided via a tutor in hospital, or in another location, e.g. at home, should be categorised as attendance.

Sickness, where no such provision is provided, should continue to be categorised as self or medically certified on the SEEMIS management information system.

3.6 Study leave

As study leave is part of a programme arranged by the school, rather than granted at pupil or parent request, it falls within the definition of attendance. Schools will be best placed to decide the study leave programme and how children will be supported during this time. This may result in children attending school or college or having leave. Study leave (during the period from the official start date of the national exam timetable until the restart of timetabled lessons for affected pupils in the school) should be recorded as 'study leave' on the management information system. Prelim exams do not fall into the category of study leave and as such schools should ensure that pupils attend as normal.

3.7 Patterns of attendance

Where pupils exhibit a pattern of attendance, which may warrant investigation, head teachers should arrange for the relevant staff to investigate and report.

Schools should diligently record such absences. This will enable regular checks to be made on the reasons for absence and will facilitate systematic visits to the family to impress upon parents and children that irregular attendance patterns have been noted. The maintenance of SEEMIS pastoral notes and staff comments thereon should provide the necessary evidence in any subsequent action against the parents.

The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on parents to provide education for their children. Where a child of school age has attended a public school, fails to attend regularly, the parent shall be deemed to have failed to secure regular attendance of their child at school. Education Staff are empowered to refer the child to the Children's Reporter.

3.8 Exemption from Attendance

The Authority as prescribed in Section 34 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 may grant exemption from the obligation to attend school. Such exemptions are applicable only in respect of children over 14 years of age and would be granted by reason of exceptional hardship at home (but not financial hardship).

Applications by the parents or carers require to be made through the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) who, upon receipt of the application, will first consult the head teacher of the school and, where appropriate, obtain the views of the School Medical Officer and if necessary Social Work. Approval will be given by the Director of Education or by a delegated Head of Education Services.

3.9 Wherever Learning Takes Place

More pupils are now learning in a variety of settings, gaining specific support for learning or accessing learning provided by other agencies or providers, in partnership with schools. The school's policies and procedures for managing attendance and absence should be agreed with every service involved in providing for pupils. A system should be in place to enable centralised recording of attendance and absence for each pupil, by the school in which the pupil is registered. If this is not collated by the school on a daily basis, then any action ordinarily taken by the school when there is absence should be taken on by the partner provider.

If absence is a concern for pupils accessing support from another provider, then partnership working between the provider, the school and the education authority would be expected on a similar staged basis **to the procedures currently employed by schools in dealing with cases of absence (as detailed in section 3.9)**, to fulfil the education authority's duty to register attendance at school and follow-up absence.

3.10 Alerting schools and parents about non-attendance

Parents should be informed that it is their responsibility to advise schools if their child or children will not be in attendance on a particular day. Parents should also be informed that they should report to schools the estimated return date from a period of non-attendance.

If, at a certain point in the school day, a pupil is not in attendance and there has been no satisfactory reason provided by parents and carers, the school should take all reasonable steps to inform the parent that the child is not in attendance; this can be expedited by using the text messaging facility within the SEEMIS Click & Go application. In primary, secondary and special schools parents should be informed by 10.30 a.m. of an unexplained absence.

If, after trying to inform parents of a missing child currently attending nursery or primary school, there has been no satisfactory response, the Police should be informed that a child is not in attendance at school.

3.11 Family holidays during term time

The majority of family holidays taken during term time should be categorised as unauthorised absence. However, it is acceptable under exceptional circumstances for schools to authorise a family holiday during term time. Such circumstances may include:

- a family holiday judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.

A family holiday classified under the "authorised absence" category should not include such reasons as:

- the availability of cheap holidays;
- the availability of desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced during school holidays;
- holidays which overlap the beginning or end of term; and
- parental difficulty obtaining leave (with local judgement applied in cases where evidence is provided by the employer that it cannot accommodate leave during school holidays without serious consequences).

Family holidays with the above and similar characteristics should be classified as unauthorised absence and should be recorded on the management information system as 'Parental Holiday (UPH)'. Where a school's prior agreement has not been sought the absence should be classed as unauthorised. In such occasions, schools will not provide work for pupils, however on the child's return, it may be decided by school staff that additional work is required.

3.12 Extended leave with parental consent

Where most family holidays will be recorded as unauthorised absence, extended leave with parental consent should not be considered the same as a family holiday. Extended leave with parental consent should be recorded separately outside the figures for attendance and absence and includes circumstances such as:

- extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school;
- short-term parental placement abroad;
- family returning to its country of origin (to care for a relative, or for cultural reasons); and
- leave in relation to the children of travelling families.

Within the SEEMIS Click & Go application, extended leave with parental consent should be recorded as such using code 'EXL'.

3.13 Exceptional domestic circumstances

Absences related to short term exceptional domestic circumstances can be classified as both authorised and unauthorised absence. Authorised absence under this heading covers situations such as:

- the period immediately after an accident or illness;
- a period of serious or critical illness of a close relative; and
- a domestic crisis which causes serious disruption to the family home, causing temporary relocation.

Authorised absence due to exceptional domestic circumstances should be recorded within the SEEMIS Click & Go management information system as such using attendance code 'DCA'.

Under section 40 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, education authorities must ensure that young people within their catchment areas do not miss out on their entitlement to an education. Education authorities must also ensure that a solution is found for the long-term educational needs of pupils with care responsibilities. (Information on carers and young carers' entitlement to assessment can be found in the Health and Social Care Act 2001). If a pupil is unable to attend school due to such responsibilities, there is an expectation that additional support services will be accessed to support the pupil, and their absence from education will not be long-term and therefore categorised as authorised absence. However, where additional services have not been accessed and care responsibilities become long-term, the absence should be categorised as unauthorised absence.

3.14 Exclusion

In addition, as exclusion is imposed by the school and not the action of a pupil or parent, it does not sit comfortably within the definition of unauthorised absence. Exclusions should therefore be recorded as '*Exclusion (EXC)*' within the management information system. (Recording of attendance and absence should cease when a pupil is removed from the register of the school.) For pupils undertaking off-site education as a part measure to address indiscipline, please refer to section 3.9, Wherever Learning Takes Place.

3.14.1 Definition of removal from the register

Removal from the school register occurs when:

- the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) uses the power under Standard Circular 8 to permanently exclude a pupil from school, arising from incidents in class or outside of class;
- the pupil is withdrawn by his/her parents with the consent of the education authority;
- the pupil is known to be attending another school;
- learning is taking place elsewhere; or
- when the pupil is absent for a period of four consecutive weeks and is unable to be traced.

If a child's whereabouts is unknown within this four-week period, reference should be made to the Authority's child protection procedures for guidance on appropriate action and in particular Standard Circulars 57, 57a and 57b as appropriate. In all cases, appropriate arrangements should be made for the transfer of pupil records as described by the Authority's child protection guidelines, following removal from the register.

4. EXCEPTIONAL CLOSURES

There will be exceptional circumstances where a school must be closed, either foreseen such as elections or unforeseen such as damage to the building or extreme weather.

Any decision to close a school must be taken by the Director of Education or a delegated Head of Education Services.

Where only a minority of pupils are in attendance for the whole or any part of the day's partial closure, the school will be regarded as closed for the purpose of formal pupil registration.

If, for an exceptional reason, a school is closed, this will be indicated under "closed".

If some educational provision is on offer to any group of pupils, then a register must be kept of those pupils present at each class held. This will cover possible emergencies, which may arise during the course of the day.

Where it is possible to provide education for the majority of the pupils, this should be regarded as normal opening and the pupils who cannot be accommodated should be given credit for attendances, which they might have made in normal circumstances.

5. LEAVING DATES

Pupils who attain the age of 16 years on or between 1 March and 30 September cease to be of school age on 31 May. Pupils who attain the age of 16 years on or between 1 October and the last day of February cease to be of school age on the first day of the Christmas holiday period.

A pupil is then free from the obligation to attend school and may leave.

6. EARLY TRANSFER TO FURTHER EDUCATION OR A TRAINING PROVIDER

A pupil who is nearing school-leaving age may transfer to an appropriate full-time further education course in advance of his/her normal leaving date. This will require the prior approval of the Director of Education or a delegated Head of Education Services who will require being satisfied that:

- the pupil has completed four years of secondary education;
- the course is a full-time one providing subjects approved by the Education Department and it is the view of the Education Department that, the pupil, because of his/her circumstances, would benefit from such a placement; and
- the parents or carers are responsible for any transport costs incurred.

7. SCHOOL LEAVERS

Pupils who indicate that they are leaving school for any reason should identify when this is to happen as soon as possible.

8. MONITORING

Annual statistics on attendance and absence are reported to the Education Committee, to parents and to The Scottish Government. These are outlined in the annual report to parents and in the Education Department's annual Standards & Quality report.

9. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND SCENARIOS FOR RECORDING ATTENDANCE OF NON-SCHOOL ORGANISED EVENTS

9.1 I have received a letter from a parent of a child who has requested that the child is allowed to leave school at lunchtime every Wednesday afternoon to attend rehearsals for the Christmas pantomime performance at the King's Theatre in Glasgow. How should I record this child's attendance during these openings?

- The child may be given permission to attend these sessions at the discretion of the head teacher. As this is a non-school organised event, the child's attendance record for these particular openings should be recorded as 'Other authorised absence (ABS)' within SEEMIS Click & Go. The pupil and parent should be advised that attendance at this event will result in a decrease in the child's attendance figure.

9.2 A pupil has been selected to play football for the Scottish Schools' football team resulting in them travelling abroad and being absent from school for four days. The pupil was recommended to the coaches of the Scottish Schools' team by the school.

- Although recommended by the school for inclusion, the pupil will be attending a non-school organised sporting event, without a member of school staff in attendance. Consequently, the pupil's attendance may be approved by the head teacher, however, the openings in question must be recorded as 'Other authorised absence (ABS)' within SEEMIS Click & Go and the pupil and parent should be advised accordingly.

9.3 An application submitted by a school for a group of pupils to take part in a two day practical science course aimed at encouraging children in primary schools to become more interested in the subject, has been approved.

- This is an educational visit organised by the school and as such the children's attendance openings for the two days should be recorded as 'School Visit' (VIS/V). This will result in the child's attendance being unaffected by their participation in this event.

9.4 The local gymnastics club has requested that a pupil be allowed to leave school at lunchtime to attend training sessions on a Friday afternoon. This has been followed by a formal request from the parent. The parent/carer has advised that the pupil is aiming to compete at the next Commonwealth games.

- Regardless of the level at which the child or young person is participating at, any non-school arranged events must be recorded as 'Other authorised absence (ABS)' within SEEMIS Click & Go. Again, if approval is given, the pupil and parent must be advised that this will result in a decrease in the pupil's attendance figure.

9.5 A pupil has been accepted to attend a day release course at a local further education college.

- The pupil is attending another educational establishment arranged by the school. As a result, the pupil's attendance for the openings in question should be recorded as 'Other Attendance out of school (OAT)'; this will not affect his/her attendance rate. It is the responsibility of the teaching centre, in this case the

college, to inform the school if the pupil is absent and for the school to keep an accurate recording of attendance.

10. ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE CODES

The full list of codes used in schools' electronic management information system (Click & Go) for attendance and absence are as follows:

Code	Short	Description	ScotXed	Poss	Att	Abs	Unauth
HOL	H	Holiday					
CLO	C	Closed (e.g. election)					
INS	I	In-Service					
SNA	H	Should Not Attend					
EXL	Z	Extended leave with parental consent	02				
---	-	Present	10	*	*		
PER	P	Medical or Dental Appointment	10	*	*		
MIS	M	Missing	10	*	*		
FLD	V	Field Trip	10	*	*		
VIS	V	School Visit	10	*	*		
STY	S	Study Leave	10	*	*		
LAT	J	Late (arrives before mid-point)	11	*	*		
WRK	W	Work Placement	12	*	*		
SEP	B	Sickness with educational provision	13	*	*		
SCH	~	In school but not in class	10	*	*		
OAT	O	Other attendance out of school	10	*	*		
MED	F	Medically Certified	20	*		*	
SEL	D	Self-Certified	20	*		*	
LT2	K	Late (arrives after mid-point)	21	*		*	
PHL	E	Authorised Parental Holiday	22	*		*	
DCA	Q	Exceptional domestic circumstances (auth)	23	*		*	
ABS	A	Other authorised Absence	24	*		*	
TBC	T	To be Confirmed	31	*			*
UPH	G	Parental Holiday	30	*			*
UNA	U	Truancy or Unexplained Absence	31	*			*
DCU	R	Exceptional domestic circumstances (unauth)	32	*			*
OUA	N	Other unauthorised absence	33	*			*
EXC	X	Exclusion	40	*			
NIS	D	Notifiable illness (self-certified)	20	*		*	
NIM	F	Notifiable illness (medically certified)	20	*		*	
NIX	H	Should not attend (notifiable illness)					

ScotXed Categories

Code	Description	Poss	Att	Abs	Unauth	Exclusion
01	Possible half-day attendances					
02	Extended leave with parental consent					
10	Attendance	*	*			
11	Late 1: arrives before 50% of opening	*	*			
12	Work Experience	*	*			
13	Sickness with educational provision	*	*			
20	Sickness with no educational provision	*		*		
21	Late 2: arrives after 50% of opening	*		*		
22	Family holidays authorised by school	*		*		
23	Exceptional domestic circumstances (authorised)	*		*		
24	Other authorised absence	*		*		
30	Family holidays not authorised by school	*			*	
31	Truancy, including unexplained absence	*			*	
32	Exceptional domestic circumstances (unauthorised)	*			*	
33	Other unauthorised absence	*			*	
40	Temporary exclusion	*				*

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