



Community Services: Education

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To: Heads of all Educational Establishments

Dear Colleague

School and Early Learning and childcare attendance and absence

1 Recording attendance

It is the responsibility of the head teacher/campus principal to record accurately the attendance of each child or young person on their school roll in SEEMiS Click and Go, as detailed in the charts in appendices 1 and 2.

2 Notification of absence

Head teachers/campus principals should remind parents and carers annually of their responsibility to inform the school on the first day of their child's absence and each day thereafter, where appropriate.

3 Monitoring of attendance

Head teachers/campus principals should put in place procedures to monitor children's and young people's attendance which places priority on securing the safety of all children and young people, as in appendix 1 and appendix 2; for example, by telephoning in the morning or using an electronic system which provides automatic alerts to parents/carers.

4 Hours of attendance

The hours of attendance per week for school children and young people are currently 27.5 for secondary and 25 for primary.

5 School attendance and absence

The guidance in this circular relates primarily to the classification of attendance and absence rather than decisions on the determination of individual cases. The guidance is not intended to be comprehensive, but to resolve certain anomalies in previous practice and provide useful overall guidance to schools.

Additional information is contained in *Supporting Children: Supporting Effective Learning*, Section J; Paper 4: School Attendance.

Attendance and absence codes for the current session are contained in appendix 3.

6 Definition of attendance

For the purposes of this standard circular, attendance is defined as participation in a programme of educational activities arranged by the school. In addition to actual attendance within the school premises, this encompasses a range of other 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;
- interviews and visits relating to 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 and dental examinations;
- study leave;
- receiving tuition via hospital or outreach teaching services;
- receiving alternative and off-site provision which is arranged because of indiscipline, including school refusers who participate in a programme of education outwith school.

Where bulk entry of register marks is made in SEEMiS Click and Go, for example Study Leave or OAT, extreme care should be taken to remove these marks from pupils who were not present on the day and replaced with the correct absence code. This is because there is a danger that pupils who are persistently absent are showing as present on these days due to the bulk entry of a 'present' code. It is the school's responsibility to accurately record a pupil's attendance/absence at each school opening.

Alternative/off-site provision as part of a learning programme

Children and young people attending alternative/off-site provision as part of a learning programme (not necessarily in relation to indiscipline) should be marked either present or absent within the provision, and information transferred to the school. This means that schools should liaise with alternative providers to ensure that attendance is recorded and monitored for the entirety of each child or young person's learning programme, as it is for children and young people whose learning programme is entirely within the formal school curriculum. This will involve periodic collection of attendance data from alternative providers to update schools'

own records for these children and young people. For example pupils on a Flexible Learning Plan or P7 Transition Visits.

Off-site provision for children of travelling families

In keeping with paragraph 5 of Circular 5/03, the category of attendance should further include off-site provision for children of travelling families, provided that they are on the roll of the school. Participation in lessons outside school premises should therefore be classified as attendance, and the children marked present.

Local Authority Obligations

Under section 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents of school age children must provide education for their children either by attendance at a public school or by other means. Schools in turn must maintain an attendance register and record child and young person absence for each morning and afternoon school session. This should be recorded **daily** in SEEMiS Click and Go for all pupils. Education authorities must record the authorised and unauthorised absence of all school children and young people, and have powers to enforce the statutory requirements on school attendance by making attendance orders, referring children whose attendance is unsatisfactory to the Reporter to the Children's Panel or by reporting parents of children who do not attend to the Procurator Fiscal.

Further, in having due regard to children and young peoples' care and welfare and exercising appropriate vigilance in relation to health and safety, schools must be in a position to account for those present within the campus at any given time.

7 Prolonged ill health

Section 40 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 requires that special arrangements be made for sick children and young people to receive education other than at an educational establishment, if the child or young person is deemed unable to attend school due to prolonged ill health. Further guidance on out-of-school education for children absent from school for long-term medical reasons is contained in *Supporting Children, Supporting Effective Learning* - Section C, Paper 4: Out of School Education for Children Absent from School for long-term medical reasons.

Previously, no distinction was made between sickness where a child was simply absent from school and sickness where some form of tuition or other education was provided. Where a child was receiving tuition in hospital, this was defined as

attendance. In keeping with the 2000 Act, therefore, sickness where an appropriate level of educational provision is being provided should be recategorised as Sickness with Education Provision using the code as defined in Appendix 3.. This will count towards a pupil's attendance rather than as an absence. Sickness where no such provision is provided should continue to be categorised as authorised using either the Self Cert or Medically certified absence codes.

It should be noted that School's have a duty to provide education for pupils, at the earliest convenience and certainly no more than 15 working days of continuous or 20 working days of intermittent absence.

There is no duty for the pupil to complete the work provided. However sickness with Education Provision can be used regardless of the number of days absent on condition that education is being provided outwith the school environment.

8 Patterns of absence and the involvement of the attendance officer

This section should be read in conjunction with *Supporting Children: Supporting Effective Learning*, Section J, Paper 4: School Attendance, paragraphs 2.3 to 3.9.

- 8.1 Where children and young people exhibit a pattern of absence, which may warrant investigation, head teachers/campus principals should investigate and report. Reports are available in the SEEMiS Click and Go system to facilitate this.

Schools should diligently record such absences and also inform the officer of additional absences as they occur. This allows a regular check to be kept on the reasons for absence and enables systematic visits to the family to impress upon both parents and children the fact that failure to ensure regular attendance at school has been noted. Absence records along with the Head Teacher's observations will provide the evidence necessary should action against the parents be authorised.

Schools should refer to their Attendance Policy when it becomes apparent that a pattern of non-attendance or attendance is below a certain level. It is recommended that the policy details what level of attendance is deemed to be acceptable and lays out what actions will be taken at what stage of non/poor attendance as laid out in *Supporting Children: Supporting Effective Learning*, Section J, Paper 4: School Attendance .

If attendance communications are not sent using the SEEMiS Click and Go Standard Letters module, a pastoral note should be added to show the date and type of attendance communication sent under the pastoral note category Attendance.

- 8.2 The Council has delegated to the local attendance council the power to (a) write; (b) interview; (c) to recommend to the clerk to the attendance council prosecution of parents in default of their responsibilities in accordance with the prescribed procedures. In addition the attendance council is empowered to refer the child to the Reporter to the Children's Panel if this becomes necessary.
- 8.3 The area clerk will superintend and co-ordinate the work of Head Teachers and be responsible for the administrative work concerned with paragraph 5.2 above.

Additional information is contained in *Supporting Children: Supporting Effective Learning*, Section J, Paper 4: School Attendance.

9 Attendance and absence: guidance to local authorities

The previous classification of study leave as authorised absence is updated by the current guidance. As study leave is part of a programme arranged by the school, rather than granted at young person or parent request, it falls within the definition of attendance. Study leave (during the period from the official start date of the national exam timetable until the restart of timetabled lessons for affected children and young people in the school) should therefore be categorised as attendance using the appropriate code as detailed in Appendix 3.

9.1 Self certified sickness absence for pupils should be marked as D (self certified).

9.1.1 Where a sickness absence lasts longer than 5 school days, pupils require to provide a medical certificate and this should be recorded as such.

9.1.2 Where a sickness absence lasts longer than 27 consecutive half days, the absence should be recorded as Sickness with Education provision. Please note that a medical certificate is still required.

9.1.3 Where it is agreed between the school and parent/carer, a pupil with ill health can attend school with a reduced timetable. The openings (usually am and pm) they are not expected to attend should be recorded in SEEMiS Click and Go using the Part Time Timetable Health related code.

9.2 Authorised absence

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

- bereavement;
- short-term exceptional domestic circumstances;
- religious observance: at the request of their parents, children of ethnic or religious minority background may be permitted to be absent from school for up to three occasions in any one session in order to celebrate recognised religious events;
- meetings prior to and in court;
- attendance at or in connection with a children's hearing or care review;
- weddings of immediate family;
- agreed debates, sports, musical or theatrical productions not arranged by or in conjunction with the school;
- sanctioned extended absence in relation to children of travelling families;
- attendance at examinations in locations outside school;
- any other educational activity approved by the Executive Director of Community Services or responsible head of service.

- Maternity leave of the pupil

- Dental or Medical Appointments

These are recorded as PER and count as authorised attendance. Primary Schools should record all dental and medical appointments where the pupil misses registration to be at the appointment. This means that the pupil will be marked as PER for the opening that they are missing.

However a pupil may only miss the first hour of a morning or afternoon session and schools should ensure that any pupil who returns to school reports to reception and a Latest Pastoral Note added to advise time of return to school. The Fire register **must** then be updated to show that the pupil is now in school. Do **not** change the PER register code to present.

During exceptional circumstances, eg fuel shortage, fire, election, strikes etc, where a school is closed for a whole day the number of school openings will be reduced by the number of days total closure and registers will not be marked.

Where only a minority of children and young people are in attendance for the whole or any part of the day, the school will be regarded as closed for the purpose of formal child and young person registration and the number of school openings will be reduced by the number of days of partial closure and registers will not be marked. The school calendar requires to be updated in SEEMiS Click and Go to show the reduction in opening days. As registration can't be taken in SEEMiS Click and Go once the session(s) is marked as a closure; a paper or online register must be taken and kept for the pupils who were in attendance. Best practice dictates that this would also be recorded in their Pastoral Notes.

However, where it is possible to provide education for the majority of children and young people, this should be regarded as a normal opening and the children and young people who cannot be accommodated should be given credit for attendances, which they might have made in normal circumstances. This should be recorded as Other Authorised Absence.

The total number of attendances at the end of the year should indicate the number of openings approved by the Executive Director of Community Services, less the number of non-attendances due to the exceptional circumstance situations and nationally agreed in-service days.

The reason for the non-attendance must be marked on the register. Where schools are deemed to be closed for the purpose of formal child and young person registration but some educational provision is offered to any group of children and young people then a register must be kept of those children and young people present at each class. This register will be used in emergencies and for future reference should this prove to be necessary.

9.3 Extended leave with parental consent

Extended leave with parental consent should be recorded separately outside the figures for attendance and absence (see appendix 3 for relevant code) 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.

9.4 Exceptional domestic circumstances

Absences related to short-term exceptional domestic circumstances can be classified as both authorised and unauthorised absence. 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;
- a domestic crisis which causes serious disruption to the family home, causing temporary relocation.

As education authorities under section 40 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act (2000) must, so far as practicable and without undue delay, ensure young people within their catchment areas do not miss out on their entitlement to an education, a solution must be found for the long-term educational needs of children and young people 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 child or young person is unable to attend school due to such responsibilities, there is an expectation that additional support services will be assessed to support the child or young person, 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.

Where children and young people have care responsibilities applications for exemption are made by the parent or carer to the school and must be approved by a senior officer within the education authority. Any exemption so granted will last until the start of the following session and may be reviewed if appropriate. The education authority will keep a register of exemptions granted with the name of the child, the circumstances under which the exemption was granted with any condition attached. This should be categorised as Authorised absence and detailed in the pupil's pastoral notes.

10 Exclusion

Exclusions should be recorded and reported separately from other types of absence, and recorded using the Exclusion code. Recording of attendance and absence should cease when a child or young person is permanently removed from the register of the school. Where a child or young person is excluded

and undertaking off-site education as a part measure to address indiscipline, this should be categorised as authorised absence and recorded as Part time timetable Exclusion related

10.1 Specific guidance pertaining to procedures relating to indiscipline and exclusion are contained in education management circular 3.08.

11 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 child or young person, parent or both);
- most family holidays during term time (see below).

Where a pupil's whereabouts is unknown this should be recorded as TBC until such time as a parent can be contacted to determine the reason for absence. If details of the absence are not confirmed by the parent within a two period of the absence the TBC should be amended to Truancy or Unexplained absence. If the parent confirms the reasons for the absence then the TBC should be changed to the appropriate code.

Please note that if a parent advises that a pupil was sick this should be counted as sickness and not as Unauthorised Absence.

11.1 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 well-being 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;
- 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. In relation to previous circulars, a criterion of otherwise satisfactory or otherwise unsatisfactory attendance was attached to the differentiation of family holidays as authorised or unauthorised absence. While otherwise unsatisfactory attendance may well be one reason for a school to withhold agreement to absence for a family holiday, it may not be the only factor needing to be taken into account. The decision on recording absence as authorised or unauthorised should be made based on the criteria outlined above. Further guidance is contained in *Supporting Children, Supporting Effective Learning*, Section J; Paper 4: School Attendance

12 Definition of removal from the register

Removal from the school register is defined as:

- permanently excluded from the school, arising from incidents in class or outside of class;
- withdrawn by parents with the consent of the education authority such as home educated pupils;
- known to be attending another school;
- special arrangements having been made to receive education elsewhere than at an educational establishment;
- absent for a period of 4 consecutive weeks and unable to be traced.

If a child's whereabouts is unknown within this 4 week period, reference should be made to the authority's child protection procedures for guidance on appropriate action. In all cases, appropriate arrangements should be made for the transfer of the child or young person's records as described by the authority's child protection guidelines, following removal from the register.

Electronic records should be transferred using the appropriate SEEMiS leaving code Please refer to MC3.07 On transfer of PPRs and retention of records.

Pupils leaving school for Home Education

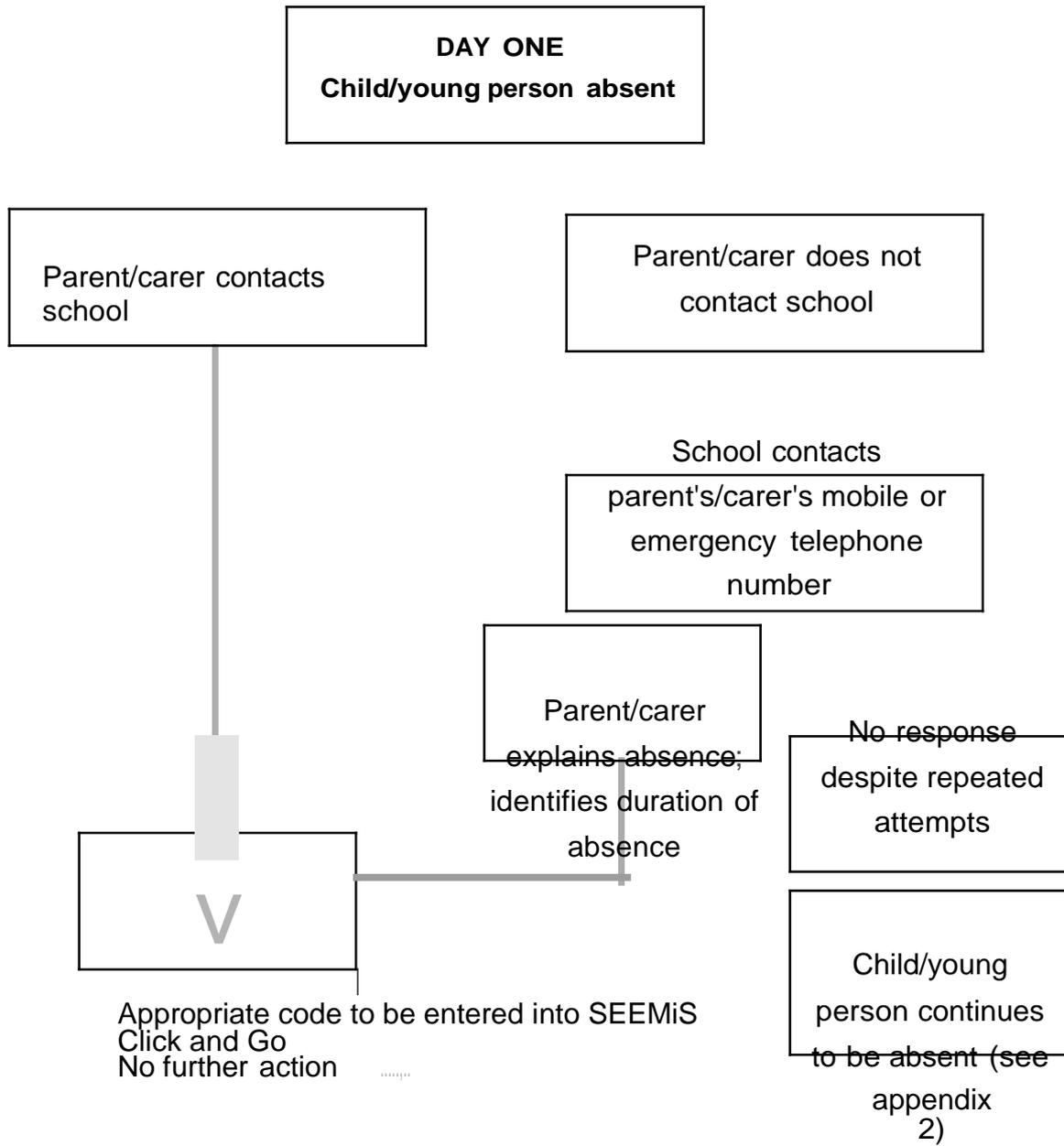
If a pupil is removed from school pending approval of a Home Education application the pupil should be marked as Other Authorised Absence until approval has been granted and the pupil is removed from the register.

Yours sincerely

Executive Director of Community Services

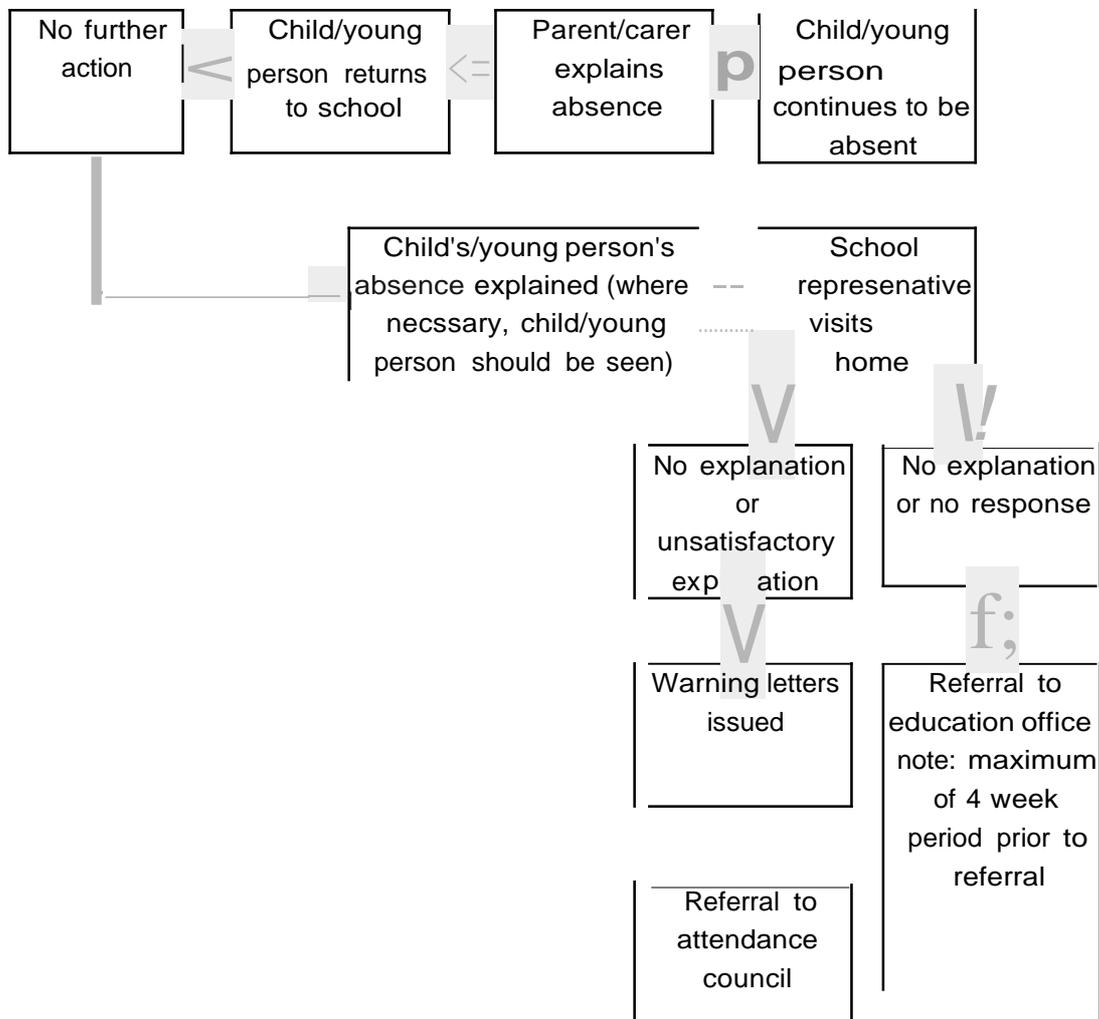
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Appendix 1



Child/young person continues to be absent or is repeatedly absent

School contacts home by letter, call, appointment (HT, pastoral [redacted] is on child protection care team, attendance team) If child/young person register, contact Social Work. SEEMiS C&G holds this information



Appendix 3

Attendance and absence codes

Attendance and absence information will be provided to Scottish Government at individual child or young person level. Under specified attendance and absence categories. This appendix summarises the categories on the Click & Go pupil records application. Further information can be obtained from the authority (you should refer to the authority for guidance if you are unsure as to which category is appropriate in a particular case).

Lateness Scottish Government have specified that lateness will be divided into 2 separate categories. An 'early' late, where the child or young person arrives on or before the mid-point of the opening, will be specified by the mark LAT and will count as attendance. A 'late' late, where the child or young person arrives after the mid-point of the opening, will be specified by the mark LT2 and will count as an authorised absence.

Permission PER (absent with permission) is now to be used for medical and dental appointments only; it no longer covers absent with permission for anything else.

Study leave 'Study leave', mark S, will count as attendance.

Application changes

A new option, 'Attendance codes' (AD), has been provided. This allows you to display or print all user-entry absence codes with details of how they are interpreted.

The option 'Mark latecomers' will now ask which lateness category to use for each child or young person.

The ability to specify which registration marks can be used by each user (by amending their registration user access record) has been discontinued.

Marks and categories in detail

As in previous years, a single registration mark must be specified for each (half day) opening that each child or young person attends at your school.

The majority of these marks (for normal attendance, school holidays etc) are obtained by default without the need for users to do anything.

Pupils are presumed to be present in SEEMiS Click and Go and therefore if a pupil is present and on time no details need to be added.

The following marks (Click & Go equivalents in brackets) do not count towards possible attendance, attendance, authorised absence or unauthorised absence.

- H (HOL) Holiday
- I (INS) In-service day
- C (CLO) Closed (eg election)
- Z (EXL) Extended leave with parental consent
(only the last of these codes can be entered directly by the user)

The remaining marks all count toward possible attendance. The following marks count as attendance.

- B (SEP) Sickness with educational provision
- J (LAT) Late (arrives before mid-opening)
- M (MIS) Missing - should only be used where the child or young person is missing but known to be in school; traditionally SEEMIS has this allocated as a method of noting disruptive behaviour
- S (STY) Study leave
- V (FLD) Field trip
- V (VIS) School visit
- W (WRK) Work experience / Voluntary Work
- OAT Other attendance out of school eg P7 transition visits and pupils on FLPs
- SCH In school but not in class
- Y Part Time Timetable Exclusion related
- = Part Time Timetable Health related

The following marks count as authorised absence.

- A (ABS) Other authorised absence
- D (SEL) Self-certified sickness
- E (PHL) Authorised parental holiday
- F (MED) Medically certified
- K (LT2) Late (arrives after mid-opening)
- P (PER) Medical or dental appointment
- Q (DCA) Exceptional domestic circumstances (authorised)

The following marks count as unauthorised absence.

- U (UNA) Truancy or unexplained absence
- G (UPH) Parental holiday
- N (OUA) Other unauthorised absence
- R (DCU) Exceptional domestic circumstances (unauthorised)
- X (EXC) Exclusion