



Department of
Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

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Our Ref: **DE/2021-0073**

Date: 21 June 2021

Dear S Long

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I am responding to your request for information, which I received on 31 May 2021. In that request, you asked for school attendance marks during the covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns:

a). When schools closed in March 2020, what SIMS code did schools use to mark their students as up until 30 June 2020? And did the children of key workers who attended during that period of time get a present mark?

When schools closed on 23rd March 2020 as a result of the first lockdown, schools recorded pupils attendance as Code ! – attendance not required. This code did not have a negative impact on pupil attendance. Schools were asked to record children of key workers who attended during that period with a present mark.

b). When schools closed for an extra week at Halloween, what SIMS code was used to code this?

Schools were advised on the 14th October 2020 in DE Circular 2020/09 addendum how to record the circuit breaker at Halloween. This can be found [here](#)

c). When schools closed in January 2021, what SIMS code was used?

New COVID codes were introduced from the 4th January 2021 and schools were notified on 18th December 2020 through [DE Circular 2020/08 addendum](#). Subsequently, DE Circular 2020/08 has been revised from the 4th January 2021 to include those new codes. That circular can be found [here](#). This circular still remains in place.

d). Year 12-14 pupils who have now finished school due to the completion of their GCSE and A level courses and the finalisation of their centre determined grades, are they being marked as code S?

Code S, as per DE Circular 2020/08 states that

It should be noted that Study leave should be applied only to public examination candidates during the examination timetable. Public examinations are those which are authenticated or awarded by an outside person or organisation, and not internally by the school.

As public examinations were cancelled due to the current pandemic Study Leave would not be appropriate in these circumstances.

Should you be unhappy with the level of service you have received in relation to your request, you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this email. You may write to the Departmental Information Manager, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Rathgill, Bangor, BT19 7PR or send an email to FOI@education-ni.gov.uk, if you wish to make a complaint.

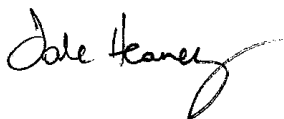
If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have a right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a review of the original decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625545826 Email: ico.org.uk

If you have any queries about this email, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you wish to discuss any of the above, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely



Dale Heaney
Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team

Dear Department of Education (Northern Ireland),

I would like to ask the following regarding school attendance marks during the covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns:

a). When schools closed in March 2020, what SIMS code did schools use to mark their students as up until 30 June 2020? And did the children of key workers who attended during that period of time get a present mark?

b). When schools closed for an extra week at Halloween, what SIMS code was used to code this?

c). When schools closed in January 2021, what SIMS code was used?

d). Year 12-14 pupils who have now finished school due to the completion of their GCSE and A level courses and the finalisation of their centre determined grades, are they being marked as code S?

Yours faithfully,

S. Long