



## Questions and Answers

### Webinar: ERO's Raising Attendance: Five Good Practices

**Date:** Wednesday 26 November, 2025

#### Transport

**Q: Kia ora. Can the govt support the local bus transport company to provide FREE buses between school hours for school-aged children? Or dramatically reduced cost?**

A: Most public transport authorities (PTAs) do offer concession fares for school-aged children—but it varies by region and policies. Check your local PTA's website for details.

If transport is a significant barrier to attendance for some students in your area then, from 2026, your local Attendance Service Provider (ASP) may be able to help. It would be worth talking to them.

#### Sharing Experiences

**Our attendance was a lot better when we moved our morning form time to after the first class. Students were late to form time but not late for classes.**

This is a good example of a practice where a small shift in the daily calendar can make a significant difference.

**We offer a casual clothes day for the whanau group that had the best attendance on the days we know kids often stay home for e.g. cross country and athletics day. Worked a treat.**

This is a good example of supporting students to attend regularly.

**I would like to see schools encourage families that move away from the school area and struggle to get their kids to a school regularly to go to their local school.**

Schools can work with their local ASP to support students to attend their closest school, especially when their attendance is no longer regular and they are at risk of becoming a chronic absentee.

## **Data and coding queries**

### **Q: what does the data show for changes in primary and secondary regular attendance 2023-2025?**

A: Regular attendance Term 3 2025 This is a link to a page in Education Counts where you can find a graph on page 9 that compares attendance across year levels over time. It can be seen that regular attendance up to Year 8 is strong with a decrease in the secondary years.

### **Q: With the new attendance codes, how accurate is the data considering each kura can decide the situations that constitute the different codes?**

A: There are four codes that school boards need to consider in their Attendance Policy: L for Late, Q for Board approved off-site learning, J for absence explained and approved, and E for absences not approved.

There is good advice in the Attendance Code Guidance for each code: Attendance Code Guidance.pdf Schools should be following this advice within the framework of the 4 codes mentioned above. Queries are accepted in the following mailbox if there is any confusion as to how to apply a code. Attendance.codes@education.govt.nz

### **Q: Can a code be made for tangi leave (accounts for 3-5% of our absence)**

A: Refer to the Attendance Code Guidance: Attendance Code Guidance.pdf where there is information on page 5 (Kaupapa Māori Settings), and further bullet points under the Q code, where there is reference to Board approved cultural activities.

### **Q: and a code for school refusal?**

A: School refusal should be considered as an absence that is explained and not approved. Alternatively, consideration needs to be given to the reasons behind school refusal, and in particular, if it is related to mental health including depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder. There is a bullet point under M – Illness / Medical absence to cover this type of absence. Students in the category of school refusal with extended absences need to be referred to an Attendance Service Provider for further support.

### **Q: Secondary students on study leave are being recorded as unjustified absences - will the MoE address this long-running issue?**

A: Secondary students on study leave are recorded with the X code. There is a note under this code in the Attendance Code Guidance.pdf that indicates that the X code is not counted in Ministry attendance calculations. This is for both daily attendance submissions and termly data in Every Day Matters reports. However, it is possible that a

school's SMS does not remove the X code when they are producing an attendance report for the school. Work is planned to consider coding for exam leave.

**Q: Can a school use code Q for Tangi and families travelling overseas for funerals and looking after sick family members.**

A: Yes a school board can approve this coding, however, schools should also be supporting these students to engage in learning during their absence in these exceptional circumstances. Many schools have very strong on-line learning systems to support on-going engagement, whilst some schools are also prepared to provide active learning tasks to complete during their absence.

**Q: There are so many variances in the way various codes are being applied - and therefore I am unsure if regional Every Day Matters data can be accurate/comparable**

A: Whilst there are some variances in the application of the Q code all schools are required to use the Ministry codes as set in each school's Student Management System. Attendance Codes webinars were held in Term 3 2025 to provide guidance on the consistent application of Attendance Codes. A transcript of this webinar and the Q and As can be found at: [Attendance codes - Ministry of Education](#)

The Ministry continues to provides support through regional Ministry offices or via the Attendance Code mailbox: [attendance.code@education.govt.nz](mailto:attendance.code@education.govt.nz)

### **Guidance for addressing absences**

**Q: A large percentage of our absences is from whānau taking holidays during the term - any advice on this?**

A: Section 36 of the Education and Training Act: [Education and Training Act 2020 No 38 \(as at 22 October 2025\)](#), [Public Act Contents – New Zealand Legislation](#) says: Students of registered schools are required to attend whenever schools are open. The Ministry does not support families taking holidays during term time. Families choosing to take holidays during term time can be reminded that it is unlawful . If this is a regular occurrence for the same family then schools may consider prosecution, once other options are exhausted.

Schools need to be relentless re expectations around taking holidays in term time and whilst this may make a small difference it is likely that this habit will continue for some

families, especially for migrant workers when holidays are determined by the low season in their agricultural employment.

**Q: The vast majority of our attendances are medical and term time holidays. (We have almost no truancy)**

A: Medical absences are always a challenge. We know that in Term 3 2025 there were very high levels of medical absences. There are times that a student is too unwell to be physically attending school, however they may be able to engage in on-line learning while they are recovering where the Q code could be applied.

**Q: And birthdays.....**

A: Student birthday is not a reason for absence from school. If families are travelling for very special birthdays then the J code could be applied for a short period of time, then it becomes the E code – explained and not approved.

**Q: We have a large number of families whose home country is not NZ. They travel in term time to check on parents who are sick, attend funerals, weddings etc. Some also go on sabbaticals, do PhD research. Any ideas?**

A: Firstly consider the families whose home country is not NZ. For many of these circumstances, a student's engagement in learning can be set up for the time of their absence. Otherwise, the principal has the discretion to apply the J code but for no more than 5 consecutive days.

For families whose parents are going on Sabbaticals or carrying out research and are likely to be gone for up to a school term or more then there are some options.

- The student could come off your school roll for the time of the absence and then re-enrol on return to school
- The student could have an absence code applied for the entire time – but knowing that as the student has not attended 20% of the term, their attendance will not be counted and therefore will not have a negative effect on the school's termly data
- After the 15 weeks the student's type could be changed in the school's SMS from RE to NA – which then implies the student is not attending, but remains on the school's roll because the absence is temporary and a return day is known
- If the student does not return at the notified time the period of 20 days of consecutive has been reached, the student is taken off the roll and a referral to the Attendance Service is generated as a priority.

**Q: So essentially there is no way to really address the in-term holidays for our culturally diverse families. It is what it is?**

A: If these culturally diverse families are immigrants and they return home for special occasions, or holidays due to low seasonal agricultural work, then consider how those students can be supported in their absence so on-going engagement in learning is occurring.

**Q: If the whanau do travel occasionally and tamariki in this whanau are high achieving regardless, do these whanau need targeting or not as much? There has been a little push back when we have questioned this in the past.**

A: If this travel only occurs occasionally, it is still considered to be an absence if in school term time. However, if the whānau is visiting other whānau in other areas of New Zealand then the students could attend a different school for a short period of time. This could involve a formal school enrolment or be considered as a visit with attendance covered off for Health and Safety reasons. Contact with the student's home school could also occur in this instance to confirm on-going attendance.

**Q: For our increasing number of students who are neurodiverse and/or have mental health issues, is there research or guidance on how best to support these students to have the best attendance possible? Should there be a differentiation in targets?**

A: There is currently not a set of rules that would allow for different targets. Advice would be to ensure there is an Individual Learning Plan for each of these students that would provide details of what learning is best and in what environment. A student may only manage to attend school physically for half a day, but continue to engage in learning activities in a different environment such as at home, or an activity away from home that is a learning opportunity. The board would have the discretion to apply the Q code for planned off-site activities.

**Q: what if we know the reason for non attendance - not the occasional days but months ??? and it is neurodiversity / mental health issues - then how long on our rolls????**

A: See response above. Consider an early chronic absence referral to the Attendance Service and the Health School. This type of absence could also meet criteria for enrolment at Te Kura with a possible transition plan back to school when possible.

### **School Roll practice**

**Q: We have students away for up to 5 months. We remove them from the roll but not their google classroom or email so they can still receive the work and keep on task.**

A: This is a good example of on-going support for these students and ensuring they continue to be engaged in learning. Rather than removing them from the roll completely

you can change their student type to NA, which implies they are not attending. If you leave their timetables open you may need to record their attendance using the Q code. However, recording attendance should not be required if their student type is NA.

**Q: How long can a student be away before they are removed from the roll? what is acceptable to the ministry?**

A: Principals are required to remove students off the roll after 20 days of absence. This then generates an Attendance Service referral. See page 6 of the Attendance Code Guidance: [Attendance\\_Guidance\\_v02B.pdf](#) that cover extended absences with an unknown cause.

**Q: Parents have informed us they are going overseas for 3 months...do we keep them on our roll?**

A: If you know where the student is and there is a return date you should keep them on the school's roll. This is considered to be a temporary absence. If the student does not return at the expected time then remove from the roll and proceed with an Attendance Service referral.

The student's absence will not be included in Ministry data if they have not attended more than 20% of the school term.

**Q: Why was the principals discretion taken away for the families who play the 20 day game of being away**

A: The STAR framework and the actions required at each threshold will support Principals to address these patterns of non- attendance sooner with families. Schools will still have discretion in how they respond to absences at each threshold. Where there are ongoing concerns with these patterns and the school has tried various options, the school should then consider a request for support from attendance service provider.

### **Access to support**

**Q: Coming from a school with high non-attendance and high needs we don't have the capacity to do it all. I feel like we're understaffed to do all that is required. Increased funding needs to be looked at.**

A: We encourage you to engage as early as possible with your Attendance Service Provider (ASP) who may be able to help... Your ASP also holds an unmet needs fund that can support schools to remove some barriers to attendance. We also suggest that you work closely with your the Ministry's Senior Education Advisor in your region who may be in a position to offer good attendance practices from other schools.

**Q: Trying to reduce barriers and putting supports in all costs time and money. I think you will find most schools are struggling in both of these areas. For us to fund a school counsellor 1x day per week it costs approx \$18K! Then I have to find the staff to keep the monitoring going etc. Sorry if this is negative but it is reality!**

A: See the response above for some suggestions. Many schools have placed the responsibility for recording and monitoring attendance on existing staff members who already have a requirement to carry out this work. That is, if a student is not in class, then that teacher needs to follow up the absence in the first instance.