

Introduction to School Attendance for Term 1 – all questions

Attendance Management

Q What absence threshold in the AMP requires schools to refer a student to Attendance Services??

A: Schools should consider referring a student to Attendance Services when there is a clear pattern of absence and the school has exhausted its own responses. Before referring to Attendance Services, schools should follow and document reasonable actions from their Attendance Management Plan (e.g., an individual attendance plan, engagement with whānau). Attendance Services is for when those efforts haven't improved attendance or where there are exceptional circumstances/complex barriers better supported by the Attendance Services.

Q: Is there an official threshold of absence at which time we need to refer a student to Attendance Services?

A: See answer above

Q: I am curious to know about using the STAR letter templates... please give some examples.

A: When a student reaches the STAR threshold, schools should consider the student's individual circumstances before initiating any response. These responses may vary between schools and should align with each school's existing processes and professional judgement.

If the absence is known (e.g., documented health or medical reasons), it may not be appropriate to issue a templated STAR letter. In such cases, schools should respond through their usual, more appropriate support and communication channels (e.g., a pastoral call, an Individual Education Plan meeting, or a tailored email).

Principals have discretion to decide whether sending the standard STAR letter is the right step, or whether a different communication, including no letter, is more suitable. Whatever approach is taken, schools should record the action and the rationale in SMS to ensure transparency and consistency with school processes.

The Ministry's letter templates are supports, not mandates. Schools are encouraged to adapt them so they fit their community, communication style, and the specific context of the situation, while still meeting the intent of the policy.

Q: The new AMP (attendance monitoring plan) in etap highlights school roles but not where the attendance service fits in. I'd like clarity on when to log a case with the attendance service and the expectations of the service provided and where that fits into ongoing responsibilities. i.e. when we've done EVERYTHING we can

possibly do and there's still unacceptable absence and we've logged it with Attendance Service, what is our role from then on?

A: Schools should consider referring a student to the Attendance Service when there is a clear pattern of absence and the school has exhausted its own responses. While referrals commonly occur once a student has reached more than 15 days of absence in a term, this should be guided by your Attendance Management Plan, which should outline when to seek support from the Attendance Services.

Q: What are the steps now for those very few that we just can't shift and are still non attenders? How do we go down prosecution or more serious consequences as that final resort?

A: For the small number of students who remain persistent non-attenders despite earlier interventions, schools should continue to reinforce clear expectations around attendance. This includes consistent messaging to families about the importance of regular attendance and educational achievement, alongside reminding parents and caregivers of their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school. Where a student reaches the level of chronic absence, schools should make a formal referral to the Attendance Service, who can provide targeted support.

Q: Scripts of key phrases to say

A: There is a Communicating with Parents resource that provides templated messages for students at each threshold. You can use these templates or alter them to fit your local context. See [here](#) for more details.

Q: Referring process; those waiting to be enrolled at another school but we are not taking them off the register until they have enrolled

If you have been informed by the parent that the student is transferring to another school, remove them from your school roll within 5 days and note the reason in ENROL. If the student does not enrol in another school you will be asked to complete a NEN referral form.

Q: Can we do multiple entries of contact for a child once they have hit 5 days away? Can we have attendance service involvement from day 5 absence?

A: Yes, schools can record multiple contact attempts for a student once they have reached five days of absence. This may include multiple entries or noting engagement as ongoing or under monitoring.

Before referring to attendance services, schools should follow and document reasonable actions from their Attendance Management Plan (e.g., an individual attendance plan, engagement with whānau). Attendance Services is for when those

efforts haven't improved attendance or where there are exceptional circumstances/complex barriers better supported by the Attendance Services.

Q: Hi there, I am curious to know about the discretionary times you may not use the STAR letters... please give some examples.

A: When a student reaches the STAR threshold, schools should consider the student's individual circumstances before initiating any response. These responses may vary between schools and should align with each school's existing processes and professional judgement.

If the absence is known (e.g., documented health or medical reasons), it may not be appropriate to issue a templated STAR letter. In such cases, schools should respond through their usual, more appropriate support and communication channels (e.g., a pastoral call, an Individual Education Plan meeting, or a tailored email).

Principals have discretion to decide whether sending the standard STAR letter is the right step, or whether a different communication, including no letter, is more suitable. Whatever approach is taken, schools should record the action and the rationale in SMS to ensure transparency and consistency with school processes.

The Ministry's letter templates are supports, not mandates. Schools are encouraged to adapt them so they fit their community, communication style, and the specific context of the situation, while still meeting the intent of the policy.

Q: Are there templates for communication to parents available at the several steps, or do we create our own?

A: You can find information for communicating to parents including templates on [Stepped attendance response – STAR - Ministry of Education](#)

Q: Can you refer students over 16 years of age to the new Attendance Service or is it only for under 16 year olds?

A: The Attendance Service is primarily designed to support students who are legally required to be attending school – i.e. those aged between 5 and 16. However, in exceptional circumstances an Attendance Service provider may be able to provide support to an older student. If you are unsure, please contact your local Attendance Service Provider to discuss the case and whether to make the referral.

Q: Should the AMP be shared on the school website or the STAR?

A: Schools will be required to publish their Attendance Management Plan on a website. If your school or kura does not have its own website, we will host those Attendance Management Plans on the Education Counts website.

Q: What is a STAR template?

A: For information on the Stepped attendance response (STAR), including templates and guidance please see the webpage: [Stepped attendance response – STAR - Ministry of Education](#)

Q: If someone reaches the STAR threshold for a reason we know (e.g. funeral for 5 days, or Covid for 5 days) - do we still send the letter? And... if not, what do we do about the action and recording in SMS?

A: When a student reaches the STAR threshold, schools should consider the student's individual circumstances before initiating any response. These responses may vary between schools and should align with each school's existing processes and professional judgement.

If the absence is known (e.g., documented health or medical reasons), it may not be appropriate to issue a templated STAR letter. In such cases, schools should respond through their usual, more appropriate support and communication channels (e.g., a pastoral call, an Individual Education Plan meeting, or a tailored email).

Principals have discretion to decide whether sending the standard STAR letter is the right step, or whether a different communication—or no letter—is more suitable. Whatever approach is taken, schools should record the action and the rationale in their Student Management System (SMS) to ensure transparency and consistency with school processes.

The Ministry's letter templates are supports, not mandates. Schools are encouraged to adapt them so they fit their community, communication style, and the specific context of the situation, while still meeting the intent of the policy.

Q: I am also wondering if there are letter templates that the MOE have that we can use and adapt to our school? Seems sensible to have some consistency across the country rather than all of us inventing the wheel.

A: Resources have been developed to help schools embed the STAR in their practice. This includes templated letters for Communicating with Parents: [STAR supporting resources](#)

Q: Where in our SMS system is this being recorded? We have eTap and I haven't seen any preset drop downs...

A: Your Student Management System (SMS) provider can demonstrate how the Attendance Management Plan functionality works in your SMS. Contact your provider for support with your SMS.

Q: Has the MOE provided any sample comms to parents about these new letters? It would be useful to have something to put in our newsletter

A: Resources have been developed to help schools to embed the STAR in their practice.

[STAR supporting resources](#)

Q: When you refer to drop downs in your conversation, what drop downs are you referring to?

A: The drop downs are part of the new functionality in your Student Management System (SMS) to record response activity. As each SMS is different, your SMS provider can demonstrate how the Attendance Management Plan functionality works in your SMS. Contact your provider for support with your SMS

Q: When should you use the "Omit Students" facility on KAMAR regarding creating a STAR pastoral entry at each threshold?

A: Please contact Kamar for a response to this query

Q: Sorry may have answered this ... is it 5 days, 10, 15 etc is it each term or for the whole year please

A: The absence thresholds are fewer than 5 days, 5 to 9 days, 10 to 14 days, and 15 or more days per term. These thresholds provide a nationally consistent structure for identifying and responding to absence, and schools must use them to guide their attendance responses.

Q: Reading the comments, there seem to be a number of questions regarding templates for letters to parents at each stage...are there any available for us to access so they are consistent across the motu?

A: Resources have been developed to help schools to embed the STAR in their practice. This includes templated letters for Communicating with Parents: [STAR supporting resources](#)

Q: I thought the AMP thresholds held regardless of the attendance code!?

A: The threshold relate to number of days absent in a term. The codes will help you when reviewing the reasons for absence and this may support you to decide on the response activities required at the thresholds.

Q: Once a child reaches the day 5 threshold, is the expectation that schools will update the contact made each day, ie, text, call, letter?

A: Schools should update their Student Management System (SMS) when different response activity takes place. It may not be each day, but you should record in your SMS what responses are happening.

Q: Apologies for not knowing, what is an SMS?

A: Student Management system – the system schools use for recording attendance, among other things.

Q: When recording a response, who is able to see the response ie, whānau, staff?

A: This will depend on your Student Management System (SMS). Please check with your SMS provider.

Q: How do we refer to the Regional Attendance Service now that ASA doesn't operate?

A: The ability for schools to make referrals has now gone live. There is a new system called the Attendance Services Case Management System (AS-CMS) that can be used to make referrals. See [here](#) for more information.

Attendance coding & recording

Q: Clarity on the use of code D

A: The D Code is for approved external appointments and covers those appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school time. It includes travel time. If a student has been at school or returns to school on day of the appointment, then the D code can be applied. If they are absent for the entire day, then either M for medical absence or J for explained and approved should be applied.

Q: If Māori students are away due to celebrations such as Waitangi Day what code do I use and what is the time frame eg: a few days before to allow for travel time etc

A: Schools have discretion on which code to apply. See page 5 of the [Attendance Code Guidance](#) where it references Kaupapa Māori settings. The J code, explained and approved can be applied. The consideration of the use of the Q code, board approved offsite learning, can also be applied at the discretion of the school if there is evidence of off-site learning.

Q: Not all of us are in Kura Kaupapa settings but we still have a large percentage of Māori students so do we just apply discretion as well?

A: See above. The bullet points in the [Attendance Code Guidance](#) cover involvement in cultural events, providing schools with the discretion to apply the appropriate code.

Q: Would National Kapahaka be "cultural" even if a student is not performing but going to tautoko their whaanau who is performing?

A: See above

Q: Is there a code for cultural activities / events?

A: Attendance at cultural events is included in both the Q code and J code bullet points in the code guidance document. The school has discretion as to which code to apply to

cover this type of learning off-site as long as it is board approved and then applied by the principal. The school also has the discretion if the student is attending in a supportive role if it is deemed to be board approved off-site learning.

Q: What about NHS? Is that dual enrolled?

A: Dual enrolments are usually for those students on a Te Kura re-integration plan where they have some Te Kura classes as well as some classes at their enrolling / regular school. Use the appropriate codes for when they are supposed to be at school and then use the A code for alternative provision when they are working at home on Te Kura classes. Communication with Te Kura is recommended to ensure the student is moving towards being reintegrated to their school.

Health schools are in essence a dual enrolment system, but the students are engaged with the Health School and in many cases with Te Kura. Health Schools are required to report attendance to the enrolling schools each term. The students have a student type of EM – therefore they do not contribute towards the school’s regular attendance count of their school.

Q: Dual enrolments and how to ensure attendance is accurately recorded?

A: See response above on dual enrolments.

Q: I have just emailed some questions about transitional attendance plans, do they all need to be approved by MOE or can some be at Principal's discretion, eg staged return to school have illness/trauma/long period of time disengaged.

A: Students can be on Transition Attendance Plans (TAP). We have a template for these on our website [here](#). The TAP template indicates that student needs will have to be identified by a medical practitioner or a psychologist and then signed off by the parent/caregiver, school and regional Ministry office.

When the students on TAP plans are at school the appropriate attendance codes are applied. When they are unwell and unable to attend school, they can be recorded as M – medical absence or J – explained and approved. Alternatively, if the student is able to engage in learning while at home using an online learning system then the Q code - board approved off-site learning can be applied.

Q: Students on reduced programmes, emotionally unwell to attend a full day - how are these absences recorded? Medical certificates cannot be issued every 3-5 days when therapists advise students remain at home for lengthy periods

A: See response above.

Q: Is there anytime in which the school can request a medical certificate for ongoing absence?

A: Yes schools can request a medical certificate for an extended absence. The details of this request need to be included in a school's attendance policy. Schools need to remain mindful that there may be significant cost to attaining a medical certificate and a time lag to getting an appointment. Some medical practices will allow nurse practitioners to issue a medical certificate.

Q: I have a student who is 5, but has a Graduated Attendance Plan (GAP) as he can't cope with a whole day. So he is present in the morning for 1.3 hours - so he is marked as present - but in the afternoon he is not here - I have been marking him present as if I mark as absent the will alter my data. I believe he is present all day for the time he is to be at school - so his school day is short. Is that OK?

A: If you choose to record the student as present for the full day, even after he has gone home, then you need to have evidence that you are supporting on-going engagement and learning for the afternoon times. This becomes the Q code – Board approved off-site learning, rather than the P code. You do need to change this for the afternoon period of time in case of an emergency as you do not want to be searching for a student who is not on site.

Q: We have a student who goes home at lunch as per agreed to by all parties in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). How do we record this?

A: This agreement must be officially signed out as this is considered to be a Transition Attendance Plan or a Graduated Attendance Plan. The template link is [here](#).

Q: What happens when you have a child who is on an approved graduated transition plan to school as a new entrant? They are not at school for the afternoon for a number of weeks so this impacts their attendance. Can we please confirm what the code should be for the afternoon?

A: When the students on graduated attendance plans are at school the appropriate attendance codes are applied. When they are unwell and unable to attend school, they can be recorded as M – medical absence or J – explained and approved. Alternatively, if the student is able to engage in learning while at home using an online learning system then the Q code - board approved off-site learning can be applied. For younger students the school could support ongoing engagement with a range of learning activities.

Q: Do you have any actual hands on strategies to encourage regular attendance.

A: The ERO report released in October 2025 provided some good examples that could be considered. You can find this on ERO's [website](#) "Changing attitudes to Attendance: 5 Good Practices" or you can watch the webinar we did with ERO on our [website](#).

Q: Chronic lateness - how is this evaluated?

A: Lateness data is collected and reported in a school's Every Day Matters termly reports. If a student is regularly late to school and is recorded with the E code as the lateness exceeds the school's threshold of being late, this will count towards the threshold of being absent across a term. Boards need to determine the threshold for lateness vs absence.

Q: Lateness and early leavers

A: It is important to understand the reasons for lateness and early leavers. If a student is late or leaving early due to other types of tuition, then boards may apply Section 52 of the Education and Training Act to cover this and apply the Q code. If it is persistent then both situations can be recorded as E – explained and not approved. If these situations are occurring in the same day, then the E codes will accumulate towards half day absences for the student.

Q: What is the threshold that they become late e.g. can you say 20mins will be marked absent?

A: The threshold for the time is at the discretion of the school and should be included in a school's attendance policy. There should also be procedures so that students know what to do if they are late – either report to the school office or straight to class. Schools can request an email or text message from a parent or caregiver if they know their child is going to be late.

Q: If parents do not provide a reason for absence, even after being contacted by text, are we still expected to keep trying to get this information? Some people are impossible to contact.

A: If all attempts to contact the family and no response is received, then change the ? Code to T for Truant. Under Section 36 of the Act students are required to attend school when it is open for instruction. If this is persistent the number of absences will meet the AMP thresholds quickly.

Q: What if you families won't respond or get back to you as to why they are away when you put a question mark?

A: See above

Q: How long do you wait for that response to then change it to a T?

A: See above.

Q: We created our AMP last year and our Ministry advisor said we want low or no T for truant. However sometimes we have made many many attempts to contact whānau and we still do not know the reason. Is it ok to put truant until they do return or is it better to leave a ? code until they return?

A: It would be expected that parents / caregivers have provided a response within a reasonable time. Within the week of the absence is a suggested time frame. Remember that each day of the use of the T code contributes towards the absence thresholds in the school's AMP. The ? Codes should be amended at the earliest possible time. Do not leave a ? when recording attendance as this is automatically and absence.

Q: What is the MOE doing about the constant term time holidays taking place? That's our second biggest absence reason beside medical. We've been making it clear to parents for some time that this isn't ok, but they simply don't care. I don't see these changes are going to make any difference.

A: Not taking holidays during term time is one of the key messages of the Public Information Campaign in 2026. You can find out more about this [here](#).

Q: I have a problem with tamariki taking holidays in term time. Particularly 6 weeks in the UK. What are we recommended to do in this case?

A: There is a public information campaign underway to provide awareness of the importance of attending school every day it is open. Taking holidays in term continues to be a challenge for some schools. Providing information to these parents re their legal requirements (Section 36) is one solution, as well as on-going communication on your website and in newsletters. It is also okay to mention that prosecutions can be made for persistent non-attendance that is not approved.

Q: Can you reclarify - you said an overseas holiday if children are doing work you provide can be coded as Q?

A: Yes that is correct as long as you can verify that the children are engaged in learning during their absence either by completing set work or engaging in on-line programmes of work.

Q: So daily attendance is submitted automatically each day at 6pm,... great... when amendments are made for up to 2 weeks, does each 6pm submission overwrite the previous information or do we need to send it in some other way?

A: Yes, each amendment will over-ride the data that is automatically submitted each day. You do not need to send the information in any other way.

Q: We had a small number of students attend school on the strike day last year. The remaining large number of students were recorded as J, so impacted our attendance data? Is there a way of having this data amended so it doesn't impact our overall attendance data in Everyday Matters, or has this already been taken into account?

A: It probably has not been taken into account. For strike days your school was officially closed – which means the day should have been removed from your calendar and no

attendance should have been recorded. For those students who required supervision on site for the day then a paper roll can be taken so you know who is on site in the case of an emergency. Please contact the [Every Day Matters team](#) to see if they are able to retrospectively amend this error for you as it will have a positive effect on your regular attendance for that term.

Q: Family emergencies overseas - can we use J for over 5 days?

A: No you cannot continue to use the J code for more than 5 consecutive days (see Section 45 of the Education and Training Act. If you are well aware that this is a family emergency, consider how you could support the student during the absence period. This could include preparing a pack of work to take with the student during the emergency period of time, or having the ability for the student to access on-line learning. For these days the use of the Q code – board approved off-site learning could be applied.

Q: The challenge for us is some parents saying their child is sick when we know they are away on holiday?

A: Yes a board can include a threshold time in the school's attendance policy to cover request a medical certificate is there is an extended absence. Schools need to be mindful of the cost and availability of accessing a doctor's appointment to get a medical certificate. Both the M code for illness and the G code for holiday in term time will contribute towards the AMP thresholds.

Q: Is nature school / forest school A code also?

A: Nature schools / forest schools, or any other one-day schools are definitely **not** an A code. This code is for Ministry approved alternative provision with the list of examples provided in the attendance code guidance. The A code is usually applied by secondary schools. These one-day programmes are not approved or endorsed by the Ministry. They are not deemed to be schools and are not monitored in any way by the Ministry. The code guidance suggests that the E code is applied – explained and not approved. There is a proviso for schools to select the Q code – board approved off-site learning, but when doing so the school needs to ensure that students are meeting the requirements of one hour of reading, writing and maths each day.

Q: We have a family still not back as their brother is in palliative care. They won't be attending for awhile. What code should we be using for this?

A: Can you please send this question to the attendance.code@education.govt.nz mailbox as more information is required. If this is for a long period of time the student could have their Student Type changed to NA – not attending, then revert to RE on their return. Alternatively consider if the school is providing any support for this student so they are able to engage in some learning while they are not attending school.

Q: FYI - On the MOE website for T code is says unexplained or Trivial. I think it should say Truant

A: Thank you for informing us. We will ensure there is consistent messaging. On the attendance code guidance, the decision table and the comparison table the T code is labelled as Truant.

Q: Does each board set what is considered a 'Board approved activity'?

A: Yes that is correct using the examples in the attendance code guidance. It is suggested that groups of schools communicate these decisions so there is some consistency within a community where siblings are attending different schools.

Q: What code would you use for regularly visiting a parent in prison? So a student is travelling once per week for visitation with his parent on the same day each week is this justified? And do we need some sort of proof of this from the parent?

A: Yes this could be considered as justified – explained and approved. Whoever is taking the student for the visit should notify the school in advance of the absence. The school can also consider how to support this student who is absent for 20% of the time each week. Is the school providing catch up work to be completed out of school hours or providing any on-line learning. Consideration of the use of the Q code – board approved off-site learning if there is verification of engagement and on-going learning.

General

Q: New DP need a crash course in everything

A: Contact your regional Ministry office. Your school's Senior Education Advisor can help you. Also review the Ministry's [website](#) for more information covering Attendance.

Q: I just would really like an overview of what is going on with Attendance this year. I'm the Office Manager and look after this but have really received nothing about what is happening this year just keep hearing things in the news.

A: This year, schools are working within a clearer, more coordinated national approach to attendance. This includes implementing an Attendance Management Plan (AMP) that outlines how schools respond to different absence thresholds, recording the actions taken at each stage in their Student Management System, and following updated rules for attendance coding and school closure reporting. These changes sit within a broader effort to strengthen consistency, improve data quality, and ensure earlier, more effective support for students and whānau.

Attendance Services

Q: Will these cover the new CMS system? If not, where do I get information about this?

A: The Intro to Attendance Term 1 webinar does not cover the new Attendance Services Case Management System (AS-CMS). You can find out more about this in the [Attendance Services webinar](#) or on our webpage [here](#).

Q: Please show us how to use the new AS-CMS platform to refer chronic absent cases

A: You can find out more about how to use the new AS-CMS [here](#).

Q: What can Attendance Services do? What power do they have?"

A: The Intro to Attendance Term 1 webinar does not cover the new Attendance Services Case Management System (AS-CMS). You can find out more about this in the [Attendance Services webinar](#) or on our webpage [here](#).

Q: How are you going to help smaller schools with new students that arrive with chronic attendance issues, like 15% attendance and with no MOE support or transition from one attendance service to another?

A: Make contact with your Attendance Service to support your work with such cases. Where Attendance Service Providers have changed, student information has been transferred to the new Attendance Service Provider.

Q: We have heard that our attendance services are only dealing with chronic attenders. Is this right?

A: Attendance Services are funded to support non-enrolled students who have been taken off school rolls as well as chronic absentees. Schools must make all efforts to work with chronic absentees before referring to the Attendance Services.