



Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy

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Review cycle:	3 Years, unless a change in school context or legislation
Review date:	15.3.29

1. Introduction

This policy is applicable to all pupils in the school, including those in the EYFS.

High Ash aims to support all children who are unable to attend school due to medical needs, and who would not receive suitable education without such provision, to continue to have access to as much education as their medical condition allows, to enable them to reach their full potential.

Due to the nature of their health needs, some children may be admitted to hospital or placed in alternative forms of education provision. We recognise that, whenever possible, pupils should receive their education within their school and the aim of the provision will be to reintegrate pupils back into school as soon as they are well enough.

We understand that we have a continuing role in a pupil's education whilst they are not attending the school and will work with the LA, healthcare partners and families to ensure that all children with medical needs receive the right level of support to enable them to maintain links with their education.

2. Legal Framework

This policy is based on the following legislation:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

It is also based on the following statutory and non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE):

- Alternative provision (2025)
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school (2023)
- Working together to improve school attendance (2024)
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (2023)

3. Definitions

Children who are unable to attend school as a result of their medical needs may include those with:

- Physical health issues.
- Physical injuries.
- Mental health problems, including anxiety issues. Emotional difficulties or school refusal.
- Progressive conditions.
- Terminal illnesses.
- Chronic illnesses.

Children who are unable to attend mainstream education for health reasons may attend any of the following:

- Hospital school: a special school within a hospital setting where education is provided to give continuity whilst the child is receiving treatment.

- Home tuition: many LAs have home tuition services that act as a communication channel between schools and pupils on occasions where pupils are too ill to attend school and are receiving specialist medical treatment.
- Medical PRUs: these are LA establishments that provide education for children unable to attend their registered school due to their medical needs.

The school recognises that there can be attendance challenges where a child has a social, emotional or mental health issue, particularly a severe issue for which the child is receiving clinical treatment.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring arrangements for pupils who cannot attend school as a result of their medical needs are in place and are effectively implemented.
- Ensuring the termly review of the arrangements made for pupils who cannot attend school due to their medical needs.
- Ensuring the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the arrangements to support the needs of pupils are clear and understood by all.
- Ensuring robust systems are in place for dealing with health emergencies and critical incidents, for both on- and off-site activities.
- Ensuring staff with responsibility for supporting pupils with health needs are appropriately trained.
- Approving and reviewing this policy on an annual basis.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Working with the Governing Board to ensure compliance with the relevant statutory duties when supporting pupils with health needs.
- Working collaboratively with parents and other professionals to develop arrangements to meet the needs of children.
- Ensuring the arrangements put in place to meet pupils' health needs are fully understood by all those involved and acted upon.
- Where mental health issues present a barrier to attendance the Headteacher will ensure the school implements reasonable adjustments to support attendance and aim to involve parents/carers to support a child who is anxious about attending from an early stage, making it clear that part of the aim of the plan is to maximise face-to-face attendance as much as possible. The plan should have regular review points built into it, and have been agreed in advance of implementation.
- Appointing a named member of staff who is responsible for pupils with healthcare needs and liaises with parents, pupils, the LA, key workers, health professionals and others involved in the pupil's care.
- Ensuring the support put in place focuses on and meets the needs of individual pupils.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff with responsibility for supporting pupils with health needs.
- Providing teachers who support pupils with health needs with suitable information relating to a pupil's health condition and the possible effect the condition and/or medication taken has on the pupil.

- Where a medical condition (including a mental health condition) prevents a pupil from attending school full-time and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A medical condition might include a mental health condition, however schools should keep in mind the nature of the challenge, and whether it can instead be managed by implementing reasonable adjustments to support attendance. Any part-time timetable should seek to maximise face-to-face school time as much as possible.
- Providing reports to the Governing Board on the effectiveness of the arrangements in place to meet the health needs of pupils.
- Actively monitoring pupil progress and reintegration into school.
- Make reasonable adjustments for the needs of the pupil on returning to the school.
- Supplying pupils' education providers with information about the child's capabilities, progress and outcomes.
- Schools should inform the LA where pupils are likely to miss more than 15 days, and work with the family to provide educational provision whilst determining with the LA whether alternative provision should be provided under section 19 of the Education Act 1996, as outlined in statutory guidance.
- Liaising with education providers and parents to determine pupils' programmes of study whilst they are absent from school.
- Keeping pupils informed about school events and encouraging communication with their peers.
- Providing a link between pupils and their parents, and the LA, where applicable.

Teachers and support staff are responsible for:

- Understanding confidentiality in respect of pupils' health needs.
- Designing lessons and activities in a way that allows those with health needs to participate fully and ensuring pupils are not excluded from activities that they wish to take part in without a clear evidence-based reason.
- Understanding their role in supporting pupils with health needs and ensuring they attend the required training.
- Ensuring they are aware of the needs of their pupils through the appropriate sharing of the individual pupil's health needs.
- Ensuring that the school is a calm, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn, which is the foundation of securing good attendance.
- Keeping parents informed of how their child's health needs are affecting them whilst in the school.
- Implementing the schools remote learning procedures, depending upon and tailored to the individual needs of the child.

School staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions or perform mental health interventions, but they are expected to work to ensure regular attendance for every child, as per the Working together to improve school attendance.

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school where possible.
- Notify the school of the reason for any of their child's absences without delay.
- Provide the school with sufficient and up-to-date information about their child's medical needs.
- Work in partnership with the school to ensure the best possible outcomes for their child.
- Attend meetings to discuss how support for their child should be planned.

It is the legal responsibility of all parents/carers to ensure their child receives that education by full-time attendance at school or otherwise. In very exceptional circumstances, however, where it is in a pupil's best interests, a plan to help a child to attend well may involve the use of a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition (including a mental health condition) prevents a pupil from attending school full-time and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

Any part-time timetable arrangements should be designed with the specific barrier to attendance in mind, have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, (either at school or at an alternative provision setting), and have formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing the timetable with the pupil and their parents/carers.

5. Managing Access

Parents are advised to contact the school on the first day their child is unable to attend due to illness. Absences due to illness will be authorised unless the school has genuine cause for concern about the authenticity of the illness. The school will provide support to pupils who are absent from school because of illness for a period of less than 15 school days by liaising with the pupil's parents to arrange schoolwork as soon as the pupil is able to cope with it or part-time education at school. The school will give due consideration to which aspects of the curriculum are prioritised in consultation with the pupil, their family and relevant members of staff.

Absence patterns are monitored by the Headteacher. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be notified if there are concerns about a pupil's attendance (for example, for periods of absence that last 15 or more school days, either in one absence or over the course of the school year). If appropriate, they will inform the LA, who will take responsibility for the pupil and their education.

For hospital admissions, the appointed named member of staff will liaise with the hospital school regarding the programme that should be followed while the pupil is in hospital.

The school will only remove a pupil who is unable to attend school because of additional health needs from the school roll where:

- The pupil has been certified by a Medical Officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school, before ceasing to be of compulsory school age; and
- Neither the pupil nor their parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school, after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
- A pupil unable to attend school because of their health needs will not be removed from the school register without parental consent and certification from the Medical Officer, even if the LA has become responsible for the pupil's education.

6. Support for Pupils

Where a pupil has a complex or long-term health issue, the school will discuss the pupil's needs and how these may be best met with the LA, relevant medical professionals, parents and, where appropriate, the pupil.

The LA expects the school to support pupils with health needs to attend full-time education wherever possible, or for the school to make reasonable adjustments to pupils' programmes of study where medical evidence supports the need for those adjustments.

The school will make reasonable adjustments under pupils' individual healthcare plans (IHCPs), reviewed annually in accordance with the Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions Policy.

Pupils admitted to hospital will receive education as determined appropriate by the medical professionals and hospital tuition team at the hospital concerned.

During a period of absence, the school will work with the provider of the pupil's education to establish and maintain regular communication and effective outcomes. The lead contact will be decided by the Headteacher.

Whilst a pupil is away from school, the school will work with the LA to ensure the pupil can successfully remain in touch with their school using the following methods:

- School newsletters
- Emails
- Invitations to school events
- Cards or letters from peers and staff including the Form tutor, Head of Section

Where appropriate, the school will provide the pupil's education provider with relevant information, curriculum materials and resources.

To help ensure a pupil with additional health needs is able to attend school following an extended period of absence, the following adaptations will be considered:

- A personalised or part-time timetable, drafted in consultation with the named staff member
- Access to additional support in school
- Online access to the curriculum from home
- Movement of lessons to more accessible rooms
- Places to rest at school
- Special exam arrangements to manage anxiety or fatigue

6.1 Reintegration

When a pupil is considered well enough to return to school, the school will develop a tailored reintegration plan. As far as possible, the child will be able to access the curriculum and materials that they would have used in school. If appropriate, the school nurse will be involved in the development of the pupil's reintegration plan and informed of the timeline of the plan by the

appointed named member of staff, to ensure they can prepare to offer any appropriate support to the pupil and to provide relevant staff training.

The school will consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to provide suitable access to the school and the curriculum for the pupil.

For longer absences, the reintegration plan will be developed near to the pupil's likely date of return, to avoid putting unnecessary pressure on an ill pupil or their parents in the early stages of their absence.

The school is aware that some pupils will need gradual reintegration over a long period of time and will always consult with the pupil, their parents and key staff about concerns, medical issues, timing and the preferred pace of return.

The reintegration plan will include:

- The date for planned reintegration, once known.
- Details of regular meetings to discuss reintegration.
- Details of the named member of staff who has responsibility for the pupil.
- Clearly stated responsibilities and the rights of all those involved.
- Details of social contacts, including the involvement of peers and mentors during the transition period.
- A programme of small goals leading up to reintegration.
- Follow-up procedures.

The school will ensure a welcoming environment is developed and encourage pupils and staff to be positive and proactive during the reintegration period.

6.2 Other types of support

Below is a non-exhaustive list of sector-led examples of the kinds of support and reasonable adjustments that the school may put place in order to support social, emotional or mental health issues affecting attendance, and to help to reduce pupils' anxiousness about attending school. These will depend on the individual's needs and their stage of education.

Reasonable adjustments

- Pupils arrive through the main door rather than through the playground entrance with everyone else to allow them a calmer arrival in school.
- Pupils can pre-order lunch and to eat in quiet place with a buddy, away from the busy Ash Tree environment
- Pupils are supported by staff members to integrate into the lunchtime environment to build their confidence with eating with others. This gives them the confidence to meet friends and make friendships that ease their anxiety.
- Seating at breaks and lunches can be provided to support with anxiety.
- Pupils can be withdrawn from lessons on a short-term basis and do work on emotional regulation, to build their resilience and alleviate anxiety about attending school.
- Transition between lessons will be supported by an LSA or Pastoral Lead, maybe leaving lessons early to avoid transition times in corridors between classes.
- Where required, a short period of phased timetabling to allow a transition back into

school and to attend full-time. For example, this could be arriving before registration to allow them to settle before peers arrive.

- Ear defenders can be worn by students who are particularly sensitive to noise. They wear these in and out of lessons as needed.
- Children with sensory difficulties are considered as part of the school uniform policy, such as allowing them to wear shorts instead of trousers, which helps to alleviate anxiety about attending.

Building confidence

- Pupils can be offered a “meet and greet” at the school gate to support transition back into school after period of absence.
- Pupils are made aware that they can speak with anyone they have confidence in, and staff know that, where they need help, they should contact a member of the trained mental health team.
- Pupils can be paired up with buddies to help support integration.
- Pupils are encouraged to take part in after-school clubs, to help to build confidence about attending.
- Depending on the needs of the child the school will look to develop small group sessions that reflect their needs and interests, e.g. sport, gardening or drawing , as well as group social skills lessons.
- Pupils can access a pastoral/safeguarding drop-in chat.
- Pupils maybe offered a one-to-one “catch-up” time with an LSA or teacher to cover core content for English/Maths or other topic work. Often a barrier to returning as pupils overwhelmed with content

7. Information Sharing

It is essential that all information about pupils with health needs is kept up-to-date. To protect confidentiality, all information-sharing techniques will be agreed with the pupil and their parents in advance of being used. All teachers and support staff will be provided with access to relevant information, including high-risk health needs, first aiders and emergency procedures, via the agreed procedures.

When a pupil is discharged from hospital or is returning from other education provision, the school will ensure the appropriate information is received to allow for a smooth return to the school. The named member of staff will liaise with the hospital or other tuition service as appropriate.

8. Training

Staff will be trained in a timely manner to assist with a pupil’s return to school. Once a pupil’s return date has been confirmed, staff will be provided with relevant training before the pupil’s anticipated return. Healthcare professionals should be involved in identifying and agreeing with the school the type and level of training required. Training will be sufficient to ensure staff are confident in their ability to support pupils with additional health needs.

Parents of pupils with additional health needs may provide specific advice but will not be the sole trainer of staff.

9. LA responsibilities

If our school cannot make suitable arrangements, or if it is clear that a child will be away from school for 15 days (consecutive or over the course of the year) or more because of their health needs, Buckinghamshire Council will become responsible for arranging suitable education for these children.

When the local authority arranges alternative education, the education should begin as soon as possible, and at the latest by the 6th day of the child's absence from school.

Where full-time education is not in the child's best interest for reasons relating to their physical or mental health, the local authority must arrange part-time education on whatever basis it considers to be in the child's best interests.

The LA should:

In cases where the local authority makes the arrangements, our school will:

- Provide to the local authority, at agreed intervals, the full name and address of any pupils of compulsory school age who are not attending school regularly due to their health needs
- Work constructively with the local authority, providers, relevant agencies and parents/carers to ensure the best outcomes for the child
- Collaborate with the local authority to ensure continuity of provision and consistency of curriculum, including making information available about the curriculum
- Along with the local authority, regularly review the provision offered to ensure it continues to be appropriate for the child and that it is providing suitable education
- Share information with the local authority and relevant health services as required
- When a child has complex or long-term health issues, work with the local authority, parents/carers and the relevant health services to decide how best to meet the child's needs (e.g. through individual support, arranging alternative provision or by them remaining at school, being supported at home and back into school after each absence)
- Where possible, allow the child to take examinations at the same time as their peers, and work with the local authority to support this
- Help make sure that the child can be reintegrated back into school successfully

When reintegration is anticipated, work with the local authority to:

- Plan for consistent provision during and after the period of education outside the school, allowing the child to access the same curriculum and materials that they would have used in school as far as possible, including through digital resources
- Enable the child to stay in touch with school life (e.g. through newsletters, emails, digital learning platforms, social media platforms, invitations to school events or internet links to lessons from their school), and, where appropriate, through educational visits
- Create individually tailored reintegration plans for each child returning to school, which includes extra support to fill any gaps arising from the absence
- Consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made

10, Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher, School Business Manager and Pastoral Lead. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

11. Links to other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Supporting pupils with medical conditions
- Pupil mental health and wellbeing policy
- Attendance policy
- Accessibility plan