

## **Pupils who cannot attend school full time due to illness referral process for schools**

This document relates to pupils too ill to attend full time mainstream school, the impact on education and outcomes, school and local authority duties, and identifying and referring pupils how pupils for local authority support.

### **Impact of illness on pupils' education**

Pupils may have a physical or mental health need that means they cannot access their school full time for 15 days or more. These children may be waiting for treatment or receiving treatment. Long-term and complex medical conditions may require ongoing support such as from the local authority, medicine, or care while at school.

Shorter-term illness on the other hand typically does not require treatment by a health professional and schools manage this without the need to plan for ongoing support or involve other professionals. In these cases, the LA is not expected to be involved.

Long-term absence, short term and frequent absence (including appointments) due to health problems affect children's

- Educational attainment now and in the future
- Ability to integrate with peers
- General well-being, emotional health, confidence and self-esteem

### **Statutory duties**

All schools must have a policy on how they support pupils with medical needs and should read this in conjunction with the steps outlined. Full requirements are found here: [Schools guidance](#)

Local Authorities are also required to have a policy and make arrangements as soon as it is clear a child will not have access to full-time education due to illness for 15 days or more. The full requirements are found here [Local Authority guidance](#)

## Identifying pupils for support from the alternative provision team and the referral process

Parent/Health care professional/other professional notify the school of a child with medical needs affecting the pupils' ability to attend school for 15 days or more.

This is usually marked as illness on the attendance register



School seeks initial advice on condition and treatment from health care professionals whether there is a diagnosis or not.

Medical advice may indicate one of the following:

1. The child's illness should **not** affect their ability to access full-time mainstream education
2. The child's illness **does** affect their ability to access full-time mainstream school **but** with reasonable adjustments in place, the impact is mitigated and the child can access full-time school.
3. The child's illness **does** affect their ability to access full-time mainstream school **and** it would be in the best interest of the child to access education outside of school or access school part-time temporarily



In all cases and without delay, **schools should jointly agree with parents and Health Care Professionals whether an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) is required.** If not, some form of written plan must be agreed upon which makes clear how the pupils' educational needs will be met.

**As part of the IHCP process, Health should recommend adjustments/support needed and advise for how long they anticipate it is required.**

NOTE: The school, healthcare professional and parent should agree, based on evidence, when a healthcare plan would be inappropriate or disproportionate. If consensus cannot be reached, the head teacher is best placed to take a final view.



Schools should consider a **holistic view of the child's** needs using other information/assessments such as EP's, SALT, parent and whole family support. In all cases, the child's assessment of how they feel, and think would improve attendance to help build a picture of the child's social, emotional and personal needs.



If it is jointly agreed that:

Education outside of school is required because the pupil cannot access full-time education and

The child's school is not arranging access to full-time school; **the child's school should start a referral to the Alternative Provision Team**

#### **Process to refer to the Alternative Provision Team**

1. Schools complete an Alternative Provision referral and share a copy with parents. The form is found here: <https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/education/alternative-provision-education-other-than-school>
2. Upload a copy of the IHCP or other educational plan that clearly outlines the agreed plan.
3. Upload medical evidence form completed by the Health Care Professional. A blank form is also found here: <https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/education/alternative-provision-education-other-than-school>
4. Upload the child's attendance certificate together with a copy of any specialist assessments, reports and SEN Support Plan.

#### **Further DfE advice**

Schools do not have to wait for a formal diagnosis before providing support to pupils. In cases where a pupil's medical condition is unclear, or where there is a difference of opinion, judgements will be needed about what support to provide based on the available evidence. This would normally involve some form of medical evidence and consultation with parents.

Where evidence conflicts, some degree of challenge may be necessary to ensure that the right support can be put in place.

Where pupils would not receive a suitable education in mainstream school because of their health needs, the local authority has a duty to make other arrangements.

#### **LA intervention**

There will be a wide range of circumstances where a child has a health need but will receive suitable education that meets their needs without the intervention of the LA – for example, where the child can still attend school with some support; where the school has made arrangements to deliver suitable education outside of school for the child; or where arrangements have been made for the child to be educated in a hospital by an on-site hospital school.

We would not expect the LA to become involved in such arrangements unless it had reason to think that the education being provided to the child was not suitable or, while otherwise suitable, was not full-time or for the number of hours the child could benefit from without adversely affecting their health.

### **Part-time timetables**

Temporary part-time timetables are used as a temporary measure to meet individual needs, for example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a reintegration package. It should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

As absence is so often, a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, schools, trusts and local authorities should always work together with other local partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support. Where that is not successful or there is non - engagement, the law protects pupils' right to an education. It provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents.

[Schools guidance](#)

[Local Authority guidance](#)