



Supporting Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy outlines how Higham Primary School supports children who are unable to attend school due to short-term or long-term health needs. We are committed to ensuring that all students receive a full and inclusive education, regardless of their health circumstances. This includes providing appropriate support to children with medical conditions or disabilities that prevent them from attending school regularly.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- SEND Policy / SEND Information Report
- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Accessibility Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including:

- Alternative Provision statutory guidance
- Arranging Education for Children who cannot attend school because of health needs – December 2023
- Behaviour in Schools (latest DfE guidance)
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education Act 1996 (especially Section 19)
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (latest version)
- Mental Health and behaviour in schools: departmental advice for school staff, DfE November 2018
- School Admissions Code, DfE 2021
- SEND Code of Practice, DfE 2015
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions: statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England, DfE Sept 2015, updated 2017
- Working together to improve school attendance (statutory from August 2024)

2. Aims of the Policy

- To ensure that children with health needs have access to a suitable education, whether through in-school provisions or home learning options.
- To work collaboratively with parents, healthcare professionals, and other agencies to ensure that the child's needs are met.
- To remove barriers to learning for children who cannot attend school due to their health needs.
- To safeguard and prioritise children's emotional and physical wellbeing.
- To enable children to re-integrate into school once they are able to return.



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3. Definition of Health Needs

Health needs can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Short-term illnesses, including injury or surgery recovery.
- Long-term medical conditions (e.g., cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, diabetes).
- Mental health conditions that require long-term support.
- Conditions requiring frequent hospital visits or long-term medical treatments.

4. Process for Referral and Support

4.1 Notification of Health Needs

Parents/carers are responsible for notifying the school as soon as possible if their child is unable to attend due to a health condition. This should be done by contacting the school office on the first day of absence and providing regular updates throughout the period of illness.

Medical documentation from a doctor or healthcare professional may be required to confirm the child's health condition and the anticipated duration of absence, particularly in cases of ongoing or frequent absence. All medical information will be handled in line with the school's Data Protection Policy and shared only with relevant staff.

The school has a duty to monitor attendance closely (See Attendance Policy). Where a pupil's absence due to illness becomes persistent (typically defined as attendance falling below 90%), it will be reviewed in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on *Children Missing Education* and *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*. This is to ensure that the pupil is safe and receiving appropriate educational and wellbeing support.

4.2 Initial Assessment

The school will assess the needs of the child in collaboration with the parents, healthcare providers, and any other relevant professionals (e.g., social workers, mental health practitioners). A meeting may be arranged between the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), the child's class teacher, and the family to discuss how to support the child's education during their absence.

4.3 Personalised Provision Plan (PPP), Pastoral Support Plan (PSP), or Health Care Plan

If necessary, a Personalised Provision Plan (PPP) or a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) will be developed for children with more complex or long-term health needs. A Health Care Plan will be developed for a pupil who has a complex or potentially life-threatening illness upon their return to school.

These plans will outline:

- The nature of the child's condition and procedures in case of emergency whilst in school.
- Adjustments to their learning (e.g., home tutoring, online learning).
- Timescales for review and the expected duration of support.
- How the school will monitor the child's educational progress.



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- How to support the child and family's emotional and mental wellbeing.

To clarify:

- A PPP focuses on educational adjustments and continuity of learning.
- A PSP supports pupils with emotional or behavioural needs affecting attendance or engagement.
- An Individual Health Care Plan addresses specific medical or physical health needs and any support required during school hours.

4.4 Communication and Regular Updates

The school will expect regular contact with the family to monitor the child's health and educational progress. Parents will be required to stay in contact with the school and notify as soon as possible if any changes in their child's health arise.

For the purpose of this policy, *regular contact* refers to consistent and meaningful communication between the school and the child and/or their family during the period of ill health. This may include:

- Weekly phone or video calls with the child or parent/carer;
- Email updates regarding school activities or learning;
- Sending and receiving work through agreed platforms;
- Messages of encouragement or updates from classmates or staff (as appropriate).

The frequency and method of contact will be agreed in consultation with the family and tailored to the child's health condition, capacity, and preferences.

5 Education Provision for Children with Health Needs

5.1 Home Learning Support

If a child is unable to attend school for a significant period, the school will provide home learning support. The length of the significant period will vary according to the child and nature of their illness, and will be determined by mutual agreement between the parent and the Headteacher. Home learning support may include online or remote learning, provision of educational resources, activity sheets or reading materials to be worked through assuming the child is well enough to do so. Parents are encouraged to submit completed home learning tasks to the class teacher via the school office or through the online platform. While teachers are not required to formally mark the work, they are encouraged to provide feedback where appropriate, as a means of maintaining engagement and connection.

5.2 Hospital or Alternative Settings

For children who require hospitalisation or treatment in alternative settings, the school will co-ordinate with the relevant healthcare institutions to ensure educational support is being provided.



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If necessary, a designated teacher will visit the child in the hospital or alternative setting to ensure continued learning.

5.3 Emotionally- Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Emotionally based school avoidance or EBSA is also commonly referred to as: school anxiety, school refusal and emotionally based school non-attendance. All of these terms are used to describe children and young people who experience challenges in attending school due to negative feelings (such as anxiety). EBSA may result in a child or young person:

- Avoiding or prolonging getting dressed in the mornings.
- Refusing to leave the house and/ or transport method to school.
- Showing physical and emotional signs of distress.
- Being reluctant to attend school for the whole week.
- Being unable to attend school at all.

The school will support pupils who are experiencing EBSA by:

- Having regular, open and proactive conversations with parents and, where appropriate, the child themselves.
- Obtaining the views of the pupil to identify barriers to attendance.
- Considering sending work home to prevent the child missing key information.
- Considering what referrals could be made to support the pupil back into school (e.g., Early Help, School Nurse etc)
- Considering what reasonable adjustments may be needed to help the child return to school.
- Reviewing if the pupil has SEND needs and if they require additional support.
- Considering whether to implement a reduced timetable to support re-integration to school.
- Making staff aware of the difficulties the pupil is experiencing
- Making good use of resources and training from Kent County Council [Emotionally Based School Avoidance \(EBSA\) - KELS!](#)

5.4 Re-Integration into School

When the child is well enough to return to school, a re-integration plan will be developed to support their transition back to the classroom. This may include:

- A phased return to full-time attendance, if required.
- Support to help the child catch up on missed work.
- Ongoing adjustments to ensure their continued success.

5.5 Use of Technology

The school will explore opportunities for online learning, digital platforms, and other tools to ensure that children can continue their education from home or hospital settings.



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6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 School Responsibilities

The school will ensure that all staff involved in supporting children with health needs are fully aware of the child's individual plan and any necessary accommodations.

Teachers will adapt teaching materials and methods to meet the needs of children with health-related absences.

The SENCO will ensure that the child's needs are appropriately documented and met **as fully as possible**, including liaising with external professionals when needed.

6.2 Parent/Carer Responsibilities

Parents/carers are responsible for notifying the school promptly of any health-related absences and providing necessary medical evidence.

Parents should collaborate with the school to ensure that their child continues their education at home, following any remote learning arrangements.

It is important that parents maintain regular communication with the school to ensure any changes in the child's condition are communicated promptly.

6.3 Child Responsibilities

Where possible children should engage with the provided educational support.

The child should communicate any difficulties in accessing their learning with the school via their parent/carers as appropriate, so that adjustments may be made if necessary.

7. Equality and Inclusion

This policy ensures that all children, regardless of their health needs, have equal access to education. The school will make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010 to accommodate children with disabilities and other health conditions.

8. Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if needed, to ensure it meets the needs of students and aligns with current guidance and legislation. The review will also consider feedback from parents, carers, healthcare professionals, and school staff.