



**Wessex**  
Learning Trust  
We Learn Together!

# Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School

**Date approved by Trust Board: September 2023**  
**Review Date: September 2025**

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This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees every two years.

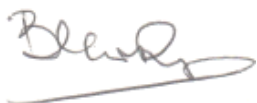


Signature:

Name: Mr Gavin Ball

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 01/09/23



Signature:

Name: Mr Brian Kirkup

Position: Chair of the Board

Date: 01/09/23

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Trust aims to support the Local Authority (LA) and ensure that all children who are unable to attend school due to medical needs, and who would not receive suitable education without such provision, continue to have access to as much education as their medical condition allows, to enable them to reach their full potential.

1.2 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.

1.3 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. Who Does this Policy Affect**

2.1 Learners require alternative education provision to be provided where they are or have been unable to attend school for a period of more than 15 days (either consecutively or cumulatively) as a result of medical needs. This may include (but is not limited to) those with physical health issues, physical injuries, mental health problems, emotional difficulties, progressive conditions, terminal illnesses, and chronic illnesses.

2.2 In all cases of long-term medical absence, written evidence is required to support the absence. This should be from a specialist medical consultant – a letter from a GP is not sufficient.

## **3. Our Duties to Children who Cannot Attend School**

3.1 Once it becomes clear that a child is to miss more than 15 days of schooling (either consecutively or cumulatively), it is necessary for alternative provision to be made for that child so as they continue to receive a suitable education. The alternative provision must be of good quality, allow children to take appropriate qualifications, prevent children from falling behind their peers in school, maintain links and communication with the learner's school and peers, and allow the learner to reintegrate successfully back into school as soon as possible. The duty to arrange this provision falls on the LA but must be supported by our academies and the Trust, although in some circumstances the LA may not feel a need to become involved if the provision the child receives from their school or e.g. hospital school is sufficient. Where possible, the need for provision should be anticipated so as it can begin from day one of a learner's absence, or at least as soon as they are well enough to receive provision.

3.2 The LA must have a named officer responsible for the education of children with additional health needs and ensure parents know who this is, as well as a written, publicly accessible policy statement on their arrangements to comply with their legal duty towards children with additional health needs. They must also review the provision provided to the child regularly, to ensure it continues to meet their needs, as well as provide policies on the provision of education for children under and over the age of compulsory education.

## **4. Responsibilities**

### **4.1 The Local Authority:**

The LA is responsible for providing suitable educational provision for students who, due to their health conditions, cannot attend their regular school for a period of 15 days or more (either cumulatively or in a single session). This provision should be made available as soon as possible from when it becomes clear a child will be absent from school, or as soon as the child is fit enough to receive this provision; and must be as close to the extent of

provision normally accessible to a child in school as they are fit enough to receive. The LA should work in conjunction with the learner's school and other appropriate bodies to ensure the provision they provide as determined appropriate by the medical professionals will be of a suitable standard that they do not fall behind their peers. The LA's provision should be unique to each child's needs and not work on a 'one size fits all' policy.

#### 4.2 The Local Partnership Boards

Local Partnership Boards are responsible for:

- Ensuring arrangements for learners who cannot attend school as a result of their medical needs are in place and are effectively implemented as determined appropriate by the medical professionals.
- Ensuring the regular (4-6 week) review of the arrangements made for learners 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.

#### 4.3 The Headteacher:

In each Trust school, the (Executive) Headteacher/Head of School is responsible for:

- Working with Local Partners to ensure compliance with the relevant statutory duties when supporting learners with health needs.
- Working collaboratively with parents/carers and other professionals to develop arrangements to meet the best interests of learners.
- Ensuring the arrangements put in place to meet learner's health needs are fully understood by all those involved and acted upon.
- Appointing a named member of staff who is responsible for learners with healthcare needs and liaises with parents/carers, learners, the LA, key workers and others involved in the learner's care.
- Ensuring the support put in place focusses on and meets the needs of individual learners.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff with responsibility for supporting learners with health needs.
- Providing teachers who support learners with health needs with suitable information relating to a learner's health condition and the possible effect the condition and/or medication taken has on the learner.
- Providing reports to the Local Partners on the effectiveness of the arrangements in place to meet the health needs of learners.
- Notifying the LA when a learner is likely to be away from the school for a significant period of time due to their health needs.

#### 4.4 Named member of Staff:

Each school within the Trust will have a named member of staff responsible for dealing with children who cannot attend school due to health needs. To contact the member of staff please check the individual school website for the name of the School SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). This member of staff will be responsible for:

- Actively monitoring these learner's progress and re-integration.
- Providing a learner's education provider with information about an individual's capabilities, progress and outcomes.
- Liaising with the Headteacher, education providers, health professionals and parents to determine learner's programmes of study whilst they are absent from school.
- Keeping learners informed about school events and encouraging communication with their peers.
- Providing a link between learners, their parents, and the LA.

#### 4.5 Teachers and Support Staff:

All staff within schools with learners with health needs have a responsibility to:

- Understand confidentiality in respect of learner's health needs.
- Design lessons and activities in a way that allows those with health needs to participate fully and ensuring learners are not excluded from activities that they wish to take part in without a clear evidence-based reason.
- Understand their role in supporting learners with health needs, including ensuring they attend the required training.
- Ensure they are aware of the needs of their pupils through the appropriate and lawful sharing of the individual pupil's health needs.
- Ensure they are aware of the signs, symptoms and triggers of common life-threatening medical conditions and know what to do in an emergency.
- Keep parents informed of how their child's health needs are affecting them whilst in the school.

#### 4.6 Parents/Carers:

Parents/Carers have the responsibility to:

- Ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school where possible.
- Work in partnership with the school to ensure the best possible outcomes for their child.
- 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.
- Attend meetings to discuss how support for their child should be planned.

## **5. Managing Absences**

5.1 Where a learner is to be absent from school, parents/carers should - where possible - notify the school in advance, or on the first day that the learner is unable to attend due to illness. Absences due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern as to the authenticity of the illness.

5.2 The school will provide support to learners who are absent from school because of illness for a period of less than 15 school days by liaising with the pupil's parents/carers 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 learner, their family and relevant members of staff.

5.3 For periods of absence that are expected to last for 15 or more school days, either in one absence or over the course of a school year, the named person with responsibility for learners with health needs will notify the LA, who will take responsibility for the learner and their education.

5.4 Where absences are anticipated or known in advance, the school will liaise with the LA to enable education provision to be provided from the start of the learner's absence. For hospital admissions, the appointed named member of staff will liaise with the LA regarding the programme that should be followed while the learner is in hospital.

5.5 The LA will set up a personal education plan (PEP) for the learner which will allow the school, the LA and the provider of the learner's education to work together.

5.6 The school will monitor pupil attendance and mark registers to ensure it is clear whether a learner is, or should be, receiving education otherwise than at school.

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

- The learner 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 learner nor their parent/carer has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school, after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.

5.8 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 learner's education.

## **6. Supporting Learners with Health Needs**

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

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

6.3 The school will make reasonable adjustments under learner's individual healthcare plans (IHCPs).

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

6.5 During a period of absence, the school will work with the provider of the learner's education to establish and maintain regular communication and effective outcomes.

6.6 Whilst a learner is away from school, the school will work with the LA to ensure the learner can successfully remain in touch with their school – for instance through (although not exclusively):

- School/Trust Newsletters
- Emails

- Invitations to School Events
- Cards or letters from peers and staff
- Video lessons from regular school staff

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

6.8 To help ensure a learner 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 and appropriate medical professionals.
- 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

6.9 In the case of a learner expecting to take public examinations, the named member of staff will liaise with the alternative provision provider over planning and examination course requirements where appropriate. Relevant assessment information will be provided to the alternative provision provider if required. Awarding bodies may make special arrangements for pupils with permanent or long-term disabilities and learning difficulties, or temporary disabilities and illnesses. Applications for such arrangements will be submitted by the school, or LA if more appropriate, as early as possible so as dispensation can be sought. The school remains responsible for the entering of candidates where they decide to take exams and should take an active role in the preparation of a learner for their exams.

## **7. Reintegration**

7.1 The aim should always be that a learner should receive their education in their school, and thus when a learner is considered well enough to return to school, the school will develop a tailored reintegration plan in collaboration with the LA. The school will work with the LA when reintegration into school is anticipated to plan for consistent provision during and after the period of education outside school. As far as possible, the child will be able to access the curriculum and materials that they would have used in school.

7.2 Where appropriate and applicable, the school nurse will be involved in the development of the learner'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 learner.

7.3 Schools will consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to provide suitable access to the school and the curriculum for the learner. These will be made in consultation with clinicians, parents, and the child. The school is aware that some learners will need gradual reintegration over a long period of time and will always consult with the learners, their parents/carers and key staff about concerns, medical issues, timing and the preferred pace of return.

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

7.5 A learner's 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 learner
- 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

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

7.7 Where necessary, staff once a learner's return date has been confirmed, staff will be provided with any relevant training in a timely manner before the learner'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.

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

7.8 Following reintegration, the school will support the LA in seeking feedback from the learner regarding the effectiveness of the process so that positive changes can be made for the future.

## **8. Information Sharing and Record Keeping**

8.1 It is essential that all information about learners with health needs is kept up to date so that we can provide the best support for learner's needs.

8.2 All school staff will be provided with access to relevant information, including high-risk health needs, first aiders and emergency procedures, via the agreed Academy procedures. To protect confidentiality, all information-sharing techniques, e.g. staff noticeboards, will be agreed with the pupil and their parent/carer in advance of being used.

8.3 Parents/Carers will be made aware of their own rights and responsibilities regarding confidentiality and information sharing. To help achieve this, the school will:

- Ensure this policy and other relevant policies are easily available and accessible.
- Provide the learner and their parents/carers with a copy of the policy on information sharing.
- Ask parents/carers to sign a consent form which clearly details the organisations and individuals that their child's health information will be shared with and which methods of sharing will be used.
- Consider how friendship groups and peers may be able to assist learners with health needs.

8.4 When a learner 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 to procure this information.

8.5 In accordance with the First Aid and Medication and the Medical Conditions Policies, written records will be kept of all medicines administered to pupils.