



Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy



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Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Suitable education is arranged for pupils on roll who cannot attend school due to health needs. "Suitable education" is defined under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 as efficient education suitable to the pupil's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.
- Pupils, staff and parents understand what the school is responsible for when this education is being provided by the local authority

Waterton Academy Trust aims to support the Local Authorities (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.

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 Local Authority (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.

Legislation and guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of the Education Act 1996.

It is also based on guidance provided by our local authority.

- Barnsley LA guidance [Education for children who can't attend school because of health needs \(barnsley.gov.uk\)](https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/education/children-who-cant-attend-school-because-of-health-needs/)
- Wakefield LA guidance [Wakefield Council Guidance on Educating Children with Medical Needs | Medical Needs Guidance | Wakefield SEND Local Offer \(mylocaloffer.org\)](https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/education/children-who-cant-attend-school-because-of-health-needs/)

In addition to the above this policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- DfE (2013) 'Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs'
- DfE (2015) 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions'
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025)
- SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (DfE/DoH, 2015)

This policy also operates in conjunction with the following Trust policies:

- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Records Management
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Accessibility Policy.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

Responsibilities of the school

Schools (including maintained schools, maintained nursery schools, academies, alternative provision academies) are required by law to make arrangements for supporting pupils at their school with medical conditions.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 Section 100 schools and education settings have a statutory duty to make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions.

Statutory guidance was published for the governing bodies of all schools, whether they are maintained by the local authority, academies or free schools. The statutory guidance applies to all education settings for children and young people up to the age of sixteen and is good practice guidance for post-16 settings.

The statutory guidance 'Supporting pupils with medical conditions' can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>

This guidance also means that schools will make arrangements for some children who are absent from school due to medical needs. The LA take responsibility for a child's education once their absence exceeds 15 days (either consecutively or cumulatively). The sections below detail the responsibility of the school and the LA in these circumstances.

The Trust recognises its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s.149 Equality Act 2010). We will ensure that pupils with medical conditions are not treated less favourably and that reasonable adjustments are made so they can access education and wider school life.

The Trust will fulfil its responsibilities in accordance with the Department for Education's Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance. Where a pupil is absent due to medical needs, the academy will work proactively with parents/carers, health professionals, the local authority and other relevant agencies to identify barriers to attendance, provide appropriate support and monitor the effectiveness of interventions. The academy will maintain accurate attendance records and apply attendance codes in accordance with current statutory guidance and attendance regulations.

If the school makes arrangements

Initially, the school will attempt to make arrangements to deliver suitable education for children with health needs who cannot attend school. This is for absences that do not exceed 15 days. 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.

Each Waterton academy has a named person who will be responsible for making and monitoring these arrangements.

In cases of initial absence that fit the criteria, the named person will be responsible for ensuring the pupil is provided with work that is appropriate. They will be responsible for ensuring that this work is updated and reviewed and that feedback is provided.

Parents will be contacted to discuss arrangements for this and to ensure an appropriate level of support is provided. The child's class teacher will also contact the pupil on a weekly basis during a check in call. Where a pupil's health needs are likely to result in repeated, prolonged or escalating absence, the academy will adopt an early intervention approach. This may include attendance support meetings, multi-agency planning, consultation with health professionals and the development of a personalised support plan to reduce barriers to education and maintain engagement with learning

All information about a pupil's medical condition will be treated as sensitive personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Information will be shared only with relevant staff, health

professionals, and the local authority on a need-to-know basis, with consent where appropriate. Secure systems will be used for storing and transmitting information.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will maintain oversight of any child absent for medical reasons. This includes ensuring appropriate welfare checks are undertaken, safeguarding records are updated and any concerns are responded to promptly. The DSL will consider whether prolonged, repeated or unexplained absence may indicate an underlying safeguarding concern and will take appropriate action in accordance with the Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Staff undertaking home visits or meeting pupils away from the school site will follow the Trust's safeguarding procedures at all times.

Reintegration will be planned with parent and for absences of less than 15 days we anticipate that the reintegration period will be less than 2 weeks in total. Reintegration plans will consider phased returns, access to catch-up support and reasonable adjustments to support pupils with long-term conditions. Where a reduced timetable is considered necessary, it will be implemented only where it is in the pupil's best interests, agreed with parents/carers, subject to regular review and used for the shortest possible period. Reduced timetables will not be used as a long-term solution or as an alternative to appropriate support and provision. Curriculum continuity will be maintained wherever possible, with input from the SENDCo where relevant. Pupil and parent voice will inform all reintegration planning.

If the local authority makes arrangements

The Local Authority (either Barnsley or Wakefield dependent upon the academy's' location) will become responsible for arranging suitable education for a pupil once their absence totals 15 days or more.

The arrangements for this are as follows:

Wakefield

Wakefield Council works with Pinderfields Hospital Pupil Referral Unit (PHPRU) to provide education provision for pupils who require this in relation to their medical needs.

The responsible person is the Service Manager, WISENDSS in partnership with PHPRU.

Referrals can be made directly to the Head teacher of The PHPRU who will liaise with the Local Authority nominated officer to agree if the referral is appropriate.

Statutory guidance indicates that medical evidence must be provided by a medical or CAMHS consultant. Where supporting medical evidence is not quickly available due to extensive service assessment waiting times, consideration will be given to other medical professional evidence, such as the child's GP. GP only referrals will initially be considered as an interim referral in order to avoid delays but will further require specialist evidence in order for provision/support to continue.

Evidence must clearly state that the pupil is too unwell to attend school and set out the reasons why and where possible the expected time period of the condition and absence from school. The medical evidence should also indicate the number of hours per week the pupil could reasonably be expected to undertake given the current medical need.

If a pupil is under the care of (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) CAMHS, there is an expectation that CAMHS practitioners will form part of the multi-agency plan and support education professionals with advice and guidance and offer relevant timescales for regular medical tuition reviews which they attend and support.

Referrals are generally made by the relevant medical or CAMHS consultant however as indicated there may be instances where referrals come through another route such as GP or through school. In the case of a school, the school must seek and provide medical evidence which confirms why the pupil is unable to attend school and states how long this is likely to be the case.

The purpose of placement at PHPRU is to provide short term education either through attendance on site or through tuition and to support the pupil to reintegrate to school as quickly as possible but retaining a degree of flexibility.

PHPRU will discuss with the medical professionals and parents/carers the number of hours of education or tuition the pupil can reasonably manage, and how and where this would be best supported.

Once the Referral Form and evidence has been considered and a decision about the referral has been made, the PHPRU Headteacher would notify the referrer.

Barnsley

Barnsley LA provide a broad and balanced education for school-age children in Barnsley including children who have an illness, condition or diagnosis that leads to prolonged or recurring periods of absence from school.

In this instance schools must submit a referral to the LA who aim to provide education to suit your child's needs within 15 working days of receiving your referral. This is providing it meets the criteria.

Barnsley LA will then provide a minimum entitlement of five hours a week. This depends on medical advice and whether they're well enough to benefit from teaching.

Tuition normally takes place on a one-to-one basis in the child's home or in a local public venue. Barnsley LA also consider whether small group tuition or tuition via an accredited e-learning programme would be better.

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

Work constructively with the local authority, providers, relevant agencies and parents to ensure the best outcomes for the pupil

Share information with the local authority and relevant health services as required

Help make sure that the provision offered to the pupil is as effective as possible and that the child can be reintegrated back into school successfully

Meet with the educational provider to ensure regular updates around progress are received and to ensure all parties are fully informed.

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 pupil to access the same curriculum and materials that they would have used in school as far as possible
- Enable the pupil to stay in touch with school life (e.g. through newsletters, emails, invitations to school events or internet links to lessons from their school)
- Create individually tailored reintegration plans for each child returning to school
- Consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will maintain oversight of any child absent for medical reasons. This includes ensuring appropriate welfare checks are undertaken, safeguarding records are updated and any concerns are responded to promptly. The DSL will consider whether prolonged, repeated or unexplained absence may indicate an underlying safeguarding concern and will take appropriate action in accordance with the Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Staff undertaking home visits or meeting pupils away from the school site will follow the Trust's safeguarding procedures at all times.

Reintegration plans will consider phased returns, access to catch-up support and reasonable adjustments to support pupils with long-term conditions. Where a reduced timetable is considered necessary, it will be implemented only where it is in the pupil's best interests, agreed with parents/carers, subject to regular review and used for the shortest possible period. Reduced timetables will not be used as a long-term solution or as an alternative to appropriate support and provision.

Where a pupil's attendance becomes irregular, their whereabouts become unknown, or there are concerns that suitable education is not being accessed, the academy will follow statutory Children Missing Education procedures and liaise with the local authority as required. This will be undertaken alongside the Trust's safeguarding procedures and attendance processes.

Monitoring arrangements

Monitoring will include the following indicators:

- timeliness of referrals made to the Local Authority;
- engagement of pupils in work provided during absence;

- quality of communication between school, family, and external providers;
- success of reintegration plans.
- attendance outcomes following reintegration;
- timeliness and effectiveness of safeguarding and welfare checks for pupils absent due to health needs.

Trustees will receive anonymised annual reports summarising pupil numbers, duration of provision, and outcomes. Any delays in local authority provision will be escalated to the Trust's executive team and, if necessary, to the Local Authority.

Links to other policies

- This policy links to the following policies:
- Accessibility plan
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions
- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Records Management
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

Document Detail			
Document Name:		Children with health needs who cannot attend school Policy	
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1	01/01/2024	L Thresh	New Policy
2	01/09/2025	M Bretherton	Added updated statutory references: <i>Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)</i> , <i>KCSIE (2025)</i> , <i>SEND Code of Practice (2015)</i> . Inserted explicit reference to Public Sector Equality Duty and reasonable adjustments. Strengthened data protection section. Clarified safeguarding oversight. Defined "suitable education" in line with Education Act 1996, s.19. Expanded monitoring section: Reintegration section strengthened:
3	04/06/26	B Robertson	Updated to strengthen alignment with current DfE attendance and safeguarding expectations. Added explicit reference to attendance support and early intervention processes in line with Working Together to Improve School Attendance. Strengthened safeguarding oversight responsibilities of the DSL, including consideration of prolonged or unexplained absence as a potential safeguarding concern. Added reference to Children Missing Education procedures. Clarified expectations regarding the use and review of reduced timetables

			during reintegration. Enhanced monitoring arrangements to include attendance outcomes following reintegration and the effectiveness of welfare and safeguarding checks.
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