



One minute guide

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions

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What duties does a school have to support pupils with medical conditions?

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 ([guide](#)), schools and education settings have a statutory duty to make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions. The aim is to ensure that children and young people with medical conditions affecting either their physical or mental health or both are properly supported in school so that they can play a full and active role in school life, remain healthy, and achieve their academic potential.

When the change in legislation was introduced, [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.

Parents or carers of children with medical conditions may be concerned that their child's health may deteriorate when they attend school, particularly if their conditions are long-term, complex and require ongoing support, medicines or care. Pupils may also experience long absences from school in order to receive medical care, which may have an impact not only on their educational attainment but also on their ability to re-integrate with their peers, which can affect their general wellbeing and emotional health. It is important that schools are able to offer appropriate support for these pupils in order to minimise the impact their condition has on their school life, and their school life has on their health.

What do schools need to do?

Many schools already provide good support for children and young people with medical conditions, and have done since before the introduction of the duty. However, the duty provided all schools with an opportunity to review their arrangements, and gave parents or carers and families reassurance that schools will take a more standardised approach.

The key requirements of schools under the statutory guidance include:

Policies - Schools should ensure they develop policies, reviewed regularly, that are accessible to parents or carers and staff. A model policy for schools to adapt is available [here](#).

Individual healthcare plans - pupils with medical conditions should have an individual healthcare plan, where this is felt to be appropriate and proportionate to the medical condition. Plans are often required even for conditions which pupils are generally able to manage well in their day to day life, such as asthma or diabetes. If a child or young person already has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in relation to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), details of how the school should respond to their health needs can be included in the EHCP and may not need a separate plan. For more information about individual healthcare plans, see overleaf.

Training - any member of school staff providing support to a pupil with medical needs should have received suitable training. This would usually be arranged by the school through the school nurse or other appropriate health professional as soon as the school is made aware of a new diagnosis or of a new pupil who has medical needs.

What does an individual healthcare plan include?

Most pupils with a medical condition should have an individual healthcare plan, unless the school, healthcare professionals and parents or carers agree, based on evidence, that such a response would be disproportionate. The policies implemented by school governing bodies should specify who is responsible for developing the plans.

Individual healthcare plans should include details of the medical condition, their symptoms and the impact it has on the child or young person. Any relevant information about medication or support needs should be detailed in the plan, as well as instructions detailing how to respond where there is a risk that emergency intervention may be needed.

The plans should be developed and agreed between the school and family, with appropriate input from healthcare practitioners, and be reviewed at least annually. Parents should have a copy of the plan, and it should be easily accessible within school to anybody who may need to support the child or young person. When pupils change schools, the plan should be shared with their new school and appropriate support arrangements implemented.

Parents or carers will usually inform the school that their child has a medical condition, or has recently been diagnosed with one. However, there have been very rare occasions where parents have fabricated a medical condition either in order to mask abuse and / or neglect or in connection with Fabricated or Induced Illness (FFI) ([guide](#)). If practitioners working with children have any concerns about what parents or carers say about their child's medical condition, they should speak to the Duty and Advice Team on tel: 113 376 0336 ([guide](#)).

What support is available to schools in meeting these duties?

There is a model policy available [here](#) which governing bodies can adapt to meet the needs of their own school, staff and students.

Children and young people with medical conditions may benefit from specialist equipment they can use at school which may help them to maintain their attendance. This equipment can be provided, if appropriate, following an assessment of the child's needs. Schools can also apply for capital funding to meet access needs for children and young people, e.g. lifts, modifications for wheelchair access and installing care suites.

To find out more about this assistance and request an assessment, please contact Access Officer Julie Lewis via email at Julie.lewis@leeds.gov.uk.

Key contacts and further information

If you have any questions about how a school is meeting these duties, please contact Area Lead for Complex Needs Jackie Claxton-Ruddock at Jackie.claxtonruddock@leeds.gov.uk.

The statutory guidance for school and education setting governing bodies is available [here](#).

Finally, this [article](#) outlines how support at school has helped one of our Leeds pupils to manage her chronic health condition, and some of the things that can help make a difference.