



Minor Illness and School Attendance

A guide for Parents

Introduction

In Haringey the School Nursing Service is commissioned by Public Health to work closely with schools, the Education Welfare Service and other agencies to ensure that children and young people can benefit from all the educational opportunities available to them.

This is in line with government initiatives such as Every Child Matters and the Healthy Schools Programme.

Reducing absence is a key priority locally and nationally. Children who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve at school and reach their full potential. Missing school disrupts school routines and learning.

Parents have a duty to ensure their child is not absent where this can be avoided. **Schools may not authorise your child's absence for a minor illness if they thought it was not necessary.**

The most common reason given for children to miss school is illness, however most of the time childhood ailments do not require a visit to the doctors, prescription, or time away from school. Often getting advice from the pharmacist or treating your child illness can be the quickest and easiest way to deal with it.

To help avoid unnecessary school absences while promoting child welfare, Haringey School Nursing Service have produced this leaflet as a general guide to help parents decide whether your child is well enough to attend school when they have a minor illness.



General Information

If your child is unwell on a school day, please always contact the school in the morning to let them know, with the specific reason as this needs to be logged in the class register.

Tell school staff and they will phone you if your child continues to have symptoms or report that they are well.

Please remember that early morning aches often pass, so don't keep your child at home 'just in case' when they could be learning in class.

If you are not sure, check the guidance in this leaflet. For further advice you could talk to a member of the school staff, your doctor or the school health staff.

Your contact details

Please make sure that the contact details the school has are current and up to date. It is important that the school is able to make contact with you during the day if your child is not well enough to stay in school.

Punctuality

Establishing good habits is important. Ensure that your child goes to bed early as lack of sleep will affect his/her ability to function in the morning leading to lateness.

Medical Appointments

Where possible please arrange doctors, dentists, optician's appointments outside of school hours. If this is not possible, your child should attend school for the rest of the day.

Medication in School

If your child needs to take prescribed medication during the school day, please arrange this with the school staff, they do not need to be kept at home.

If your child has a long-term illness, you should discuss this with your doctor and the school. Usually, it is possible to arrange medication so that it is not taken during school hours. School staff may need to be made aware of the illness so that if it causes problems while your child is at school, they know how to help. Each school will have a policy for management and administration of medicines.

Longer Term Absence

If there are concerns about your child's repeated absence from school, the school may ask you to present medical evidence to verify the reason for absence and/or refer your child to the school nurse. A letter from a medical professional, such as a GP or from a hospital is needed when:

- A child has any condition requiring hospital or surgical care.
- The child returns to school with a cast or stitches.
- The child needs restricted PE lessons or playtime activities for more than three consecutive days.

If your child has attended the Emergency Department or been admitted to hospital, please follow the recommendations of hospital staff on when your child is able to return to school.

When should I keep my child off school?

As a parent, it can be difficult to decide whether or not your child is well enough to go to school however most illnesses can be managed in school. Your child should not be kept away from school unless they:

- Are so unwell that they are not able to cope with the lessons.
- Have an infectious illness that can spread to other children.
- Need care during school hours that cannot be carried out in school.

If you are unsure check the guidance in this leaflet and The NHS website that has useful advice:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school>.

When a Parent or Sibling is Ill

A parent should make alternate arrangements to get the well child to school. Family illness is not considered a legitimate reason for school absence.

Developing good family or parent networks can be helpful, as schools will not usually authorise absence due to parental or sibling illness. Please discuss any difficulties with the school as they may be able to offer support.

Minor Illness

Raised Temperature (fever)

If your child looks or feels shivery, usually cold or hot, they may have a raised temperature. This may be due to a variety of reasons. If your child has a raised temperature (38°C and above), they should not be in school. It is important to measure the temperature accurately with a thermometer. Your child should be able to return to school once they feel and look better.

For further information please visit:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/fever-in-children

Aches and Pains

If your child has a persistent tooth or ear ache, they need to see a dentist or a doctor without delay.

A child whose only complaint is minor headache does not usually need to be kept at home.

Tummy Ache

If your child complains of mild tummy ache and has no other symptoms, they should go to school.

If your child complains of repeated mild tummy ache, headache or other symptoms and does not want to attend school, this could be due to your child being unhappy at school, experiencing bullying or finding school work difficult. Speak to your child, the teacher or school nurse to discuss this and find ways of dealing with it.

Vomiting and Diarrhoea

If a child is vomiting or has diarrhoea keep them off school and ensure adequate fluid intake to avoid dehydration. Children can return to school 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped for two days. Seek medical advice if your child does not improve as you expect. For further information please visit:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea-and-vomiting



Cold and Cough

A child may attend school with slight cold and cough. However, children with bad or long-lasting coughs need to see their GP. Once treated or when the cough is controlled or disappearing and the child is feeling better, they need to return to school.

If your child has asthma, remember they may need their blue inhaler more often.

Asthma and Viral-induced wheeze

Asthma is a long-term condition that affects the lungs, and can cause cough, wheeze, difficulty breathing or asthma attacks which make it hard to breathe.

Viral-induced wheeze is triggered by virus infections, and unlike in asthma, children do not have symptoms all year round.

If your child has asthma or viral-induced wheeze, you must ensure that you give the school a spare reliever (usually blue) inhaler and a spacer to be used in school for your child, and their up-to-date asthma/wheeze action plan.

Sore Throat

If your child complains of a slight sore throat and has no other symptoms, they are fit to go to school.

If the sore throat occurs with a raised temperature, they need to stay at home.

Head lice

Head lice and nits are very common in young children. They don't have anything to do with dirty hair and are usually picked up from head-to-head contact. Your child having head lice does not require them to be absent from school.

Head lice and nits can be removed by wet combing. For further information, visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-lice-and-nits/>

If this treatment is unsuccessful or your child has persistent episodes of head lice, please visit your pharmacist for further advice.

Do not send a child to school with an unexplained rash or skin eruption until you have consulted your doctor.

Health Tips

To ensure that your child is happy, healthy and able to participate fully in school activities, your child must:

- Be registered with a GP.
- Have regular checks with the dentists.
- Have all childhood immunisations as recommended by Department of Health.
- Enjoy a healthy diet and exercise.
- Get enough sleep i.e. goes to bed on time.
- Have regular checks for head lice every 2 weeks.

Parents/Carers must:

- Work closely with lead professionals and others where children have special needs to ensure their needs are met.
- Try to attend medical appointments outside school hours if possible.
- Speak to school staff or school health adviser if you have any concerns about your child.



COVID 19

Coronavirus is an infectious disease which causes mild to moderate respiratory illness. Most people recover without requiring special treatment.

Evidence shows that, compared to adults, children are less at risk to infection and may not have symptoms or will display milder symptoms

Protect yourself and others from infection by washing your hands and using an alcohol based rub frequently and not touching your face.

In accordance with the Public Health England, small number of children may need to isolate if they are displaying signs and symptoms of Covid-19 or living with a person who has tested positive. Please ensure that lateral flow tests are taken & do not send your child to school.

For more information please access:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>



The following table provides guidance on some common childhood illnesses:

Illness	Recommendations
Chicken Pox	Children can return to school 5 days from onset of the rash.
Conjunctivitis	No need to be off school.
Diarrhoea and Vomiting	Children can return to school 48 hours from last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting. Exclude from swimming for 2 weeks.
Flu (Influenza)	Children should return to school as soon as they have recovered.
German Measles (Rubella)	Keep off school for 5 days from onset of rash.
Glandular Fever	No need to be off school.
Head Lice (Nits)	No need to be off school. Treat with necessary shampoo.
Impetigo	Keep off school until lesions are crusted or healed.
Measles	Keep off school for 5 days from onset of rash.
Mumps	Keep off school for 5 days from onset of swollen glands.
Ringworm	Keep off school only until treatment commenced.
Scabies	Child can return after first treatment.
Threadworms	Children should attend school.
Warts and Verrucae	Children should attend school.
*All information taken from Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and Other Child Care Settings (HPA 2006)	

Our contact details:

School Health Service

School nurses and their teams can be contacted via your child's school or via the generic email below:

whh-tr.haringeyschoolnursing@nhs.net

Tel: 020 3224 4300/4182

Education Welfare Service

Telephone: 0208 489 0000 ask for EWO service

Other useful contacts and information

NHS 111 online (111.nhs.uk) or call 111 if you think you need medical help right now but it is not an emergency

Website: www.nhs.uk

