CHILDREN WITH HEALTH NEEDS WHO CANNOT ATTEND SCHOOL POLICY

Author:	Heather Murphy (Assistant Headteacher- Safeguarding and Attendance Designated Safeguarding Lead Senior Mental Health Lead)		
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1. INTRODUCTION

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a suitable and high-quality education. Pupils who are unable to attend school due to health needs must continue to receive education that is good quality, enables progress, and supports their social and emotional wellbeing. Health needs may include physical illness, injury, recovery from surgery, chronic medical conditions, mental health difficulties, anxiety-based school avoidance where supported by professional evidence, pregnancy-related health needs or periods of hospitalisation.

The school recognises that absence from education due to health needs may present a safeguarding risk. In line with statutory guidance, attendance is treated as a safeguarding matter, and the school will work proactively with the local authority and other agencies to ensure that no pupil is without suitable education. Children whose attendance is affected by mental health illness will be supported in line with this policy and the school's attendance policy. Absence due to mental health needs will be treated with the same importance as physical health needs.

Under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a duty to arrange suitable, full-time education (or part-time where appropriate for the child's needs) for children of compulsory school age who are unable to attend school because of illness, exclusion or otherwise. This duty applies whether a pupil is on roll at a school or not and includes pupils who can attend intermittently.

Where a child cannot attend school due to health needs and would not otherwise receive a suitable education, the local authority is responsible for arranging appropriate provision.

In many cases, pupils will continue to receive suitable education through school-led arrangements, hospital education services, or adapted provision without the need for local authority intervention. However, where provision is not suitable or not full-time (unless medically appropriate), the local authority must intervene.

2. AIMS

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Suitable education is arranged promptly for pupils who cannot attend school due to health needs
- Absence related to health is identified early and responded to proactively
- Pupils, parents and staff understand roles and responsibilities
- Pupils remain engaged with education and school life during absence
- Reintegration into school is planned, supported and successful

3. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

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

- Education Act 1996 (Section 19)
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act
- Children and Families Act 2014 (Section 100 – duty to support pupils with medical conditions)
- DfE (2013) "Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs"
- DfE (2014) "Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions"
- DfE (2024) "Working Together to Improve School Attendance" (statutory guidance)
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- DfE (2025) "Keeping Children Safe in Education"
- DfE "Alternative Provision" statutory guidance

This policy is also informed by guidance provided by the local authority, including:

Telford & Wrekin Policy & Procedures for Pupils who are on a Modified Timetable

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 General principles

The school will act proactively where it is clear that a pupil's absence due to health needs is likely to become prolonged. The school will not wait for a fixed threshold before taking action and will engage the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Provision should be arranged as soon as it is clear that a pupil will be absent for an extended period, and where appropriate no later than the sixth day of absence.

The school will notify the local authority as soon as it becomes clear that a pupil is likely to be absent for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative, because of health needs. Where health needs significantly impact attendance, the school will consider alternative provision, blended learning, therapeutic support and flexible pathways in collaboration with the local authority and relevant professionals.

The school will take a flexible and proportionate approach to medical evidence and will not routinely require formal medical evidence to support absence, unless there is a clear and justified reason.

4.2 School responsibilities
The school will:

- Monitor attendance and identify concerns early
- Maintain regular communication with pupils and families
- Provide appropriate work and support during short-term absence
- Make reasonable adjustments to support access to education
- Work collaboratively with the local authority and other professionals
- Ensure pupils remain connected to school life

4.3 Roles and responsibilities
Headteacher
Responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with statutory duties
- Working with governors, parents, and professionals
- Ensuring arrangements are understood and implemented
- Appointing the Assistant Headteacher for Attendance and Safeguarding who will act as the named lead for coordinating support for pupils unable to attend school because of health needs
- Ensuring staff training
- Notifying the local authority of prolonged absence

SENCO
Responsible for:

- Monitoring pupils unable to attend school
- Supporting planning and reintegration
- Liaising with education providers and families
- Monitoring progress and outcomes

Staff
Responsible for:

- Supporting pupils' access to education
- Understanding health needs and confidentiality
- Adapting teaching where appropriate
- Maintaining communication with families

Parents
Expected to:

- Ensure attendance where possible
- Inform the school of absence promptly
- Provide relevant information about health needs
- Engage with planning and support

- Raise concerns through the school's complaints procedure. Where provision is arranged by the local authority, parents will be advised of the relevant local authority complaints and escalation procedures.

4.4 Absence management

- Parents must inform the school on the first day of absence
- Illness absence will be authorised unless there is a valid concern
- The school will provide support and work during short-term absence
- Attendance will be monitored closely
- The school will notify the local authority when absence exceeds or is expected to exceed 15 days
- Attendance registers will be maintained in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the school's Attendance Policy.

4.5 Support for pupils

The school will:

- Work with families and professionals to meet pupils' needs
- Ensure access to as full an education as possible
- Maintain communication with pupils during absence
- Provide appropriate curriculum materials
- Consider adaptations such as:
    - flexible or part-time timetables
    - remote learning
    - additional support
    - access to facilities
    - rest areas

4.6 Reintegration

The school will:

- Develop a tailored reintegration plan
- Work collaboratively with the local authority
- Involve relevant professionals
- Provide a gradual and supported return where needed
- Ensure the pupil feels welcomed and supported

Reintegration plans will include:

- Clear timelines
- Named staff responsibility
- Regular review meetings
- Academic and pastoral support
- Social reintegration opportunities

4.7 Where the Local Authority makes arrangements

Where the school cannot meet the pupil's needs alone, the local authority will arrange suitable education.

The school will:

- Work collaboratively with the local authority and providers
- Share relevant information
- Support continuity of learning
- Facilitate reintegration

Where concerns arise about delays or suitability of provision, the school will escalate concerns with the local authority and support families in accessing appropriate procedures where necessary.

5. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be monitored regularly and updated sooner than stated if DfE guidance changes, local authority procedure change or there is a significant case review identifying the need to change. This policy will be reviewed biennially by the governing body or sooner if required by changes in legislation or guidance. The governing body will receive regular assurance that statutory duties for pupils with health needs who cannot attend school are being met.

6. LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to:

- Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Behaviour Policy