ZENITH
MULTI ACADEMY
TRUST

# Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School Policy

for use by all staff and volunteers in:
All schools in the Trust (including Castledon's Satellite)

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| **Approved by:** | Board of Trustees |
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This policy is based on a model from Juniper Education

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## 1. Introduction

The school/Trust aims to support the 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/students should receive their education within their school, and the aim of any alternative provision will be to reintegrate pupils/students back into school as soon as they are well enough.

We understand that we have a continuing role in a pupil's/student'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 school.

The Trust and its schools recognise that, in most cases, the first priority is to enable pupils with health needs to remain in education within their own school. Before considering referral to the local authority for education otherwise than at school, schools will work proactively with pupils, parents/carers, healthcare professionals and other relevant agencies to identify and remove barriers to attendance and participation. This may include implementing reasonable adjustments, adapting timetables, modifying aspects of the curriculum or school day, providing pastoral and wellbeing support, making environmental adjustments, reviewing Individual Healthcare Plans and considering other supportive measures that enable the pupil to access education safely and successfully. A referral to the local authority should not replace efforts to promote inclusion within school and should ordinarily be considered only where, despite appropriate adjustments and support, the pupil is unable to attend school because of their health needs.

Where it is appropriate and in the pupil's best interests, schools will continue to consider and plan for reintegration, even where this may be a longer-term objective. Opportunities to increase participation in school life, reintroduce attendance gradually, or remove barriers to attendance should remain under review throughout any period of education otherwise than at school.

## 2. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- DfE Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 'Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school/Trust policies:

- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy/ Allergy Policy

- Alternative Provision/Reduced Provision Policies
- Health and Safety
- Allergy policy

## 3. Definitions

Children who are unable to attend school as a result of their medical needs may include those with:

- Mental health conditions which have been assessed as affecting a pupil's ability to attend school, including severe anxiety, depression, eating disorders and other clinically significant presentations.
- Physical health issues
- Physical injuries
- Emotional-based school avoidance (EBSA)
- Progressive conditions
- Terminal illnesses
- Chronic illnesses

Children who are unable to attend mainstream education for health reasons may attend/access education via any of the following:

- Hospital school: a special school within a hospital setting where education is provided to give continuity whilst the child is receiving treatment.
- Home/alternative tuition: many LAs have home tuition services that act as a communication channel between schools and pupils/students on occasions where pupils/students are too ill to attend school and are receiving specialist medical treatment.
- Medical PRUs: these are LA establishments that provide education for children unable to attend their registered school due to their medical needs.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### 4.1 LA Duties

The LA must arrange suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, would not receive a suitable education without such provision.

The school has a duty to support the LA in doing so.

The LA should:

- Provide such education as soon as it is clear that a pupil/student will be away from school for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative. They should liaise with the appropriate medical professionals to ensure minimal delay in arranging appropriate provision for the pupil/student.
- Ensure the education pupils/students receive is of good quality, allows them to take appropriate qualifications, prevents them from falling behind their peers in school, and allows them to reintegrate successfully back into school as soon as possible.
- Address the needs of individual pupils/students in arranging provision.
- Have a named person responsible for the education of children with additional health needs and ensure parents know who this is.
- Have a written policy statement on their arrangements to comply with their legal duty towards children with additional health needs.

- Review the provision offered regularly to ensure that it continues to be appropriate for the child, and that it is providing suitable education.
- Give clear policies on the provision of education for children and young people under and over compulsory school age.

In Essex, the Education Access team support children who are referred under 'Section 19 Medical Referrals. Some children do not feel strictly under 'Medical', and so are referred under Section 19 'Otherwise'. Section 19 'otherwise' is a broad category which covers circumstances other than illness or exclusion in which it is not reasonably possible for a child to take advantage of any existing suitable schooling

**The LA should not:**

- Have processes or policies in place which prevent a child from getting the right type of provision and a good education.
- Withhold or reduce the provision, or type of provision, for a child because of how much it will cost.
- Have policies based upon the percentage of time a child is able to attend school rather than whether the child is receiving a suitable education during that attendance.
- Have lists of health conditions which dictate whether or not they will arrange education for children or inflexible policies which result in children going without suitable full-time education or as much education as their health condition allows them to participate in.

## 4.2 The Trust

**The Trust/CEO are responsible for:**

- Ensuring arrangements for pupils/students who cannot attend school as a result of their medical needs are in place and are effectively implemented.
- Ensuring the termly review of the arrangements made for pupils/students who cannot attend school due to their medical needs takes place.
- Ensuring the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the arrangements to support the needs of pupils/students 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 Headteachers provide staff with responsibility for supporting pupils/students with health needs, with appropriate training.
- Approving and reviewing this policy on an annual basis.

**Local Governing Bodies/Headteachers are responsible for:**

- Working collaboratively with parents and other professionals to develop arrangements to meet the best interests of children.
- Ensuring the arrangements put in place to meet pupils/students' health needs are fully understood by all those involved and acted upon.
- Ensuring there is named member of staff who is responsible for each pupil/student with healthcare needs, who liaises with parents/carers, pupils/students, the LA, key workers and others involved in the pupil's/student's care.
- Ensuring the support put in place focusses on and meets the needs of individual pupils/students.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff with responsibility for supporting pupils/students with health needs where relevant.

- Providing teachers who support pupils/students with health needs with suitable information relating to a pupil's/student's health condition and the possible effect the condition and/or medication taken has on the pupil/student.
- Notifying the LA when a pupil/student is likely to be away from the school for a significant period of time due to their health needs.
- The Local Governing Body will receive assurance regarding the effectiveness of arrangements for pupils with health needs who cannot attend school, including themes arising from reintegration arrangements, educational outcomes and any emerging risks.

Various pastoral leaders or the SENCo could be the lead for a child, and the lead will be whoever is best placed to support the child. The named member of staff for each child is responsible for:

- Coordinating arrangements for pupils who cannot attend school because of health needs
- Working closely with the Senior Leadership Team Link for Medical Conditions and Allergies, alongside other relevant leaders, to ensure continuity between Individual Healthcare Plans, attendance support, educational provision and reintegration arrangements.
- Actively monitoring pupil/student progress and reintegration into school.
- Supplying pupils/students' education providers with information about the child's capabilities, progress and outcomes.
- Liaising with the Headteacher, education providers and parents/carers to determine pupils/students' programmes of study whilst they are absent from school.
- Keeping pupils/students informed about school events and encouraging communication with their peers.
- Providing a link between pupils/students and their parents/carers, and the LA.
- Sharing key information with external providers and parents/carers to support the provision e.g. term dates, reporting arrangements (including for attendance and safeguarding)

Teachers and support staff are responsible for:

- Understanding and maintaining confidentiality in respect of pupils/students' health needs.
- Designing lessons and activities in a way that allows those with health needs to participate fully and ensuring pupils/students are not excluded from activities that they wish to take part in without a clear evidence-based reason.
- Understanding their role in supporting pupils/students with health needs and ensuring they attend the required training.
- Ensuring they are aware of the needs of their pupils/students through the appropriate and lawful sharing of the individual pupil's/student's health needs.
- Ensuring they are aware of the signs, symptoms and triggers of common life-threatening medical conditions and know what to do in an emergency.
- Keeping parents/carers informed of how their child's health needs are affecting them whilst in the school.
- Ensuring they provide relevant requested information to support the provision of education when a student is taught off-site.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Work in partnership with the school and relevant professionals to maximise attendance in a manner consistent with medical advice and the child's health needs.
- 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/reviews to discuss how support for their child/children should be planned.
- Obtain relevant medical evidence of both a child's medical needs, and (where necessary) when these are no longer a barrier to attending school.

## 5. Managing Absence

Parents/carers are advised to contact the school on the first day their child is unable to attend due to illness.

Absences due to illness will be authorised unless the school has genuine cause for concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school will provide support to pupils/students who are absent from school because of illness for a period of less than 15 school days by liaising with the pupil's/student's parents/carers to arrange schoolwork as soon as the pupil/student is able to cope with it, or part-time education at school (in line with our Reduced Provision policy). The school will give due consideration to which aspects of the curriculum are prioritised in consultation with the pupil/student, their family and relevant members of staff.

Working together to improve school attendance (DfE August 2024) places a requirement on schools to submit a sickness return where pupils of compulsory school age have been recorded as code I (illness) for 15 days either consecutively or cumulatively. Only one sickness return is required for a continuous period of sickness in a school year. The purpose of the return is to help both schools and the local authority to agree any provision that is required to ensure continuity of education.

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 LA will be notified via the Sickness Return if there a pupil who has been recorded as code I (illness) for 15 days consecutively or cumulatively. The Education Access team will triage all sickness returns in line with its section 19 responsibilities. Where the Education Access team believe that the local authority's section 19 duty may be met, contact will be made with the school. This may include a request for further information or advice on how to make a medical referral to the Education Access team.

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 pupil's/student's absence.

When a child is in hospital, liaison between the school, hospital teaching staff, the local authority, and alternative provision/ home tuition service can ensure continuity of provision and consistency of curriculum.

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

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

- The school has received written confirmation from a registered medical practitioner that the pupil is unlikely to be well enough to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age; and
- Neither the pupil/student 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.

A pupil/student who is unable to attend school because of their health needs will not be removed from the school register solely because the local authority has become responsible for arranging their education. Any decision regarding removal from roll will be made in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations and will be supported by appropriate medical evidence and discussion with the pupil/student and their parent/carer.

Register codings will be in line with Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

## 6. Promoting Wellbeing/ Other Support for pupils

The school recognises that prolonged absence due to health needs can affect emotional wellbeing, peer relationships, confidence and a pupil's sense of belonging. The school will maintain regular contact with pupils and families, seek the views of the child or young person, and consider strategies to maintain connection with school life. This may include wellbeing check-ins, opportunities for contact with trusted adults and peers, invitations to school events where appropriate, and referrals to internal or external support services.

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

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

Where a pupil has an Individual Healthcare Plan, the arrangements for educational provision during periods of absence and reintegration following absence should be reflected within the IHP wherever appropriate, in accordance with the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.

Pupils/students admitted to hospital will receive appropriate education as determined by the medical professionals and hospital tuition team at the hospital concerned.

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

Whilst a pupil/student is away from school, the school will work with the LA to ensure the pupil/student can successfully remain in touch with their school using the following methods:

- School newsletters
- Emails
- Invitations to school events
- Cards or letters from peers and staff

Where appropriate, the school will provide the pupil's/student's education provider with relevant information, curriculum materials and resources.

To help ensure a pupil/student with additional health needs is able to attend school following an extended period of absence, the following adaptations will be considered:

- A personalised or reduced timetable. Reduced timetable arrangements will be implemented only where supported by appropriate evidence, agreed with parents/carers and the pupil

where appropriate, reviewed regularly, and used with the aim of returning the pupil to full-time education as soon as their health allows
- 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 access arrangements to manage anxiety or fatigue or other needs

## 7. Zenith Minds

Where a pupil/student is attending Zenith Minds due to mental health, and is not then attending school for the remainder of the time, the LA must be notified by the school that this is a reduced timetable. Section 19 medical referrals should still be considered.

## 8. Reintegration

When a pupil/student 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. Reintegration planning should begin as early as possible and be developed collaboratively with the pupil, parents/carers, healthcare professionals, the local authority and relevant school staff. The views and preferences of the pupil should be sought throughout the process.

As far as possible, the child will be able to access the curriculum and materials that they would have used in school.

If appropriate, the named member of school staff, in conjunction with school medical lead, will be involved in the development of the pupil's/student'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 pupil/student.

The school will consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to provide suitable access to the school and the curriculum for the pupil/student.

For longer absences, the reintegration plan will be developed near to the pupil's/student's likely date of return, to avoid putting unnecessary pressure on an unwell pupil/student or their parents/carers in the early stages of their absence.

The school is aware that some pupils/students will need gradual reintegration over a long period of time and will always consult with the pupil/student, their parents/carers and key staff about concerns, medical issues, timing and the preferred pace of return.

The 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 pupil/student.
- 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.

The school will ensure a welcoming environment is developed and encourage pupils/students and staff to be positive and proactive during the reintegration period.

Following reintegration, the school will support the LA in seeking feedback from the pupil/student regarding the effectiveness of the process.

## 9. Information sharing

It is essential that all information about pupils/students with health needs is kept up to date.

To protect confidentiality, all information-sharing techniques, e.g. staff noticeboards, will be agreed with the pupil/student and their parent in advance of being used.

All teachers, LSAs, supply and support/associate staff will be provided with access to relevant information, including high-risk health needs, first aiders and emergency procedures, via the agreed procedures.

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 pupil/student 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 pupils/students with health needs.

When a pupil/student 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.

## 10. Record Keeping

In accordance with the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, written records will be kept of all medicines administered to pupils/students.

Proper record keeping protects both staff and pupils/students and provides evidence that agreed procedures have been followed.

All records will be maintained in line with the Records Management Policy.

## 11. Training

Staff will be trained in a timely manner to assist with a pupil's/student's return to school.

Once a pupil's/student's return date has been confirmed, staff will be provided with relevant training before the pupil's/student'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/students with additional health needs.

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

## 12. Examination and Assessments

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/students 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.

## 13. Unacceptable practice

Schools will not:

- pressure pupils to return before they are medically ready;
- refuse reasonable adjustments supported by evidence;
- reduce educational provision solely because of cost;
- assume all pupils with similar conditions require the same arrangements;
- isolate pupils from school life unnecessarily;
- require parents to provide education that is the responsibility of the school or local authority.

## 14. Monitoring arrangements

The school will monitor:

- timeliness of referrals to the local authority;
- duration of absence before educational provision commences;
- educational progress and attainment outcomes;
- effectiveness of reintegration arrangements;
- feedback from pupils and parents/carers;
- use of reduced timetables;
- any emerging themes requiring policy review.

The policy will be reviewed annually and following significant legislative or local changes.