

Children and Young People Unable to Attend School because of Health Reasons

1. Introduction and Aims

This policy document should be read alongside the statutory guidance produced by the DfE: 'Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs. Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities – January 2013'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>

Local Authorities are responsible for arranging suitable full-time education for children and young people of compulsory school age who, because of illness, would not receive suitable education without such provision. This applies whether or not the child is on the roll of a school and whatever type of school they attend. It applies to children who are pupils in Academies, Free Schools, special schools, and independent schools as well as those in maintained schools (point 1, page 6 of the *Statutory Guidance 2013*).

This policy document aims to ensure that all children and young people in Milton Keynes of compulsory school age, who are unable to attend school or educational setting because of health reasons, continue to have access to as much education as their health condition allows, so that they are able to maintain the momentum of their education. Additionally, it aims to ensure that Milton Keynes Local Authority, Education and Health Services have the capacity to deliver appropriate education as soon as it is clear, *according to the child/young person's medical consultant*, that they will be away from school for 15 working days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative, within an academic year, for health reasons.

Milton Keynes does not have a hospital school and the Local Authority does not have any educational provision specifically for children/young people who are not in hospital and unable to attend their school for health reasons. However, the Local Authority is still required to ensure that every child/young person, no matter their background, needs or where they live, should receive a good education and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. For this reason, it is important that the Local Authority is made aware of children and young people who have health needs which impacts on their attendance at school. This policy document sets out to provide detail about how Milton Keynes Local Authority aims to fulfil its duties in this regard.

Children and young people who are unable to attend school for health reasons, *where their absence from school/setting has been formally recommended by a medical professional*, include those with:

- Physical health issues
- Physical injuries
- Mental Health problems, including anxiety issues
- Emotional difficulties, including emotionally based school attendance issues
- Progressive conditions

- Terminal illness
- Chronic illnesses

2. General Principles

Inclusion

All Milton Keynes children and young people (aged 4-18 years, or up to 25 years if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan) who are unable to attend their school or educational setting because of health reasons *which have been formally recognised by health services*, should not be at home or in hospital without access to education for more than 15 working days (consecutive or cumulative) in an academic year

Partnership working

Partnership working (point 9, page 7 of the *Statutory Guidance, 2013*) between families, schools / educational settings (including nurseries, pre-schools, college etc.), the Local Authority and Health Services is vital. In particular, good links will enable the necessary cooperation to ensure that children/young people with health needs:

- are known about across organisations and their absence for health reasons can be monitored and supported appropriately
- receive appropriate education in a timely manner
- are supported in their reintegration back into their originating school/educational setting as and when they are well enough. This may, where appropriate, include remote/online learning as part of their education

Resourcing

Where a health need (physical or mental) is creating a barrier to learning, the child/young person's needs will be met through the school's designated resources wherever possible. However, where this is not possible and where absence is significant, a partnership approach to resourcing will be necessary between the school and the LA

Children / young people in hospital outside of Milton Keynes

Children/young people admitted to hospital outside of Milton Keynes will receive education as determined appropriate by the medical professionals and hospital school tuition team at the hospital concerned.

3. Role of the Local Authority (LA)

The following points provide the framework within which Milton Keynes Local Authority can fulfil its statutory duty towards ensuring a good education for children and young people unable to attend school for health reasons:

Named LA Officers:

MK LA will ensure that there are named Local Authority Officers for children/young people with health needs, and that parents/carers know this. These are: Caroline Marriott (Head of SEND Services); Vic Courtis (EHCP Service Leader); Nina Broderick (Inclusion Service Leader – children/young people without EHCPs),

Partnership Working:

MK LA will ensure that it maintains good links with all schools and settings and health organisations and has a notification system (see Appendix 1) by which co-operation can be promoted when

children/young people cannot attend school because of ill health. The sharing of information between schools, health services and LAs is vital (point 9, page 7 of the *Statutory Guidance, 2013*).

Swift Response:

MK LA will work with health services, schools, and settings to ensure that children/young people who have a chronic illness or condition which is likely to result in prolonged or recurring periods of absence from school/setting, whether at home or in hospital, should have access to education, from day one of the absence as far as possible and by the latest, day six (point 15, page 8 of the *Statutory Guidance, 2013*)

Monitoring Role:

In order to be able to provide a swift response, MK LA needs to have a system in place to receive information about children/young people unable to attend school/educational setting for health reasons. This is through the 'Notification Form' system (see Appendix 1). However, as acknowledged in the *Statutory Guidance (2013)*, there will be a wide range of circumstances where a child/young person has a health need but will receive suitable education that meets their needs without the intervention of the LA. For example:

- where the child/young person can still attend school with some support
- where the school has made arrangements to deliver suitable education outside of school for the child/young person
- where arrangements have been made for the child/young person to be educated in a hospital by an on-site hospital school.

The LA is not expected to become involved in such arrangements unless it had reason to think that the education being provided to the child/young person was not suitable or, while otherwise suitable, was not full-time or for the number of hours the child/young person could benefit from without adversely affecting their health. This might be the case where, for example, the child/young person can attend school but only intermittently. *Nevertheless, this does mean that the LA needs to know about children/young people who are unable to attend school for health reasons for 15 or more days within an academic year, and the 'Notification Form' system (see Appendix 1) is the agreed method for receiving this information from schools/settings and health services.*

Providing Suitable Education:

MK LA will ensure that it is ready to take responsibility for any child/young person whose illness will prevent them from attending school for 15 or more school days, either in one absence or over the course of a school year, *and where suitable education is not otherwise being arranged:*

- LAs should set up a personal provision plan, which should ensure that the child's school, the LA and the hospital school or other provider can work together (point 16, page 8 of the *Statutory Guidance, 2013*)
- The education provided should be of similar quality to that available in their school/setting (as defined in the statutory guidance *Alternative Provision, 2013*), including a broad and balanced curriculum, which, where appropriate, may be delivered remotely (point 14, page 8 of the *Statutory Guidance, 2013*)
- LAs should have regard to any medical advice given by the hospital when they discharge a child, as to how much education will be appropriate for them after discharge, when they might be ready to return to school and whether they should initially return to school on a part-time basis only. LAs should work with schools to complement the education a child receives if they cannot attend school full-time but are well enough to have education in other ways (point 17, page 8/9 of the *Statutory Guidance, 2013*)
- Children/young people will receive appropriate support enabling them to successfully reintegrate back into their originating school/setting. This may come from various sources as appropriate to the needs of the child/young person, for example, Special Educational Needs

and Disability Services (SEND), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Children and Family Practice / Social Care Services, Educational Psychologists, and, where relevant, School Nurses.

4. Role of Schools / Educational Settings

Schools play a big part in making sure that the provision offered to the child is as effective as possible and that the child can be reintegrated back into school successfully (point 9, page 7 of the *Statutory Guidance, 2013*). The following actions can support the Local Authority in fulfilling its statutory duty towards ensuring a good education for children and young people who cannot access school for health reasons:

Named Person:

Schools/settings should ensure that there is a named person who is responsible for children/young people who cannot attend school as a result of their health (mental and physical)

Policy Statement:

Schools/settings should establish a written policy statement and clear procedures which may stand alone or be incorporated into the school's SEND policy and /or the LA policy

Absence Monitoring:

Schools/settings should ensure that attendance is monitored, and registers marked so that they show if a child/young person is, or ought to be, receiving education otherwise than at school for health reasons:

- Schools should not remove a child/young person from the school register unless written medical evidence states that they will be unable to attend school for the rest of their compulsory schooling (point 22, page 9/10 of the *Statutory Guidance, 2013*)

Shorter absences, absences not part of a pattern related to chronic or recurring illness and absences not formally recommended by a medical professional:

Schools/settings should make arrangements with the child/young person's parents/carers to provide them with schoolwork to complete at home as soon as they become able to cope with it

Swift Response:

Schools/settings should ensure the LA is made aware as quickly as possible (at the latest on the sixth day of absence) using the 'Notification Form' system (see Appendix 1) once it is recognised that a child/young person is unable to attend school because of health reasons, where the absence is expected to last for more than 15 days (consecutive or cumulative), *and where the absence has been formally recommended by a medical professional*

Partnership Working:

Schools/settings should work in partnership with the family, hospital and/or medical professionals involved and LA as appropriate to:

- Develop and share a provision plan with appropriate professionals and parents/carers, and review the plan at least half termly or whenever the child/young person's health condition changes
- Invite the LA to development and review meetings of the plan where relevant and appropriate
- Share promptly as appropriate information about the child/young person's curriculum, achievements, and any special educational needs / disabilities
- Provide appropriate work and materials promptly and regularly
- Be active in the monitoring of progress and attainment where appropriate

- Be active in the smooth reintegration back into school, liaising with the LA and other agencies as necessary, through use and review of the provision plan
- Ensure that children/young people who are unable to attend school because of health reasons are kept informed about school social events and are enabled to participate in homework clubs, study support and other activities as appropriate
- Encourage and facilitate liaison with peers, for example, through visits, videos etc.

Unable to Arrange and Provide Suitable Education:

Schools/settings should notify the LA if they are unable to manage the needs of the child/young person without the intervention of the LA, by:

- completing and submitting the 'Notification Form' requesting support from the LA SEND Services (see Appendix 1).

5. Role of Health Services

To support the monitoring of children/young people with health needs and to ensure smooth transitions between schools/settings and LA educational support, Health Services (health consultants e.g., GP, community paediatrician, hospital consultant or consultant psychiatrist or psychologist as relevant) should:

- Provide confirmation of the child/young person's physical or psychological/mental health difficulty, condition, illness, or injury and of recommended absence from school where appropriate:
 - to the child/young person's school/setting
 - to the LA via the 'Notification Form' system (see Appendix 1)
- Provide an estimated timescale during which alternative educational provision will be required
- Indicate whether the child/young person's absence will likely be for longer than 15 working days and whether their condition means that they are likely to require recurring educational support
- Comment on the child/young person's ability to cope with educational provision given their health condition and on the kind of arrangements that would be needed to ensure the child/young person's continued access to education, including, for example, whether they could access remote learning
- Indicate the review arrangements, treatment or support required to ensure the child/young person returns to school as soon as they are able to do so, and any reintegration needs / arrangements that should be considered, e.g., remote learning; a phased return due to fatigue or other medical changes.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Assurance

- Monitoring of the LA record of children/young people out of school due to health reasons and their reintegration back into school will be managed by relevant staff within MK SEND Services, and data will be stored according to the Milton Keynes Council Data Protection Policy. This information will be provided by schools/settings, MKUH and/or CAMHS via the 'Notification Form' system (see Appendix 1)
- The progress of children/young people receiving Local Authority support and education due to health reasons will be monitored by MK SEND Services, in conjunction with the named member of school staff at the child/young person's originating school/setting and the child/young person's medical consultant/GP

- Evaluation of the child/young person's education and progress will be carried out by schools/settings collating attainment data where appropriate; LA SEND Services requesting and collating feedback from children/young people and parents/carer via evaluation form – seeking their views on the service received, and LA SEND Services requesting feedback via evaluation form from relevant professionals, including school staff, LA staff and health professionals. Evaluation data will be periodically collated and included within wider monitoring of SEND Services. This will be used to review and improve services to children/young people with health needs.

7. Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Children/young people with SEND in Milton Keynes who also have health needs should have EHC Plans or SEN Support Plans and should continue to receive Annual Reviews or equivalent for SEND Support organised by the school. LA SEND Services may also be supporting those children/young people with EHC plans and Social Care needs. These children/young people should have a provision plan specific to their health needs, developed in partnership with family, school/setting, health and where appropriate the LA, which is maintained by their school/setting. The school/setting SENCo should be regularly involved in liaison between the school and LA SEND Services.

8. Public Examinations

Efficient and effective liaison is important when children/young people with health needs are approaching public examinations. The school/setting and LA SEND Services should be able to arrange a suitable focus on the child/young person's education at this stage in order to minimise the time lost while s/he is unable to attend his/her school/setting. Awarding bodies must be made aware through appropriate means and should make arrangements for children/young people with permanent long-term illnesses or indispositions when taking public examinations. School/settings, supported by those working with the child/young person, should submit applications for special arrangements as early as possible.

9. Equal Opportunities

The LA, schools/settings and the Health Services will strive to ensure that equal opportunities are fundamental to the assessment of circumstances and to the service provided, recognising strengths, and addressing areas of difficulty on an individual basis. In addition, the LA, schools, and the Health Services aim to provide an education comparable to that available in school, and which is:

- Of good, broad, balanced quality
- Appropriately able to address the individual needs of each child/young person
- Appropriate and sensitive to the child/young person's background and individuality (gender/religion/culture/identity)
- Responsive to the demands of what may be a changing health status
- Sufficient to enable them to take appropriate qualifications
- Sufficient to prevent them from slipping behind their peers in schools
- Delivered so that they can continue to feel fully part of their school/setting community
- Flexible enough to enable them to reintegrate successfully back into school as soon as they are deemed able to. This may include periods of remote / online learning.

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Appendix 1

Notification Form system

The Notification Form system is designed for health services and schools/settings to be able to quickly provide monitoring information to the Local Authority about any child/young person in their care:

- who becomes unable to attend school for health reasons
- who is unlikely to be able to access education for 15 or more days, consecutively or cumulatively, across an academic year because of a health reason
- where their absence has been recommended by a medical professional.

The link to the form is here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/H4G3Cz8uft>

Please use this form to notify the LA of any child/young person who meets the above criteria.

For schools/settings:

- If LA support is *not* being requested, please select 'no' on section 22 of the form
- If LA involvement is being requested (to support delivery of a suitable education for the child/young person), please select 'yes' on section 22 and complete section 23 of the form. A member of SEND Services will be in touch within 5 working days.