Policy for children with health needs who cannot attend school

Author/Reviewing member of staff	Mrs Doolin
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1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Suitable education is arranged for pupils on roll who cannot attend school because of physical or mental health needs.
- Pupils, staff and parents/carers understand the school's responsibilities and how these work alongside the duties of Worcestershire County Council.
- Support is timely, proportionate and focused on maintaining education, safeguarding, wellbeing and successful reintegration into school.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the following legislation:

- Education Act 1996, including the local authority duty under section 19.
- Children and Families Act 2014, including section 100 (supporting pupils with medical conditions).
- Equality Act 2010.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

It also has regard to the following Department for Education statutory guidance:

- Working together to improve school attendance (updated July 2026).
- Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.
- Alternative provision.
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions.

The policy also follows Worcestershire County Council guidance and procedures for Children who Cannot Attend School (CCAS) and the local authority's Section 19 duty.

3. Responsibilities of the school

Where possible, a pupil's health needs will be supported by Westacre Middle School so that they can continue to access suitable education from their own school, with reasonable adjustments and appropriate support, without unnecessary delay.

The school will work collaboratively with the pupil, parents/carers, health professionals, Worcestershire County Council and other agencies as appropriate. Support will not be delayed solely because a particular form of medical evidence is not immediately available; evidence requested will be reasonable and proportionate to the circumstances.

3.1 If our school makes the arrangements

Initially, the school will seek to make suitable arrangements for pupils with health needs who cannot attend school, or who can attend only intermittently.

- Parents/carers will be invited to meet key staff. Where appropriate, an Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP) will be drawn up or reviewed, with the pupil involved wherever possible. A reintegration plan and review dates will be agreed where relevant.

- The class teacher, working with the Head of Year, will oversee school provision and identify a named point of contact.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be involved where there are safeguarding concerns. The school retains safeguarding responsibility for pupils who remain on its roll, including when education is being provided away from the school site.
- Where the pupil has SEND, the school will work with parents/carers and the local authority to ensure appropriate support is accessible. Where the pupil has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), provision specified in the plan will be considered and the SEND team involved where necessary.

School arrangements may include:

- Providing work and learning resources for use at home.
- Online contact or Teams meetings where appropriate.
- Liaising with hospital schools, health professionals and agencies such as CAMHS, Early Help and Social Care.
- Reasonable adjustments to the school day, curriculum, environment or expectations.
- A short, time-limited phased return or part-time timetable where this is in the pupil's best interests.
- A referral/notification through Worcestershire's CCAS process where appropriate.

Part-time timetables and phased returns

A part-time timetable will only be used in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests, for example as part of a short-term reintegration following illness. It will not be used as a long-term solution or as a behaviour-management measure.

Any part-time timetable will be agreed with parents/carers, be time limited, reviewed regularly and include a clear plan from the outset for increasing provision towards full-time education as soon as the pupil's health allows. Attendance will be recorded using the appropriate statutory attendance codes.

Attendance and sickness returns

The school will make the required sickness return to Worcestershire County Council where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a pupil will miss, or has missed, 15 school days because of sickness, either consecutively or cumulatively during the school year. This notification supports the local authority in considering whether its section 19 duty is engaged.

The 15-day point is not a waiting period before action can be taken. Where it is clear earlier that a pupil may otherwise not receive suitable education, the school will work with the local authority promptly so that appropriate arrangements can be considered.

Remote education may form part of the support offered, but participation in remote learning does not in itself mean that the pupil is recorded as attending school. Attendance will be recorded in line with the statutory attendance codes and the school's Attendance Policy.

Fabricated and/or induced illness

In a very small number of cases there may be concerns that a child's medical difficulties may be fabricated or induced. This is a safeguarding concern and will be managed in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and local safeguarding procedures.

Concerns may include fabrication or falsification of signs, symptoms, medical history, records or documents, or the deliberate induction of illness. Where there is a concern that a child may be experiencing or be at risk of harm, advice will be sought through the appropriate Worcestershire safeguarding route, including the Family Front Door where applicable.

The school will work with health and other professionals and will seek relevant information proportionately. Support for the pupil will not be withheld simply because particular medical documentation is unavailable while professional advice or assessment is being sought.

3.2 If the local authority makes the arrangements

Under section 19 of the Education Act 1996, the local authority must arrange suitable education for a child of compulsory school age who, because of illness, exclusion or otherwise, would not receive suitable education unless such arrangements were made.

Worcestershire County Council considers relevant cases through its Children who Cannot Attend School (CCAS) process and multi-agency panel. The school will make a CCAS notification/referral where appropriate and will provide the information needed to support timely decision-making.

Where full-time education is not in the child's best interests for reasons relating to physical or mental health, the local authority may arrange part-time education on a basis it considers to be in the child's best interests. Any part-time provision should be reviewed regularly with the aim of increasing towards full-time education as soon as the child's health allows.

Where the local authority arranges alternative education, Westacre Middle School will:

- Provide information requested by the local authority, including attendance information and relevant educational, safeguarding and SEND information, in accordance with data-protection requirements.
- Work constructively with the local authority, providers, relevant agencies and parents/carers to secure the best outcomes for the pupil.
- Collaborate with the local authority to support continuity of provision and curriculum, including sharing appropriate curriculum information and resources.
- Regularly review the provision with the local authority and other partners to ensure that it remains suitable and responsive to the pupil's needs.
- Share information with the local authority and relevant health services as required and appropriate.
- Where the pupil has complex or long-term health needs, work with the local authority, parents/carers and relevant health services to decide how best to meet those needs.
- Help the pupil remain connected to school life and plan for successful reintegration.

Reintegration

When reintegration is anticipated, the school will work with the local authority, parents/carers and other professionals as appropriate to:

- Plan for consistent provision during and after education outside school and, as far as possible, maintain access to the curriculum and learning materials used in school.
- Enable the pupil to remain in touch with school life through appropriate contact, digital platforms, newsletters, invitations to school activities and other suitable opportunities.
- Create an individually tailored reintegration plan, including additional support to address gaps arising from absence.
- Consider and implement reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
- For pupils with SEND or an EHCP, ensure that relevant SEND provision and review arrangements are considered as part of reintegration.

4. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher and the governing body, or sooner where legislation, statutory guidance or Worcestershire County Council procedures change. At each review, the policy will be approved in accordance with the school's governance arrangements.

5. Links to other policies and guidance

This policy should be read alongside:

- Accessibility Plan.
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.
- Attendance Policy.
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report.
- Equality information and objectives / Equality Policy, as applicable.

Key external guidance:

- DfE - Working together to improve school attendance
- DfE - Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school
- DfE - Alternative provision
- Worcestershire County Council - Children who Cannot Attend School (CCAS)
- Worcestershire County Council - Section 19 Duty