Policy for children with health needs who cannot attend school

Author/Reviewing member of staff	Mrs C Doolin
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Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Suitable education is arranged for pupils on roll who cannot attend school due to health needs
- Pupils, staff and parents understand what the school is responsible for when this education is being provided by the local authority

Legislation and guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of the Education Act 1996.

It also based on guidance provided by Worcestershire Children First.

The responsibilities of the school

Initially, the school will attempt to make arrangements to deliver suitable education for children with health needs who cannot attend school.

If the school makes arrangements initially

The school will attempt to make arrangements to deliver suitable education for children with health needs who cannot attend school. The class teacher working with the Head of Year will oversee provision. They will decide which member of staff will be the point of contact here in the school. If there is a safeguarding concern, then the DSL will also be involved.

Arrangements which the school could make include

- Sending work home
- Making a MET referral
- Liaising with hospital schools and other agencies such as CAMHS, Early Help and Social Care
- Agreeing a time limited reduced timetable, following the school's agreed protocols.

In the first instance parents will be invited in to meet key staff and an Individual Health Care Plan will be drawn up. Where possible the pupil will be involved in this process. At this meeting a plan for reintegration back into school will be discussed with agreed review times.

Issues around ensuring the child is being safeguarded will be discussed at this meeting. Parents 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 who are absent from school because of illness for a period of less than 15 school days by liaising with the pupil's parents to arrange school work as soon as the pupil is able to cope with it or part-time education at school. The school will give due consideration to which aspects of the curriculum are prioritised in consultation with the pupil, their family and relevant members of staff.
- 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 school will notify the LA, who will support school in providing educational provision for the pupil.
- 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 absence.
- For hospital admissions, the appointed named member of staff will liaise with the LA regarding the programme that should be followed while the pupil is in hospital.

- The school will monitor pupil attendance and mark registers to ensure it is clear whether a pupil is, or should be, receiving education otherwise than at school.
- The school will only remove a pupil who is unable to attend school because of additional health needs from the school roll where:

- A pupil unable to attend school because of their health needs will not be removed from the school register without parental consent and certification from a Medical Professional, even if the LA has become responsible for the pupil's education

Alternative Provision

In order to ensure children access their entitlement to full time education, sometimes it is helpful or necessary to make alternative provision for the child. Alternative provision often allows for a more bespoke and flexible approach to education. This can work well for children whose medical difficulties mean for example that their energy levels fluctuate and therefore full time attendance within a busy school environment is very challenging.

Alternative provision can be defined as education for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education (DfE, 2013). Alternative provision for children with medical difficulties can be arranged by the school or by the Local Authority. In cases where the child's medical difficulties are likely to be short term (typically less than 15 days) or result in only small amounts of school being missed, it is often simpler for the school to make these arrangements. In cases where the child is not able to attend school for long periods it may be more appropriate for the Local Authority to make arrangements through the Medical Education Team.

Medical Education Team

In Worcestershire the statutory duties for children unable to attend the school because of medical difficulties are discharged by the Medical Education Team. The Medical Education Team ensure that arrangements are in place for children and young people who are unable to attend school because of their medical needs so that they have appropriate and ongoing access to education. The Team consists of qualified teachers and teaching assistants who are skilled in teaching children /young people of statutory school age with a wide range of physical, emotional and psychological health needs.

The Medical Education Team service level agreement and referral form are available online:

Medical Education team

Where it is not appropriate or possible for the needs of children with medical difficulties to be met by the Medical Education Team and the school has not made alternative arrangements,

Worcestershire Children First will work with schools and families to agree provision. This may involve securing provision at a Pupil Referral Unit, at an Alternative Provision Free School or home tuition and/or access to a Virtual Learning Platform.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

A child or young person has special educational needs (SEND) if they have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most other children and young people of about the same age.

Children and young people with medical conditions don't necessarily have SEN, but there are significant overlaps between children with disabilities and medical conditions and those with SEN.

Children with SEN require special educational provision to be made for them. Special educational provision is any educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for other children or young people of the same age.

Some children or young people with medical difficulties may need additional support which is not special educational provision; for example, they might need certain treatments or medicines administered at school. In order to be classed as having SEN, they must require support with education or training which is different from that given to other children or young people of the same age.

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on maintained schools and academies to make arrangements to support children / young people with medical conditions. Individual healthcare plans will normally specify the type and level of support required to meet the medical needs of such children / young people. Where children and young people also have SEN, their provision should be planned and delivered in a co-ordinated way with the healthcare plan.

Worcestershire's Graduated Response guidance sets out schools' responsibilities for children and young people with SEND as described in the 2015 SEND Code of Practice.

SEND education provision

Early Help and Social care

Where there are emerging welfare or well-being concerns about a child with medical difficulties, parental consent should be gained to carry out an assessment using the Early Help Framework. This assessment may in some cases identify the need for a family plan.

Early help assessment

Whilst not all children will need an early help assessment, it is important to recognise the additional pressures that medical conditions may create for family members, including siblings, parent/carers and other close relatives. Open and honest communication with parent/carers is crucial to making good provision in schools and ensuring that children's needs are met and that the needs of the family as a whole are recognised.

Escalating welfare concerns

If an Early Help assessment has been undertaken and there are needs that can't be met by the early help arrangements in school or any other early help agency and there is a role for family support, then a referral to Level 2 or 3 services may be appropriate. Worcestershire's Levels of Need Guidance (2019) describes the indicators which may suggest that a child needs additional or targeted support from services providing intervention at these levels.

Worcestershire level of needs guidance

As with all children if there is a risk of significant harm to a child with medical difficulties, an immediate referral should be made to the Family Front Door

9.00am-5.00pm – Monday to Thursday 9.00am-
4.30pm – Friday

01905 822666

Out of hours or at weekends: 01905 768020

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. Parents/carers may fabricate or induce illness in a number of ways:

- Fabrication of signs and symptoms. This may include fabrication of past medical history
- Fabrication of signs and symptoms and falsification of hospital charts and records, and specimens of bodily fluids, including falsification of letters and documents
- Induction of illness by a variety of means

As with any other form of abuse, where schools are concerned that a child may be experiencing or be at risk of harm, advice should be sought from the Family Front Door. In cases where Fabricated and/or induced illness is a consideration, evidence of medical difficulties such as medical appointment letters and multiagency working as part of the child's IHP will be key.

Further advice regarding this area of safeguarding is available as a supplement to Working Together to Safeguard Children:

If the local authority makes arrangements

If the school can't make suitable arrangements Worcestershire Children First will support school in arranging suitable education for these children.

In cases where the local authority makes arrangements, the school will:

- Work constructively with the local authority, providers, relevant agencies and parents to ensure the best outcomes for the pupil

- Share information with the local authority and relevant health services as required
- Help make sure that the provision offered to the pupil is as effective as possible and that the child can be reintegrated back into school successfully

When reintegration is anticipated, work with the local authority to:

- Plan for consistent provision during and after the period of education outside the school, allowing the pupil to access the same curriculum and materials that they would have used in school as far as possible
- Enable the pupil to stay in touch with school life (e.g. through newsletters, emails, invitations to school events or internet links to lessons from their school)
- Create individually tailored reintegration plans for each child returning to school
- Consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Deputy head teacher with responsibility for personal development. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.