



Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy

Date ratified	March 2025
Committee Responsible for Policy	Children, Families and Community Committee and FGB
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Headteacher Signature	
Chair of Governors/ Committee Signature	

Growing together as children of God

At Holy Trinity C of E Primary School:

- we want our pupils to **grow** in confidence, independence, resilience and knowledge, so that all achieve their full potential and develop a life-long love of learning and of the world around us.
- we work **together** with families, community and church to model positive relationships, supporting each other and acknowledging that we are stronger when we work together.
- we are growing together as **children of God**, strengthening our faith, secure in the knowledge we are unique, loved and cherished

Biblical Basis of Policy

Jeremiah 29:11

‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’

1. Introduction

Holy Trinity C of E Primary School follows the guidance set out in the Government document, *Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs January 2013* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269469/health_needs_guidance_-_revised_may_2013_final.pdf

This policy should be read alongside the DfE's *Working together to improve school attendance guidance* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>, and the *Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupils-attendance-guidance-for-schools>.

2. The Role of Merton Local Authority

Merton Local Authority must:

- Arrange suitable full-time education (or as much education as the child's health condition allows) for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

Merton Local Authority should:

- Provide such education as soon as it is clear that the child will be away from school for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative. They should liaise with appropriate medical professionals to ensure minimal delay in arranging appropriate provision for the child.
- Ensure that the education children receive is of good quality, as defined in the statutory guidance *Alternative Provision (2013)*, allows them to take appropriate qualifications, prevents them from slipping behind their peers in school and allows them to reintegrate successfully back into school as soon as possible.

- Address the needs of individual children in arranging provision. 'Hard and fast' rules are inappropriate: they may limit the offer of education to children with a given condition and prevent their access to the right level of educational support which they are well enough to receive. Strict rules that limit the offer of education a child receives may also breach statutory requirements.

Merton Local Authority 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 (meeting the child's needs and providing a good education must be the determining factors).
- 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)

3. The Role of Holy Trinity C of E Primary School

We recognise the important role we have in working with other agencies to ensure the best possible outcomes for a child who is unable to attend school due to their medical needs.

We will make information available about the curriculum and work the child may miss, helping the child to keep up, rather than having to catch up.

We understand that we can only remove a pupil who is unable to attend school because of additional health needs where:

- the pupil has been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school, before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and;
- neither the pupil nor their parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school, after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.

We understand that a child unable to attend school because of health needs must not, therefore, be removed from the school register without parental consent and certification from the school medical officer, even if the LA has become responsible for the child's education. Continuity is important for children and knowing that they can return to their familiar surroundings and school friends can help their recovery and their educational progress.

Reintegration

When reintegration into school is anticipated, LAs should work with the school to plan for consistent provision during and after the period of education outside school. As far as possible, the child should be able to access the curriculum and materials that he or she would have used in school. The LA should work with schools to ensure that children can successfully remain in touch with their school while they are away. This could be through school newsletters, emails, invitations to school events or internet links to lessons from their school.

LAs should work with schools to set up an individually tailored reintegration plan for each child. This may have to include extra support to help fill any gaps arising from the child's absence. It may be appropriate to involve the school nurse at this stage as they may be able to offer valuable advice. The school nurse will also want to be aware that the child is returning to school, so that they can be prepared to offer any appropriate support.

Under equalities legislation schools must consider whether they need to make any reasonable adjustments to provide suitable access for the child.

Where the absence is likely to be lengthy, the reintegration plan may only take shape nearer to the likely date of return, to avoid putting unsuitable pressure on an ill child in the early stages of their absence. While most children will want to return to their previous school routine at once, some will need gradual reintegration over a longer period.

4. The Role of Holy Trinity C of E Primary School where a mental health issue is affecting attendance

Holy Trinity C of E Primary School recognises the need for reasonable adjustments to be made for pupils whose social, emotional or mental health (SEMH) issue is affecting their attendance.

The school is committed to ensuring that the school is a calm, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn, which is the foundation for securing good attendance. The school will achieve this through a whole-school approach to pupil mental health, and by developing trusted relationships with parents/carers and families.

Holy Trinity C of E Primary School sets high expectations for attendance, engagement and punctuality of pupils who are anxious about attending school, yet the school recognises that there can be attendance challenges where a child has an SEMH issue.

The school will work closely with parents/carers and children to implement reasonable adjustments to alleviate specific barriers to attendance (as set out in the DfE's *Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134196/Support_for_pupils_where_a_mental_health_issue_is_affecting_attendance_effective_practice_examples.pdf)

These adjustments will be reviewed regularly with all parties involved.

The school may make referrals to in-school or external professional support where necessary.

In certain circumstances it may be necessary for a child to be on a part-time timetable in order to encourage their attendance at school. The part-time timetable must be agreed with parents/carers and the Educational Welfare Office.