


Children's Services

LOCAL AUTHORITY SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE UNABLE TO ATTEND SCHOOL DUE TO IMPACT OF MEDICAL CONDITION

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Introduction

This policy outlines how Hertfordshire County Council fulfils the statutory responsibilities written by the Department for Education to ensure a good education for pupils unable to attend school because of medical needs. (January 2013).

This policy applies to all children and young people who would normally attend mainstream schools, including academies, free schools, independent schools and special schools, or where a child is not on the roll of a school. It applies equally whether a child cannot attend school at all or can only attend intermittently.

What is this guidance about?

This document has been produced to assist schools who need to refer to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) for support when a child or young person is unable to attend school due to medical needs.

Aims

The aim of the DfE statutory guidance is to ensure that all children with medical conditions, in terms of both physical and mental health, are properly supported in school so that they can play a full and active role in school life, remain healthy and achieve their academic potential. For children with SEN, the guidance should be read in conjunction with the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) code of practice.

Most children's educational needs are best met within an educational setting with Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 reinforcing the duty on governing bodies of maintained schools, proprietors of academies and management committees of PRUs to implement a plan for supporting pupils at their school with medical conditions.

Hertfordshire County Council works to ensure that any child who is unable to attend their own school because of medical needs, has access to learning and can continue to make progress. HCC works collaboratively with parents, schools and other stakeholders, to remove any barriers to learning so the child can experience success and can take a full and meaningful part in society.

The legal position

All children of compulsory school age are legally entitled to receive a suitable full-time education and local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that all such children in their area receive education. Whilst there is currently no legal definition of what constitutes 'full time' education, it may be useful for it to be borne in mind that in state schools' children of compulsory school age normally receive around five hours of education a day for about 190 days a year. The Local Government Ombudsman established (in its report Out of school...out of mind (LGO. 2011)) that the number of hours of teaching per week considered to represent full-time education is as follows and can be used as a guide:

- to provide educational support, as far as possible, from day one to pupils with a long term or recurring illness, whether at home or in hospital.
- to coproduce the education programme and Holistic Reintegration Plan working together with school, parents, pupil, health and other professionals involved with the child.
- to regularly review the education programme and reintegration plan half-termly with school, parents, pupil, health and other professionals.
- to liaise with the school to obtain termly updates of medical evidence to ensure the identified education programme best meets the pupil's needs and to continue the additional support provided by the ESMA Teaching Service.
- to provide support for pupils who are not on a school roll for reasons other than elective home education, the ESMA Teaching Service can consider support, subject to appropriate medical advice. Parents / carers will continue the process of securing a suitable placement for future reintegration.

Hertfordshire County Council provision for pupils unable to attend school due to medical needs

Educational tuition is provided by the ESMA Teaching Service for:

- Pupils of statutory school age (5-16), who have medical evidence that justifies their school's absence.
- Pupils who are Hertfordshire residents.

The ESMA teaching service provision

The ESMA Teaching Service complements the education provided by schools and works in collaboration with schools to provide support in the core subjects (English, Maths and Science). The ESMA Teaching Service uses a variety of support tools, refer to the description of the ESMA's Teaching Service graduated response for full details (Annex 2).

- Telepresence robot [AV1 Robot](#) (25 hours) reconnects primary or secondary school age pupils with school and their social life by providing full time access to school and peers. ESMA has ensured the safeguarding and GDPR compliance of this tool. Further details can be obtained from the ESMA Lead Teacher.
- Real time online teaching (18.5 hours weekly for Y5-Y11 via [Acorn Digital Learning](#)) in the core subjects (English, Maths & Science). Small virtual classes providing interaction with peers and teachers, building confidence in a safe and secured environment where learning and progress is continually monitored.
- Online and face-to-face group teaching by the ESMA Teacher in the core subjects (English, Maths, Science). Allocation of hours dependent on health needs of pupil.
- Online and face-to-face 1:1 tuition by the ESMA Teacher in the core subjects (English, Maths, Science). Allocation of hours dependent on health needs of pupil.
- Education support by the ESMA Teaching Assistant.

- For pupils who have long term or recurrent illness, the school must provide the current treatment plan and the named medical contact.
- Referral must have signed parental consent and supporting current medical evidence from a health professional working with the young person.
- For pupils receiving additional funding (through either an EHCP or Local High Needs Funding and/or Pupil Premium Grant) the school should state in the reintegration plan how this funding is being used.
- To enable ESMA support to continue, schools are required to send termly medical updates.

The ESMA teaching service entry criterion

Information required from schools for referrals to the ESMA teaching service

Schools must provide detailed information about the pupil, to ensure an informed decision can be made by the ESMA Teaching Service. This should include:

- Medical evidence that confirms the pupil is medically unable to attend school.
- The reason for the absence (medical condition).
- Likely duration of absence from school as indicated by health professional.
- Current support plan on offer from the school based on medical advice.
- Baseline (academic attainment, engagement, emotional).
- If the pupil is attending school on a reduced timetable, the school should submit the reintegration plan agreed as detailed in the HCC Guidance for pupils of school age on reduced timetable, found [here](#).

The ESMA teaching service exit criteria

The ESMA teaching service works together with the pupil, parents, school, health and other professionals supporting the child to ensure school reintegration is achieved, as soon as their health needs permit.

The ESMA Teaching Service will close support for a pupil if/once a:

- The pupil reintegrates to their current school, or transitions to a new school.
- The pupil is too ill to engage with education.
- The pupil does not attend the ESMA Teaching Service lessons.
- The pupil refuses to access physical/mental health services.
- The pupil moves out of Hertfordshire.

Refer to the ESMA teaching service entry and exit criteria for full details. (Annex 1)

Recording attendance for authorised absence on medical grounds

It is important that schools act to ensure that the DfE guidance in respect of attendance is correctly observed for pupils unable to attend school for medical reasons. The registration

- The way in which the school will make educational provision for pupils as set out in the guidance document [‘Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions \(December 2015\)’](#).
- The school’s responsibility to monitor pupil attendance and to mark registers so that they show if a pupil is, or ought to be, receiving education otherwise than at school by using the recording key agreed with HCC Attendance service.
- School monitoring processes regarding cumulative school non-attendance and actions to be taken i.e. liaising with HCC Attendance Service for advice and guidance.
- The school’s management structures, staff responsibilities and lines of communication (within the school and with outside agencies, such as HCC and health services) for pupils with medical needs.
- The provision of work and materials for pupil linking with the broad and balanced curriculum that the school will make available during the medical absence.
- Strategies for ensuring support for those with long-term absence, including the details of assessment and curriculum plans, within 5 school days of the absence. A clear process explaining how work will be provided for the pupil, on a weekly basis.
- A named contact from the school to aid communication with other parties, to attend reintegration meetings and keep contact with the pupil.
- Procedures for ensuring that children and young people who are unable to attend the school because of medical needs have access to public examinations.
- School procedure to record the voice of the pupil.
- Procedures for ensuring the pupil is reintegrated smoothly into the school following any period of absence.
- An individual support plan / Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) for pupils with a long term of recurring medical condition.
- How the school will monitor attainment and progress during the period of school absence.
- The process to make referrals to HCC ESMA Teaching Service. The referral must include current medical evidence from a health professional supporting the pupil and termly medical updates should be provided to continue the ESMA Teaching Service support.
- How the school will ensure that pupils who are unable to attend school because of medical needs, have the educational support they need to maintain their education. Schools should liaise with the ESMA Teaching Service to collaboratively draw a support plan for pupils who are likely to be at home/in hospital for more than 15 consecutive school days, or more whether consecutive or cumulative.

Individual health care plans (IHP)

Individual healthcare plans (IHP) are different from Education Health Care Plans (EHCP). However, they do sit neatly alongside if required. An IHP is important to ensure that the school knows how to handle a medical emergency with the child and that it is providing the right support for a child on an ongoing basis.

A template for an Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP) is available [here](#). All schools must review IHPs (Individual Healthcare Plans) at least annually.

Multiagency work

Effective collaboration between all relevant services (CAMHS, NHS, schools, HCC, pupil and parents) is essential to delivering effective education for children with additional health needs. There is an expectation that the school, the ESMA Teaching Service, health and other professionals along with the family and pupil, will work together to achieve the best possible outcomes and a successful reintegration to school once the pupil is well enough.

The school can obtain further support from HCC Integrated Services for Learning (ISL) a multi-professional service working in four integrated area teams across the county helping schools, settings and families to improve outcomes for children and young people with additional and special educational needs. Services include:

- Educational Psychology
- Early Years SEND
- Speech Language Communication and Autism
- Physical and Sensory Impairment
- Access to Education for Refugees and Travellers
- Hertfordshire Steps
- Attendance
- Education Support for Medical Absence (ESMA) Teaching Service
- Special Educational Needs (SEN)

ESMA teaching service - exit criteria

Pupil reintegrating to current school or transitioning to a new school

Pupil recovered from illness and no longer requires support from the ESMA Teaching Service.

Pupil is able to attend majority (50%) of the agreed timetable co-produced with school, parents, pupil, the ESMA Teaching Service, health and other professionals.

ESMA teaching service support

- No further support required from the ESMA Teaching Service and school to continue to increase attendance in line with the HCC guidance on reduced timetable and agreed reintegration plan.
- All stakeholders informed of the ESMA Teaching Service referral closure at reintegration review meeting.

Pupil too ill to engage with education

Health professional reports that pupil is too ill to access education/ESMA Teaching Service lessons

ESMA teaching service support

- Multi-agency meeting arranged with pupil, parents/carers, school and professionals involved to review suitability of provision and identify amendments to reintegration plan.
- Following health advice, the ESMA Teaching Service support will be put on hold for six weeks and will cease if pupil's health has not improved.
- School will continue to liaise with the ESMA Teaching Service lead and all stakeholders should continue to monitor and review in line with health advice to identify suitable next steps for educational access.

Pupil non-engaging with the ESMA Teaching Service lessons

ESMA teaching service support

- Multi-agency meeting arranged with pupil, parents/carers, school and professionals involved to review suitability of provision and identify amendments to reintegration plan.
- If attendance continues to be a concern and health professionals state that the reintegration plan is accessible, then school's non-attendance process should follow.
- The ESMA Teaching Service educational support will cease.

Annex 2 – The ESMA Teaching Service – Graduated Support Provision

Universal

Needs can be met in school with minimal additional support

Absent or anticipated absence from school due to medical reasons supported by evidence from Universal Services such as GP; not in receipt of health treatment and/or limited reasonable adjustments.

- Advice to schools on implementing reasonable adjustments in line with Statutory Guidance supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (DfE, Dec 2015).
- Advice regarding in-school support mechanisms and strategies to deliver the school curriculum.

Universal Plus

The child/young person has health needs but can access school with some reasonable adjustments

Absent or anticipated absence from school due to medical reasons supported by evidence from Universal Services such as GP; not in receipt of health treatment but with some evidence of reasonable adjustments.

- Signposting schools to additional support available i.e. DSPLs, charities.
- Piece of time limited guidance to school and pupil from ESMA Senior Teacher to inform the school's support arrangements.

Targeted

The child/young person's medical condition may require additional teaching support at specific times.

Absent or anticipated absence from school due to medical reasons supported by evidence from [NHS Tier 3](#) Services such as Consultant e.g. a hospital admittance for long stay (five days or more) or recurrent periods of absence.

- Real time online teaching (18.5 hours weekly for Y5-Y11 via [Acorn Digital Learning](#)) in the core subjects (English, Maths & Science). Small virtual classes providing interaction with peers and teachers, building confidence in a safe and secured environment where learning and progress is continually monitored.
- Telepresence robot [AV1 Robot](#) (25 hours) reconnects primary or secondary school age pupils with school and their social life by providing full time access to school and peers. The ESMA Teaching Service has ensured the safeguarding and GDPR compliance of this tool. Further details can be obtained from the ESMA Teaching Service Lead.

Annex 3 - Service Level Agreement between Herts Schools and the ESMA Teaching Service

Effective collaboration between all relevant services (CAMHS, NHS, schools, HCC and parents) is essential to delivering effective education for children with additional health needs. This Agreement confirms the support arrangements for pupils referred to the ESMA Teaching Service who are temporarily unable to attend their school, due to the impact of their medical condition. Reintegration to school is the ESMA Teaching Service key target. The ESMA Teaching Service is not a registered exam centre.

The ESMA teaching service purpose

The ESMA Teaching Service purpose is to enable students to feel connected with their peers, included in their school and supported in their learning.

The ESMA Teaching Service works together with pupil, parent, school, health and other professionals supporting the child to ensure school reintegration is achieved, as soon as their health needs permit.

Roles and responsibilities

Parents/ carers responsibilities

1. Seek advice from a qualified health professional when non-attendance to school develops (for children with mental health issues, a mental health practitioner).
2. Seek medical guidance around reasonable adjustments that the school should consider, alongside strategies to support.
3. Share health advice with the school to assist them with their support plan or individual health care plan.
4. Provide current medical guidance when requested by school.
5. Provide early communication to school, if a problem arises or help is needed.
6. Attend necessary meetings with school and relevant professionals.
7. Put into practice recommended techniques given by health, to support their child to return to school when health needs permit.
8. Reinforce with their child, the value of a return to school.
9. Ensure that their child is ready for and attends all provision offered.
10. Ensuring that an adult is present while the pupil attends their ESMA Teaching Service lessons.
11. Responsible for safeguarding their child when they are not receiving education.

School's responsibilities

1. The first 15 working days of absence remains the school's responsibility to provide and mark schoolwork for the pupil.
2. Provide access to the full curriculum (Art, History, etc.) according to the needs of the pupil, working together with the ESMA Teaching Service who will provide additional access to the core curriculum (English, Math's, Science).

7. Ensure the pupil is involved in the planning and evaluation of their Holistic Reintegration Plan (Pupil voice).
8. Monitor that updated medical evidence is provided by the school to enable ongoing teaching intervention from the ESMA Teaching Service (beyond 12 weeks).
9. Support pupils on the school site; in a suitable venue, or exceptionally, in the pupil's home if supported by appropriate medical evidence. If support is required in the home, it will be necessary to carry out an appropriate risk assessment and there must always be a responsible adult present.
10. Contact the school to clarify why a referral did not meet the entry criteria.
11. Contact health professionals to determine how much education is manageable for the pupil in relation to their health needs.

Health service responsibilities

1. Provide support to schools to inform the pupil's health care plan.
2. Provide relevant details to school of health support to enable the school to develop a holistic support plan in liaison with school, parents, pupil and other professionals (health) working with the child.
3. Provide outreach and training to the school in relation to the needs of the pupil due to the impact of their medical condition.
4. Participate, or provide written advice to inform the Holistic Reintegration Plan.

Pupil responsibilities

1. Be ready to maintain communication with the identified link teacher from school.
2. Be ready to engage with the agreed Holistic Reintegration Plan.
3. Be prepared to work with the professionals to develop skills to communicate their views and concerns.
4. Be ready to take steps needed to commence the return to school.

	SIGNATURE	DATE
Parent/Carer		
School Representative		
ESMA Teacher		
Health Representative		
Other professional		

Annex 4 - Recording Attendance

It is important that schools act to ensure that the DfE Guidance in respect of attendance is correctly observed for pupils on a reduced timetable. The registration codes applied will depend on the precise arrangement for providing education.

Registration codes

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

The DfE Guidance states that only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

This should therefore be used when a pupil has a reduced timetable that includes sessions which have been mutually agreed not to involve attendance at any other institution or supervised activity. The sessions not involving attendance at any other institution or supervised activity should be recorded as authorised absence. The school should be satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place for the care and welfare of the pupil during the time when they would otherwise be at school. This is particularly important for pupils in the primary phase and should comply with Hertfordshire guidance on part time timetables.

Code B: Off-site educational activity

The DfE states this code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore, by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised, and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing schoolwork. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

This should therefore be used if the pupil is receiving off site provision, approved by the school including any work experience forming part of the alternative provision. A pupil marked 'B' should be present at another educational institution or appropriately supervised activity agreed by the school. The school should establish robust arrangements with other providers to promote the effective and timely sharing of individual attendance information, to ensure they fulfil their legal and safeguarding responsibilities and apply the correct registration codes.

Code W: Work experience

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.