Essex County Council

Education

Education Access Team

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions

Reviewed: September 2025

Statutory Duty

The Local Authority (LA) has a statutory duty to provide suitable education for pupils who are unable to attend school due to health needs. Statutory guidance was issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in December 2023: 'Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs'.

Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs (DfE December 2023).

Governing bodies have a duty to ensure that their school develops a policy for supporting pupils with medical conditions that is reviewed regularly and is readily accessible to parents and school staff. The responsibilities under this duty are set out in statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in December 2015.

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (DfE 2015)

Nicola Turp, Education Access Manager is the named officer responsible for the education of children with additional health needs in Essex.

The referral process

Parents/carers are advised to contact their child's school in the first instance to discuss any concerns regarding regular school attendance.

Schools should make appropriate referrals to the Education Access team for children who are unable to attend school due to health reasons. Referrals should be made where a child will be away from school for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative.

In these circumstances, parents/carers must arrange for the school to receive appropriate advice outlining the circumstances pertaining to their child's medical condition, and the impact the condition is having on achieving regular school attendance. Where available, parents/carers should share all reports from health to inform decisions around how the medical condition is best supported.
Medical advice should be provided by the service who is overseeing your child's condition i.e. if your child is under a consultant then they should provide the medical advice rather than your local GP.
Where possible, it is helpful for the advice to offer a view on how the medical condition is impacting on school attendance and suggest what interventions/ adjustments are needed to support. If your child is too unwell to receive education, then this would need to be clearly stated. If parents/carers are struggling to obtain medical advice, schools should not delay making a referral to the Education Access team but should clearly outline how your child's medical condition is currently being supported.

Decisions

Once the referral form and supporting information has been considered and a decision about the referral has been made, the Education Access team will notify the school. The school should then update parents/carers accordingly. If a referral has been agreed, parents/carers will be invited to attend a school-based planning meeting to discuss the provision, agree placement objectives and desired outcomes. It is important to note that provision is only an interim arrangement and will support a return to school. Regular review meetings will take place to support the reintegration plan.

Parents/carers will be asked to provide updated medical advice every 12 weeks to ensure that the education arrangements remain suitable and appropriate to the medical condition.

Ensuring children have a good education

Where support is agreed, the education provider will arrange a suitable location for sessions to take place. Where there is a requirement for sessions to take place in the family home, the education provider will be required to undertake a risk assessment to ensure safety; the family must also ensure that there is a responsible adult present for the duration of the session.

As all children remain on roll to their school, close liaison with the referring school is essential, and the school should make every effort to keep your child in mind. Children and their families should continue to receive school communications and be kept informed of all school activities and events. The referring school will be expected to arrange regular review meetings to monitor progress and support reintegration steps.

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Roles and Responsibilities

The referring school must:

- Identify a senior member of staff to act as the school's lead professional responsible for the oversight of the pupil's placement.
- Provide a named teacher with whom each party can liaise (usually the SENCo). The named contact will ensure that the class teachers / heads of departments provide all the curriculum resources in order that the pupil can complete courses and prepare for assessments and examinations. Where appropriate, the tutor and tutor group should also keep in contact.
- Where possible, support the pupil to access non-core subjects during the period that they are not attending the onsite.
- Be proactive in supporting the pupil to still feel part of the school community whilst they are not well enough to attend school.
- Provide a suitable working area within the school for the pupil / education provider where necessary.
- Be proactive in planning and supporting the reintegration of the pupil back into school as soon as they are well enough. Where necessary the school will need to make reasonable adjustments under equalities legislation.[1] This duty is anticipatory, and adjustments must be put in place beforehand to prevent a pupil experiencing disadvantage.
- Ensure that pupils who are unable to attend school, are kept informed about school social events and are encouraged to maintain contact with their peers.
- Ensure that there is updated medical advice provided to assist with progressing the case and to support reintegration.
- Where a pupil is unable to take their exams within the school setting, it is the school's responsibility to organise those exams, secure an invigilator and locate a safe venue.

The Education Access team

The Education Access team is responsible for:

[1] The Equality Act 2010

- Triaging all referrals to the service and commissioning provision for those pupils who meet the threshold for statutory support.
- Working with the school, provider, family, and pupil to ensure the delivery of a suitable curriculum that can meet the need.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the education provision to ensure it continues to remain suitable.
- Facilitate an agreed programme of reintegration[2] and attend any relevant planning meetings.

Education provider

The education provider will:

- Liaise with the named person/s in school.
- Liaise with professional network as required.
- Provide a flexible programme of support to meet the needs of the pupil.
- Provide regular reports on the pupil's progress and achievements.
- Provide an opportunity for the pupil to contribute their views.
- Attend review meetings.
- Support engagement with the school alongside an appropriate reintegration programme.

Health and other support services

Health and support services will endeavour to:

- Offer medical treatment, advice, and support where appropriate to enable the Education Access team to determine the most appropriate provision.
- Contribute to a pupil's individual health care plan where appropriate.
- Provide outreach and training relating to the pupil's medical condition along with advice and support on managing health needs in school.
- Attend or provide advice to review meetings.
- Provide written reports where necessary.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers will support by:

- Providing current medical guidance when requested.
- Provide early communication if a problem arises or help is needed.
- Attend necessary meetings.
- Reinforce with their child, the value of a return to school and support the engagement and reintegration process.
- Ensure that their child is ready for and attends all provision offered.
- Take responsibility for safeguarding their child when they are not receiving education.
- Encourage participation with school and peers.

Your child

[2] Guidance on reintegration is outlined in Arranging Alternative Provision statutory guidance DfE 2025

Your child will try to:

- Be ready to work with the provider.
- Be prepared to communicate their views.
- Engage with school and other agencies as appropriate.
- Prepare for reintegration.
- Participate in school and with peers when able to.

Ending of support

The Education Access team will continue to monitor your child's progress and engagement to assess whether the education remains suitable to your child's health needs. Where there is no longer medical advice from health to support the continuation of the provision and/or where there is poor engagement with education offer, the Education Access team will assess whether the Local Authority's statutory duty to provide education remains.

Where the threshold for statutory support is no longer met, the Education Access team may end the placement. The Education Access team will communicate this decision with the team around your child and will work with partners to ensure there are suitable arrangements in place for your child's education.

Pupils who are not of compulsory school age

The Education Access team will not normally provide support for children who are under or over compulsory school age. However, support may be considered where a child is repeating a compulsory school year due to medical reasons. All cases will be considered on an individual basis.