



IS MY CHILD TOO ILL FOR SCHOOL?

Preventing pupil/student absence

Attendance⁴Learning ©

Worried about your child's illness?

Children sometimes get ill, parents/carers may feel the need to keep children off from school. This guide provides **information about common conditions** and what to do before deciding whether to keep children off school.

Did you know?



Absences adds up

If pupils miss 10% or higher of their possible sessions this is classified as 'persistent absence'. A session is 1 morning or afternoon in school – **every session counts!**



Absence affects attainment

Pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Primary) and Key Stage 4 (Secondary) have higher rates of attendance compared to those with the lowest attainment.



Absence limits life chances

From Early Years through to Primary and Secondary education, punctual and regular attendance is an important protective factor for children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

What to do if my child is unwell?

Not every illness requires children to be absent from school. It can be difficult deciding whether to keep children off from school, including nursery when they are unwell.

If your child is well enough to attend school but they have an infection that could be passed on, talk to your school – if they feel able, they may provide a work pack to prevent your child falling behind.

Schools will have an attendance policy which will include specific procedures that a parent/carer must do in the event of their child needing to be absent from school – if ever in doubt contact your child's school.

As a parent/carer you should **notify the school on the first day** your child is unable to attend due to illness (e.g. by telephone or a dedicated reporting facility). Schools should authorise absences, unless in rare cases when they have cause for concern about the genuineness of an illness. If this is in doubt, schools can request that medical evidence is provided (e.g. a prescription or an appointment card). Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if they are not satisfied that the illness is genuine – they should advise parents/carers if they intend to do this.

Parents/carers should let the school know:



The nature of the illness



Whether your child has seen their GP, or whether an appointment has been made to see a specialist service



How long you expect your child to be absent from school



The outlook (prognosis) for the child's recovery

For absences that are expected to last up to 15 days and are not part of a pattern of recurring illness, the parents/carers should discuss this with their child's school about the possibility of them organising work and homework to be set as soon as the child is able to cope with it. The school should also agree with you how completed work will be collected, marked and returned.

Longer absence through illness, injury, or medical condition

If absence is long-term or repeated, schools may request proof that your child is genuinely unwell and unable to attend school:

This is part of a school's safeguarding duties.

Keep copies of appointments and/or medical reports.

The school may want to draw up a support plan with parents/carers and consider whether to refer your child to a specialist service. This may be so if your child:



has a long-term or chronic condition, and is expected to be absent from school for a longer period



has intermittent attendance due to an illness (such as epilepsy or sickle cell anaemia)



is going to be absent from school for a period of therapy or surgery

Education for pupils who are unable to attend school because of medical needs can be provided for in the following ways:



Children who are in-patients of most hospitals will be taught through the hospital teaching service



Children who are not in-patients, may receive home tutoring organised by the local Education Inclusion service – check with your local arrangements

Children who are admitted to NHS hospitals (including psychiatric units) in other areas will receive education through local hospitals, schools or other facilities.

Parent responsibilities to regular attendance

By law, all children of compulsory school age (normally 5 to 16) must receive a suitable full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to make sure this happens either by registering children at school or by making other arrangements to give them a suitable, full-time education. Once registered, parents are legally responsible for making sure they regularly attend – to build foundations for life, it is advisable for Early Years children, to have punctual and regular attendance.

Recording children's attendance

If your child needs to be absent from school due to being unwell, schools will (usually) mark this as 'authorised'.

NOTE: Only the Headteacher can authorise an absence and only in exceptional circumstances. If they have reason to doubt reasons provided, they may mark your child's absence as 'unauthorised'.

Be careful not to take any unnecessary absences from school, as these may not be authorised – unauthorised absence is a strict liability offence and parents/carers could face legal action about these (e.g. Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order, Prosecution).

See our booklet 'School Attendance and Parental Responsibility: Information for parents' for full information and guidance.



Arrange appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. If unable, make sure your child attends school before and after appointments (if time allows – check with your school).

Is your child too ill for school?

If in doubt, check with your child's school.

RED 'KEEP OFF'	AMBER 'CONSULT GP OR PHARMACY'	GREEN 'ATTEND'
Chickenpox Consult GP or Pharmacy. Return to school 5 days after onset of rash, when spots have crusted over.	Diarrhoea or Vomiting Only take time off when symptoms are persistent. Consult GP if symptoms persist after 48 hours.	Flu Consult GP or Pharmacy. Often confused with common cold. Return to school 5 days after onset of illness.
High temperature Keep off school until temperature goes away.	Measles Consult GP. Return to school 4 days after rash appears.	Mumps Consult GP. Return to school after swelling appears.
Whooping cough Consult GP. Return to school 5 days after start of antibiotics or 21 days after start of illness.	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Check with latest government/NHS guidance. Contact your child's school if they have symptoms.	Ear infection If associated with a high temperature or severe earache, keep off school until high temperature goes away.
Impetigo Consult GP. Return to school when scabs are dry or 48hrs after start of antibiotics.	Scabies Consult with GP. Return to school after first treatment.	Scarlet fever Consult GP. Return to school 24hrs after start of antibiotics.
Shingles Consult GP. Only stay off if rash is weeping and cannot be covered.	Cold sores No need to keep off school.	Conjunctivitis No need to keep off school.
Common colds Continue to attend and practise good hand hygiene.	Hand, foot and mouth disease Consult GP and Pharmacy. Inform school and continue to attend.	Glandular Fever Consult GP or Pharmacy. Inform school and continue to attend.
Headlice and nits No need to keep off from school.	Period Pains Consult GP or Pharmacy. Inform school and continue to attend.	Ringworm See a Pharmacy unless on scalp, of which case, see GP. Children can attend school once treatment has started.
Slapped cheek syndrome No need to keep off from school.	Sore throat No need to keep off from school.	Tonsilitis Consult GP or Pharmacy. Inform school and continue to attend.
Threadworms No need to keep off from school.	Feeling sick No need to keep off from school.	See more at: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/