

Medical Policy - procedure for a child presenting unwell in school.

Approval Date – May 2025

Review Date – May 2028

Purpose: To provide clear and consistent guidelines for all school staff when determining whether a student is too unwell to remain in school and should be sent home during the school day.

General Principles:

- The immediate health and well-being of the student are the paramount considerations in all decisions regarding sending a student home due to illness.
- Decisions should be based on a comprehensive assessment of the student's symptoms, their ability to participate in normal school activities, and their overall health status.
- Except in cases of immediate medical emergency, communication with parents or carers is a crucial step before a student is sent home / medical care..
- For students with pre-existing medical conditions, the guidance and protocols outlined in their Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) will take precedence over the general guidelines in this policy.

Guidance for staff

Students being sent to the medical room should reach the threshold for being sent home, minor issues do not require students to be sent to the medical room, unnecessary referrals to the medical room disadvantage the students' learning and dilute the care given to students with medical issues that do reach the threshold.

Specific Thresholds for Sending a Student Home:

- **Fever:** A student with a recorded temperature of 37.8°C (100°F) or higher should be sent home. They should not return to school until they have been fever-free for a continuous period of 24 hours without the use of any fever-reducing medication.
- **Vomiting and Diarrhoea:** Any student experiencing one or more episodes of vomiting or diarrhoea during the school day should be sent home. They should not return to school until they have been free of these symptoms for a period of 48 hours from the last episode.
- **Severe Headache:** A student reporting a severe headache that significantly impairs their ability to concentrate, participate in learning activities, or is accompanied by other concerning symptoms such as a stiff neck, persistent vomiting, visual disturbances, or sensitivity to light should be sent home. For students with diagnosed migraines and established IHPs, the protocols within their plan should be followed.
- **Other Significant Pain:** Any pain that is severe enough to prevent the student from comfortably participating in normal school activities and does not respond to basic first aid measures administered at school warrants consideration for sending the student home.
- **Suspected Infectious Diseases:** Students exhibiting symptoms suggestive of a potentially infectious disease, such as an unexplained rash (particularly if accompanied by a fever), persistent coughing, or other symptoms consistent with communicable illnesses, should be assessed based on current NHS and UKHSA guidance. Exclusion periods recommended by these organizations for specific illnesses (e.g., chickenpox, measles, rubella, mumps, scarlet fever, whooping cough, impetigo, ringworm,

conjunctivitis) should be followed.

- **Head Injury:** Any student who sustains a head injury should be immediately assessed by a trained first aider or school nurse. Parents or carers should be promptly informed of the incident. Students exhibiting any "red flag" symptoms indicative of a more serious head injury, including but not limited to loss of consciousness, persistent or worsening headache, repeated vomiting, confusion, drowsiness, or changes in behavior or coordination, must be sent home and may require immediate medical attention.
- **Other Observable Symptoms:** Any other symptoms or signs that indicate the student is significantly unwell and unable to benefit from being in school, such as persistent or severe coughing, noticeable difficulty breathing, marked lethargy or drowsiness, an unexplained rash accompanied by a fever or feeling unwell, or any other condition that raises concern about the student's health and ability to participate in the school day.

Procedure for Sending a Student Home:

1. Any member of staff who is concerned about a student's health should refer the student to a designated first aider or the Student reception / medical room for assessment.
2. The trained first aider will assess the student's condition, taking into account their reported symptoms and any observable signs.
3. Unless the situation necessitates immediate emergency medical attention, an attempt will be made to contact the student's parents or carers to inform them of the situation and to arrange for the student to be collected from school. Up-to-date contact information for parents/carers must be readily available.
4. If parents or carers cannot be reached immediately, and the student's condition is deemed concerning but not life-threatening, the school will follow its established safeguarding procedures and may seek advice from relevant health professionals.
5. While awaiting collection, the student will be supervised in the medical room or a designated quiet space.
6. The incident, including the student's symptoms, the assessment made, the actions taken, and all communication with parents or carers, will be documented in accordance with the school's record-keeping procedures.

Parental intervention during the school day.

Students should not be directly contacting parents during the school day. This also applies to illness. Parents should not be contacting students directly. If a student is ill during a lesson they should speak to the teacher, if they are ill during a social time they should go to student reception. Parents can determine if a student is ill and unable to attend school, the NHS gives useful [guidance](#). It is difficult for a parent to remotely ascertain whether their child is unwell enough to meet the thresholds to be sent home once they are attending on-site and we would ask that parents advise their children to speak to a member of staff if they feel unwell.

If a student has contacted home and the parent would wish us to consider them being sent home then the protocol once Medical room staff are made aware:

Student is advised to go to the medical room

Student is assessed by medical room staff.

Parents are made aware of whether the student meets the threshold to go home.

The parent can choose to override this advice and require their child to be sent home ill, if the child has not met the threshold.

Table 1: Summary of Draft Policy Thresholds for Sending Students Home

Symptom/Condition	Threshold for Sending Home	Return to School Criteria
Fever	Temperature $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ (100°F)	Fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication
Vomiting	Any episode	Symptom-free for 48 hours
Diarrhoea	Any episode	Symptom-free for 48 hours
Severe Headache	Impairs participation, especially with stiff neck, vomiting, visual issues	Symptoms resolved (follow IHP for migraine)
Significant Pain	Impairs participation, unresponsive to basic first aid	Symptoms resolved
Suspected Infectious Disease	Symptoms of specific illnesses (e.g., rash, persistent cough)	As per NHS/UKHSA guidance for the specific illness
Head Injury	Red flag symptoms or deemed unable to participate by first aider/nurse	As advised by medical professional or school protocols
Other Observable Symptoms	Significantly unwell and unable to benefit from school	Symptoms resolved

Implementation and Best Practices:

Effective implementation of this medical policy requires a multi-faceted approach involving training, communication, clear roles and responsibilities, and ongoing review.

Comprehensive training should be provided to all school staff members, including teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff, and any other personnel who may interact with students. This training should cover the specifics of the school's medical policy, including detailed explanations of the thresholds for sending students home, and guidance on recognizing the signs and symptoms of common childhood illnesses and when to seek further assistance.

Clear and consistent communication with parents and carers is essential. Parents should be informed about the procedures for when their child becomes unwell at school and the importance of providing up-to-date emergency contact information. When a student needs to be sent home, clear and empathetic communication with the parents or carers is crucial, explaining the reasons for the decision and any recommended next steps, such as seeking medical advice.

The roles and responsibilities of trained first aiders in assessing student illness and making decisions about whether a student should be sent home must be clearly defined within the school's medical policy. These individuals should have the appropriate training and resources to effectively assess students and make informed decisions in line with the policy guidelines.

For students with long-term or complex medical conditions, it is vital to ensure that Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) are in place. These plans should be developed collaboratively with parents, relevant healthcare professionals, and the student (where appropriate) and should clearly outline any specific thresholds or procedures related to the student's condition that may differ from the general school policy. IHPs should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect any changes in the student's medical needs.

Accurate and thorough record-keeping is an important aspect of managing student health. All instances where a student is sent home due to illness, including the specific reasons, the symptoms observed, the time of departure, and details of communication with parents or carers, should be documented according to the school's established procedures. This data can be valuable for identifying any trends, informing reviews of the policy, and ensuring consistency in its application.

The school's medical policy should be regarded as a living document that is subject to regular review and updates. This review process should take into account the latest national guidance from organizations like the NHS and UKHSA, as well as feedback from school staff, parents, and relevant healthcare professionals. Regular updates ensure that the policy remains aligned with current best practices and effectively addresses the evolving health needs of the student population.

While this policy provides specific thresholds to guide decision-making, it is also important to acknowledge that there may be individual cases where professional judgment and a degree of flexibility are required. School staff, particularly trained first aiders, should be empowered to use their professional judgment in situations that may not fit neatly within the defined thresholds, especially when there are concerns about a student's well-being that warrant further consideration.