



Children with healthcare needs who cannot attend school policy

Name of Headteacher:	T. Johnston
Date Policy approved and adopted:	May 2026
Date Due for review:	May 2027

Merdon Junior School

Children with Healthcare Needs who cannot attend school

Introduction

Merdon Junior School aims to support all children, regardless of their individual circumstances, to fulfil their full potential and provide an education that enables them to shape their own futures. Where children are unable to attend school because of their health, the school will follow Department for Education guidance and work with Hampshire Local Authority who have the responsibility to arrange a suitable full-time education (or part time when appropriate for the child's needs) for children who are unable to attend a mainstream or special school because of their health.

The Local Authority is responsible for arranging suitable education for children who are unable to attend school due to health needs, and who would not receive suitable education without such provision. There will be a wide range of circumstances where a child has a health need but will receive suitable education that meets their needs without the intervention of the LA - for example, where the child can still attend school with some support. Where the school has made arrangements to deliver suitable education outside of school for the child; or where arrangements have been made for the child to be educated in a hospital by an on-site hospital school, it would not be expected that the Local Authority become involved in such arrangements unless it had reason to think that the education being provided to the child was not suitable or, while otherwise suitable, was not full-time or for the number of hours the child could benefit from without adversely affecting their health. This might be the case where, for example, the child can attend school but only intermittently.

Due to the nature of their health needs, some children may be admitted to hospital or placed in alternative forms of education provision. We recognise that, whenever possible, pupils should receive their education within their school and the aim of the provision will be to reintegrate pupils back into school as soon as they are well enough. We understand that we have a continuing role in a pupil's education whilst they are not attending the school and will work with the local authority, healthcare partners and families to ensure that all children with health needs receive the right level of support to enable them to maintain links with their education.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the following legislation:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

It is also based on the following statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE):

- Alternative provision
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school

This policy also follows guidance provided by our local authority.

Definitions

Children who are unable to attend school as a result of their medical needs may include those with:

- Physical health issues.
- Physical injuries.
- Mental health needs, including anxiety issues.
- Emotional difficulties or school refusal.
- Progressive conditions.
- Terminal illnesses. - Chronic illnesses.

Children who are unable to attend mainstream education for health reasons may attend any of the following:

- Hospital school: a special school within a hospital setting where education is provided to give continuity whilst the child is receiving treatment.
 - Home tuition: a tuition service that acts as a communication channel between schools and pupils on occasions where pupils are too ill to attend school and are receiving specialist medical treatment.
- Medical PRUs: local authority establishments that provide education for children unable to attend their registered school due to their medical needs.

Roles and Responsibilities

Local authorities 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.

Local authorities 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 the offer of education a child receives may also breach statutory requirements

The Governors are responsible for ensuring the school is compliant with statutory duties including:

- Arrangements for pupils who cannot attend school as a result of their health needs are in place and are effectively implemented.
- Termly review of the arrangements made for pupils who cannot attend school due to their health needs.
- Ensuring the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the arrangements to support the needs of pupils are clear and understood by all.
- Robust systems are in place for dealing with health emergencies and critical incidents, for both on-and off-site activities.
- Staff with responsibility for supporting pupils with health needs are appropriately trained.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Working with the Governors to ensure compliance with the relevant statutory duties when supporting pupils with health needs.
- Working collaboratively with parents and other professionals to develop arrangements to meet the best interests of children.
- Ensuring the arrangements put in place to meet pupils' health needs are fully understood by all those involved and acted upon.
- Appointing a named member of staff who is responsible for pupils with healthcare needs and liaises with parents, pupils, the local authority, key workers and others involved in the pupil's care.
- Ensuring the support put in place focuses on and meets the needs of individual pupils.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff with responsibility for supporting pupils with health needs
- Providing teachers who support pupils with health needs with suitable information relating to a pupil's health condition and the possible effect the condition and/or medication taken has on the pupil
- Providing reports to the Governors on the effectiveness of the arrangements in place to meet the health needs of pupils.
- Notifying the local authority when a pupil is likely to be away from the school for a significant period of time due to their health needs.
- Dealing with pupils who are unable to attend school because of health needs.
- Actively monitoring pupil progress and reintegration into school.
Supplying pupils' education providers with information about the child's capabilities, progress and outcomes.
- Liaising with the education providers and parents to determine pupils' programmes of study whilst they are absent from school.
- Keeping pupils informed about school events and encouraging communication with their peers.
- Providing a link between pupils and their parents, and the local authority.

Teachers and support staff are responsible for:

- Understanding confidentiality in respect of pupils' health needs.
- Designing lessons and activities in a way that allows those with health needs to participate fully and ensuring pupils are not excluded from activities that they wish to take part in without a clear evidence-based reason.
- Understanding their role in supporting pupils with health needs and ensuring they attend the required training.
- Ensuring they are aware of the needs of their pupils through the appropriate and lawful sharing of the individual pupil's health needs.
- Ensuring they are aware of the signs, symptoms and triggers of common life-threatening medical conditions and know what to do in an emergency.
- Keeping parents informed of how their child's health needs are affecting them whilst in the school

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school where possible
- Work in partnership with the school to ensure the best possible outcomes for their child.
- Notify the school of the reason for any of their child's absences without delay.
- Provide the school with sufficient and up-to-date information about their child's health needs.
- Attend meetings to discuss how support for their child should be planned.

Managing Absences

- The school will provide support to pupils who are absent from school because of illness for a period of less than 15 school days by liaising with the pupil's parents to arrange schoolwork as soon as the pupil is able to cope with it or part-time education at school. The school will give due consideration to which aspects of the curriculum are prioritised in consultation with the pupil, their family and relevant members of staff.
- For periods of absence that are expected to last for 15 or more school days, either in one absence or over the course of a school year, they will notify the local authority, who will take responsibility for the pupil and their education.

Where absences are anticipated or known in advance, the school will liaise with the local authority to enable education provision to be provided from the start of the pupil's absence.

- For hospital admissions, the school will liaise with the local authority regarding the programme that should be followed while the pupil is in hospital.

- The local authority will set up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for the pupil which will allow the school, the local authority and the provider of the pupil's education to work together.
- The school will monitor pupil attendance and mark registers to ensure it is clear whether a pupil is, or should be, receiving education otherwise than at school.
- The school will only remove a pupil who is unable to attend school because of additional health needs from the school roll where:
- The pupil has been certified by a 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.

A pupil unable to attend school because of their health needs will not be removed from the school register without parental consent and certification from the Medical Officer, even if the local authority has become responsible for the pupil's education.

Support for Pupils

To help ensure a pupil with additional health needs is able to attend school following an extended period of absence, the following adaptations will be considered:

- A personalised or part-time timetable, drafted in consultation with the pupil's teacher and SLT.
- Access to additional support in school.
- Online access to the curriculum from home.
- Movement of lessons to more accessible rooms where possible.
- Places to rest at school.
- Special exam arrangements to manage anxiety or fatigue.

Reintegration

When a pupil is considered well enough to return to school, the school will develop a tailored reintegration plan in collaboration with the local authority.

The school will work with the local authority when reintegration into school is anticipated to plan for consistent provision during and after the period of education outside school.

- As far as possible, the child will be able to access the curriculum and materials that they would have used in school.
- Where appropriate, the school nurse will be involved in the development of the pupil's reintegration plan and informed of the timeline of the plan by the appointed named member of staff, to ensure they can prepare to offer any appropriate support to the pupil.

- The school will consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to provide suitable access to the school and the curriculum for the pupil.
- For longer absences, the reintegration plan will be developed near to the pupil's likely date of return, to avoid putting unnecessary pressure on an ill pupil or their parents in the early stages of their absence.
- The school is aware that some pupils will need gradual reintegration over a long period of time and will always consult with the pupil, their parents and key staff about concerns, medical issues, timing and the preferred pace of return.

The reintegration plan will include:

- The date for planned reintegration, once known.
- Details of regular meetings to discuss reintegration.
- Details of the named member of staff who has responsibility for the pupil.
- Clearly stated responsibilities and the rights of all those involved.
- Details of social contacts, including the involvement of peers and mentors during the transition period.
- A programme of small goals leading up to reintegration.

The school will ensure a welcoming environment is developed and encourage pupils and staff to be positive and proactive during the reintegration period.

Provision for siblings

When treatment of a child's condition means that his or her family have to move nearer to a hospital, and there is a sibling of compulsory school age, the local authority into whose area the family has moved should seek to ensure that the sibling is offered provision. The provision should be suitable and available, for example, in a local mainstream school or other appropriate setting.

If the local authority makes arrangements

If the school can't make suitable arrangements, Hampshire County Council HCC) and their Inclusion Support Service (ISS) will become responsible for arranging suitable education for these children.

Identification of pupils

Most unwell children/young people (CYP) continue to have their need for education appropriately met by their own school. This support can be sensitively arranged between the school, the parents or primary carers, a primary health care provider (most often the GP) and the CYP themselves.

- Before considering a referral to the local authority for advice and guidance a school must satisfy itself that a CYP's absence is due to ill-health and that there are no other factors influencing non-attendance.

- Schools should consider liaison with other agencies that may be in contact with the CYP and/or their family. This could, for example, be children's social care, CAMHS, school nursing service or the GP.
- When ill health persists beyond 15 consecutive or non-consecutive school days the school should make a referral to ISS for advice, guidance and educational provision.

Referrals to Hampshire County Council

All referrals to Hampshire County Council will be received via a single point of access (SPA) by the Inclusion support Service (ISS). This ensures (a) that all referrals are treated in an equitable manner (b) that effective monitoring can take place.

- All medical referrals will be made on the Education Forms link – provided by ISS to school

The HCC triage system will take account of:

- Medical evidence, which should be verified in writing by a consultant community paediatrician or specialist consultant psychiatrist from Child and Mental Health Adolescent Services (CAMHS); where this is not possible alternative enquiries should be made to G.P.'s and/or others. This should indicate:
 - that at the time of writing the CYP is not well enough to attend school ▪
 - The impact the illness is having on education
 - The current plans and provision in place to support the CYP's education
 - The age and stage of the pupil e.g. KS1– KS4
 - How the school has made every reasonable adjustment to include the CYP in education and whether there are any reasonable adjustments the school could make to enable the CYP to attend school
 - Any other available evidence

Merdon Junior School will authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine concern about the veracity of an illness. Where this is the case the Headteacher should contact the single point of Access (SPA) for bespoke advice.

Where parents are unable to provide evidence, further enquiries should be made to the General Practitioner (GP) or other health professionals or agencies especially around mental health issues.

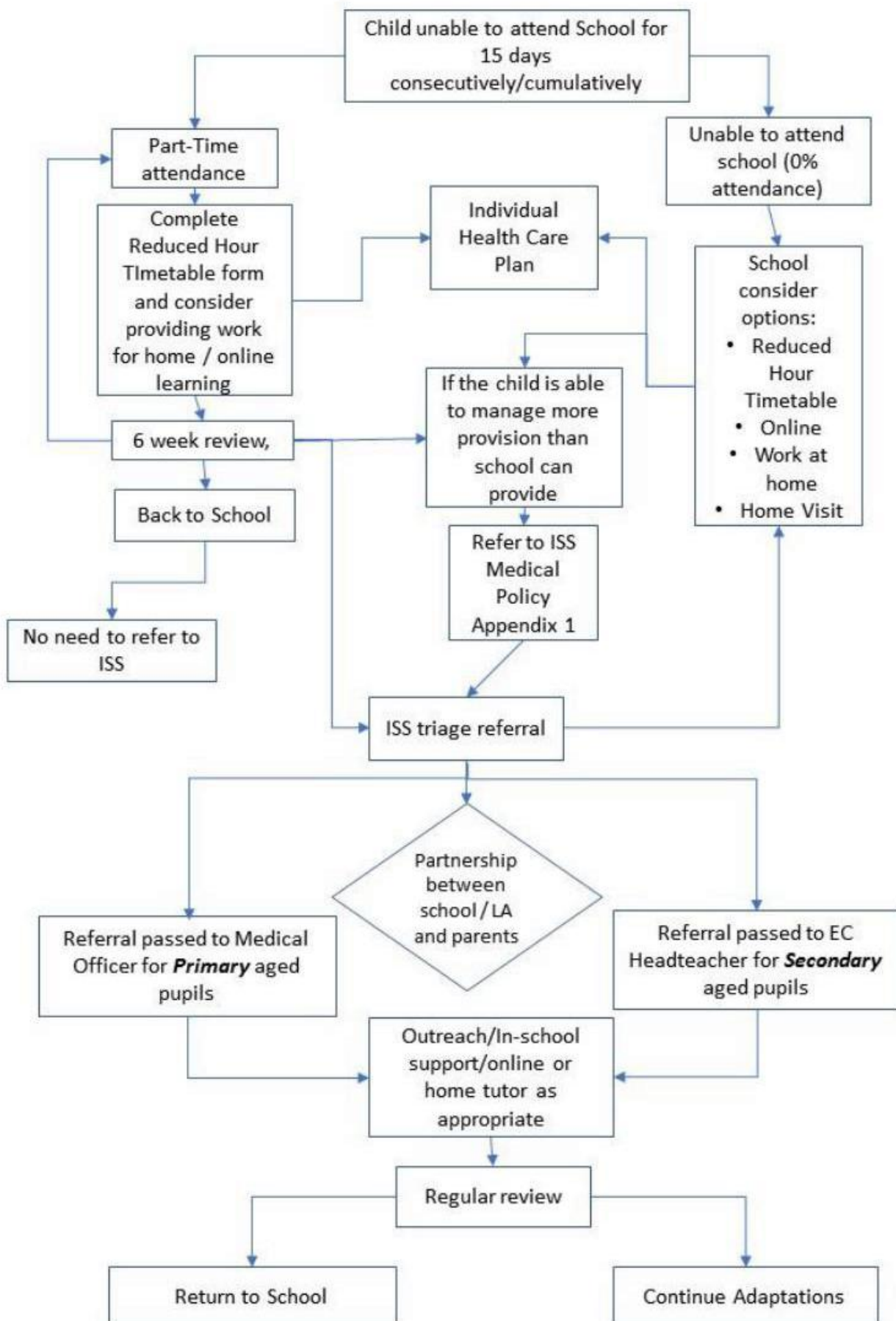
Whilst unable to attend their home school, it is important that CYP continue to engage in education. The provision offered will take account of age, aptitude and ability alongside other individual characteristics such as social and emotional needs, special educational needs and any disability. It is recognised and accepted that the capacity of the individual CYP to engage in learning may change over time. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the provision is regularly reviewed and that it continues to be both flexible and sensitive to individual need. All provision will maintain a focus on returning the CYP to school-based learning as soon as is reasonably possible. The child's progress will be reviewed regularly,

in consultation with the parent/carer, the home school and other relevant services. Reviews may be made more frequently according to need. It should be recognised that a child's educational needs and ability to access education may change depending on their health and that the programme may need to be flexible to accommodate this. (See Appendix 1 for a flow diagram overview).

In cases where the local authority makes arrangements, Merton Junior School will:

- Work constructively with the local authority, providers, relevant agencies and parents to ensure the best outcomes for the pupil
- Share information with the local authority and relevant health services as required
- Help make sure that the provision offered to the pupil is as effective as possible and that the child can be reintegrated back into school successfully When reintegration is anticipated, work with the local authority to:
- Plan for consistent provision during and after the period of education outside the school, allowing the pupil to access the same curriculum and materials that they would have used in school as far as possible
- Enable the pupil to stay in touch with school life (e.g. through newsletters, emails, invitations to school events or internet links to lessons from their school)
- Create individually tailored reintegration plans for each child returning to school
- Consider whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made

Appendix 1 : Flow diagram



Evaluation and Review

Date of Ratification	May 2026
Date for Next Review	May 2027
Comments: No changes since last review suggested	