



Riversdale Primary School

"A nurturing, ambitious and values led school."

Children with Health Needs not Attending School Policy

Date: 3rd September 2025

Review Date: 2nd September 2026



AIMS

Riversdale Primary School is committed to ensuring that all children with health needs who are unable to attend school continue to receive a suitable education. We work closely with Wandsworth Local Authority (LA) to ensure that pupils who cannot attend due to health needs have access to as much education as their condition allows, enabling them to achieve their potential and remain connected to their school community.

Whenever possible, pupils should receive their education within their school. Where this is not possible, alternative provision will be arranged in collaboration with the LA and health professionals. Our shared aim is always the pupil's successful reintegration back into school when they are well enough to return.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy has due regard to the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- DfE (2023) Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs
- DfE (2024) Working together to improve school attendance (statutory from August 2024)
- DfE (2015) Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions

RELATED POLICIES

This policy also operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Virtual Learning Policy

DEFINITIONS

Children with Health Needs:

Children with health needs are those who are unable to attend school for physical or mental health reasons and who would not receive a suitable education without additional arrangements being made. Health needs may be temporary, recurring, or long-term, and may affect attendance on a part-time or full-time basis.

Children Unable to Attend School Because of Health Needs:

This includes, but is not limited to, children who are:

- Receiving or recovering from medical treatment (in hospital or at home)
- Experiencing chronic or life-limiting conditions
- Managing mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, or emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)
- Recovering from injury, surgery, or medical procedures
- Experiencing acute illness that prevents regular attendance
- Undergoing assessment or treatment for neurological or psychological conditions
- The key consideration is not the specific diagnosis, but whether the child's health prevents them from attending school and accessing suitable education.

Suitable Education:

Education arranged for children who cannot attend school must be:

- Of good quality, meeting the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any SEND
- Full-time, unless part-time is better suited to the child's health needs
- Continuous, ensuring minimal disruption to learning and progress
- Ambitious and inclusive, allowing children to take appropriate qualifications and reintegrate successfully into school when well enough.

Alternative Provision:

Not to be confused with the school's Alternative/Additionally Resourced Provision (ASC Resource Base), alternative provision for children unable to attend school because of health needs may include:

- Hospital schools or hospital tuition – education provided within hospital settings during treatment
- Home tuition or outreach teaching – provided by or on behalf of the LA
- Medical Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) – LA establishments for children unable to attend school
- Online or blended learning – digital access supporting continuity of education.

Reintegration:

A structured process supporting a pupil's return to school following an extended absence due to health needs. It involves collaboration between the pupil, family, school, Wandsworth LA, and medical professionals to ensure a safe, gradual, and sustainable transition.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA):

EBSA describes significant emotional distress about attending school, often linked to anxiety or other mental health difficulties. It is recognised as a health need requiring early intervention and multi-agency collaboration rather than punitive attendance measures.

Individual Healthcare Plan (IHCP):

An IHCP is a collaborative document between the school, parents, healthcare professionals, and (where appropriate) the pupil, outlining how the pupil's health condition will be managed to ensure full access to education.

WANDSWORTH LOCAL AUTHORITY DUTIES

Wandsworth LA must arrange suitable full-time education (or as full-time as the pupil's health allows) for children of compulsory school age who cannot attend their registered school due to health needs.

The LA will:

- Arrange provision as soon as it is clear that a pupil will be absent for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative.
- Liaise promptly with medical professionals and the school to minimise delay in provision.
- Ensure the education provided is high quality, enables progression, and allows the pupil to reintegrate successfully.
- Designate a named officer responsible for coordinating education for children with additional health needs.
- Maintain and publish a policy setting out local arrangements for such provision.
- Review provision regularly to ensure suitability and effectiveness.

The LA must not:

- Restrict provision based on cost or a fixed list of medical conditions.
- Apply rigid attendance thresholds before intervening.
- Delay or deny provision while awaiting medical evidence where need is clear.

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

Riversdale Primary School will:

- Notify Wandsworth LA when it becomes apparent that a pupil will be absent due to health needs for 15 days or more.
- Liaise with the LA, parents, healthcare professionals, and any alternative provision provider to plan appropriate education.
- Ensure the pupil remains on the school roll and that accurate attendance codes are used in line with the 2024 Attendance Regulations.
- Maintain regular contact with the pupil and family, promoting inclusion in school life through communications, updates, and invitations to events.
- Contribute to and review the pupil's Personal Education Plan (PEP) where one is in place.
- Plan for a supported and timely reintegration once the pupil is able to return.
- Ensure data sharing and confidentiality comply with the Data Protection Act 2018.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Governing Board:

- Ensures the policy and related arrangements are effective and regularly reviewed.
- Confirms staff are appropriately trained and procedures followed.

Headteacher:

- Ensures compliance with statutory duties.
- Works collaboratively with families, the LA, and healthcare providers.
- Appoints a named staff member for pupils with health needs.
- Oversees training, communication, and reintegration.
- Reports annually to governors on effectiveness.

SENCo/Named Staff Member:

- Coordinates communication between school, family, LA, and staff.
- Monitors progress, attendance, and reintegration.
- Shares curriculum resources with the alternative provision provider.
- Maintains pupil connection with school through communication and virtual engagement.

Teachers and Support Staff:

- Plan and deliver accessible lessons.
- Remain informed about pupils' health conditions and triggers.
- Communicate effectively with families and the named staff member.

Parents/Carers:

- Inform school on the first day of absence due to illness or treatment.
- Provide up-to-date medical information and attend planning meetings.
- Support reintegration and communication during absence.

MANAGING ABSENCES

Identification and Early Notification:

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of absence if their child is unwell or receiving medical treatment.

Where a pupil is expected to be absent for more than five consecutive school days due to a health condition, parents will be asked to share relevant medical information or documentation to help the school plan appropriate support.

The school recognises that some health conditions are chronic or fluctuate; therefore, repeated short absences may also indicate the need for additional support or liaison with healthcare professionals.

No pupil will be disadvantaged due to delayed or missing medical evidence. The school will work supportively with the family while evidence is sought.

Communication and Information Gathering:

The named member of staff for pupils with health needs will coordinate communication between the family, relevant health professionals, and the LA.

Parents/carers may be asked to provide consent for the school to liaise directly with the pupil's GP, consultant, or other relevant medical practitioner to obtain advice about the pupil's capacity to engage in education.

Where appropriate, the school nurse or community health team may be consulted to confirm whether the pupil is medically fit to attend school, participate in part-time education, or requires home/hospital tuition.

All communication will be handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection requirements.

Short-Term Health-Related Absence (Up to 15 Days):

For absences expected to last fewer than 15 school days, the school will provide work to complete at home or arrange virtual learning opportunities.

Teachers will prioritise key curriculum areas and adapt tasks to ensure learning is manageable during recovery.

The named staff member will maintain contact at least once a week to monitor progress, wellbeing, and readiness to return.

A brief reintegration discussion will take place prior to return if adjustments are needed (e.g., reduced timetable, quiet space, rest breaks).

Longer-Term or Recurrent Absence (15+ Days):

When it becomes clear that a pupil will be absent for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative, the school will immediately inform Wandsworth LA.

The LA, in consultation with medical professionals, will assess the pupil's needs and arrange suitable full-time education (or as full-time as the child's condition allows) via home tuition, hospital education, or a medical PRU.

The school will:

- Provide all necessary background and curriculum information to the LA provider.
- Nominate a staff link to liaise regularly with the pupil and family.
- Monitor attendance, progress, and engagement with the provision.
- Attend review meetings with the LA and healthcare professionals.

Where the pupil's health fluctuates, the school will plan for flexible transition between home-based and school-based education to maintain continuity.

Evidence and Recording:

The school will record absence due to health needs using the appropriate DfE attendance codes (for example, "I" for illness or "C" for authorised absence, and "X" for absence not required to attend in specific medical circumstances).

Staff will ensure registers clearly distinguish between authorised health-related absence and unauthorised absence.

The school may request updated medical information if a long-term condition impacts attendance patterns, in order to plan appropriate support.

All evidence and correspondence will be stored securely and reviewed periodically.

Maintaining Educational Continuity:

The school will ensure that pupils with health needs remain engaged in education through:

- Ongoing access to learning resources and communication platforms (e.g., Google Classroom, CenturyTech etc.).
- Regular contact from staff to sustain connection and belonging.
- Adapted or remote learning tasks agreed in consultation with parents and, where relevant, the LA provider.

Where the LA arranges alternative provision, the school will maintain oversight of curriculum alignment and progression so that reintegration is smooth and purposeful.

Reintegration Following Health-Related Absence:

Reintegration planning will begin as soon as a likely return date is known.

The Reintegration Plan will be co-produced by the school, family, healthcare professionals, and (if involved) the LA provider, and will include:

- A clear timeline and review checkpoints.
- Any reasonable adjustments required (e.g., rest breaks, reduced timetable, access arrangements).
- Support for wellbeing and confidence building.
- Identified staff responsible for ongoing communication and review.

Reintegration will be gradual and flexible, reflecting the pupil's health and recovery.

The school will continue to monitor attendance, progress, and wellbeing for at least one half-term following full return.

Review and Escalation:

The SENCo and named staff member will review each ongoing case of health-related absence at least every half-term, in consultation with the LA and medical partners.

Where absence extends beyond one term, a case review meeting will take place to ensure provision remains appropriate and reintegration is planned.

Governors will receive anonymised termly reports summarising the number of pupils absent due to health needs, the nature of provision arranged, and reintegration outcomes.

Key Principles:

Absence due to health needs is treated as a shared responsibility between the pupil, family, school, LA, and healthcare professionals.

The school's focus is on continuity, communication, and compassion, ensuring that pupils with health conditions remain connected to education and supported to reintegrate as soon as they are able.

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS RETURNING TO SCHOOL

The school will work with all partners to:

- Develop an IHCP or PEP to meet needs.
- Make reasonable adjustments for access and participation.
- Maintain communication with families and education providers.
- Support continued inclusion in school life (e.g., online lessons, messages from peers).

Adaptations may include:

- Personalised or part-time timetable

- Online or blended learning access
- Additional in-school support
- Quiet/rest areas
- Adjusted exam arrangements where applicable

INFORMATION SHARING

It is essential that all information about pupils with health needs is kept up-to-date.

To protect confidentiality, all information-sharing techniques, e.g. staff notice boards, will be agreed with the pupil and their parents in advance of being used, in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

All teachers, TAs, supply and support staff will be provided with access to relevant information, including high-risk health needs, first aiders and emergency procedures, via a noticeboard in the staffroom.

Parents will be made aware of their own rights and responsibilities regarding confidentiality and information sharing. To help achieve this, the school will:

- ensure this policy and other relevant policies are easily available and accessible;
- provide the pupil and their parents with a copy of the policy on information sharing;
- ask parents to sign a consent form which clearly details the organisations and individuals that their child's health information will be shared with and which methods of sharing will be used;
- consider how friendship groups and peers may be able to assist pupils with health needs.

When a pupil is discharged from hospital or is returning from other education provision, the school will ensure the appropriate information is received to allow for a smooth return to the school. The named member of staff will liaise with the hospital or other tuition service as appropriate.

RECORD KEEPING

In accordance with the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, written records will be kept of all medicines administered to pupils.

Proper record keeping protects both staff and pupils and provides evidence that agreed procedures have been followed.

All records will be maintained in line with the Data Protection Policy and Data Disposal Appendix.

TRAINING

Staff will be trained in a timely manner to assist with a pupil's return to school.

Once a pupil's return date has been confirmed, staff will be provided with relevant training one week before the pupil's anticipated return.

Healthcare professionals should be involved in identifying and agree the school the type and level of training required.

Training will be sufficient to ensure staff are confident in their ability to support pupils with additional health needs.

Parents of pupils with additional health needs may provide specific advice but will not be the sole trainer of staff.

EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

The named member of staff will liaise with the alternative provision provider over planning and examination course requirements where appropriate.

Relevant assessment information will be provided to the alternative provision provider if required.

Awarding bodies may make special arrangements for pupils with permanent or long-term disabilities and learning difficulties, or temporary disabilities and illnesses.

Applications for such arrangements will be submitted by the school, or LA if more appropriate, as early as possible.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually by the governing board or earlier if national guidance changes.

Updates will be communicated to all staff and parents.

Effectiveness will be monitored through attendance data, pupil outcomes, and feedback from families and Wandsworth LA.