



Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and the Administration of Medicines in Schools

OVERVIEW

Support Staff are increasingly being required to support pupils with medical conditions and administer medicines in schools. Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on governing bodies of maintained schools, proprietors of academies and management committees of Pupil Referral Units to make arrangements for supporting pupils at their school with medical conditions.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced guidance 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' which sets out the responsibility Governing bodies have to ensure arrangements are in place to support pupils at school with medical conditions and how staff should be supported. All schools should have a policy in place which sets out who is responsible for ensuring that sufficient staff are suitably trained; a commitment that all relevant staff will be made aware of the child's condition; cover arrangements in case of staff absence or staff turnover to ensure someone is always available; risk assessments for school visits, holidays, and other school activities outside the normal timetable and monitoring of individual healthcare plans.

The guidance also states "Any member of school staff may be asked to provide support to pupils with medical conditions, including the administering of medicines, although they cannot be required to do so. School staff should receive sufficient and suitable training and achieve the necessary level of competency before they take on responsibility to support children with medical conditions. Any member of school staff should know what to do and respond accordingly when they become aware that a pupil with a medical condition needs help."

There is a responsibility for Governing bodies to "ensure that the school's policy sets out clearly how staff will be supported in carrying out their role to support pupils with medical conditions, and how this will be reviewed. This should specify how training needs are assessed, and how and by whom training will be commissioned and provided. The school's policy should be clear that any member of school staff providing support to a pupil with medical needs should have received suitable training.

Suitable training should be identified during the development or review of individual healthcare plans. Healthcare professionals should normally lead on identifying and agreeing with the school the type and level of training required, and how this can be obtained. Schools can choose to arrange training and need to ensure this remains up to date. Guidance states that training should be sufficient to ensure that staff are competent and have confidence in their ability to support pupils with medical conditions, and to fulfil the requirements as set out in individual healthcare plans. Staff need an understanding of the specific medical conditions they are being asked to deal with, their implications and preventative measures. **The DfE is clear that a first-aid certificate does not constitute appropriate training in supporting children with medical conditions.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. My job description does not detail health care or the administration of medicines, can it be changed?

A. Any changes to a job description should be done in full consultation with staff and Trade Unions to ensure there is not a fundamental change. If changes are being proposed, you may want to present a collective position to the Head Teacher in response and GMB can help you with this. DfE is clear that School Support Staff are not healthcare professionals although some support staff may have a specific duty to administer medicines as part of their contract.

Q. Should health care duties be in my job description?

A. There should be an explicit job description that sets out the main elements and competencies of the role being required, and it should be clear that the requirement only relates to delegated tasks relating to a named child in their care.

Q. Is supporting pupils' health care needs covered in the NJC School Support Staff role profiles for teaching and learning support roles?

A. No. Duties relating to supporting pupils with health care needs are not included in the profiles. The NJC recognises that many of these duties are carried out on a voluntary basis in different ways. Therefore, if this duty becomes a requirement of the job, as part of an agreement between employers and unions, it should be set out in the job description as an additional duty allowing it to be accounted for in the evaluation of the role (and therefore in remuneration as appropriate).

Q. I am happy to carry out duties relating to health and medicines- is this ok?

A. Any member of support staff who is willing to undertake such duties should ensure they are supported through training and competent to do so. There should be ongoing advice and support and it is paramount that any member feels confident to carry out their role safely.

Q. I do not want to be responsible for a pupil's medical care and/or administer medicines. What shall I do?

A. If this a new requirement to your role, GMB will support members who do not feel confident or comfortable administering medicines or who believe they are being pressured in to doing so.

Q. Does the Head Teacher decide if a member of staff is proficient in a medical procedure or in providing medication?

A. No. Healthcare professionals, including the school nurse, can provide confirmation of the proficiency of staff in a medical procedure, or in providing medication.

Q. Is this all that is required?

No. The school's policy should additionally set out arrangements for whole-school awareness training so that all staff are aware of the school's policy for supporting pupils with medical conditions and their role in implementing that policy. This extends to making sure new staff are briefed as part of induction. Healthcare professionals can advise on training that will help ensure that all medical conditions affecting pupils in the school are understood fully. This includes preventative and emergency measures so that staff can recognise and act quickly when a problem occurs.

Q. What about risk assessments?

A. When the decision is made to delegate a specific health care procedure, an assessment of the associated risks must be undertaken. This assessment will identify if the procedure can be undertaken by a support worker or whether it requires a registered nurse. Where the risk can be mitigated through appropriate training, the procedure may be delegated in partnership with the support worker's employer (school). The training package and competency assessment will be developed on an individual basis specific to the needs of the pupil.

Q. What health care needs could support staff be asked to support?

A. The most common medical conditions requiring support are asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and allergies and support with tracheostomy care, stoma care or enteral feeding.

Q. What clinical procedures should NOT be undertaken by unregistered health and non-health qualified carers?

A. According to The Royal College of Nursing 'Meeting Health Needs in Educational and other Community Settings', the following clinical procedures should not be carried out by unregistered and non-health qualified carers-

- Medicine not prescribed or included in the care plan.
- Assessment of care needs, planning a programme of care or evaluating outcomes of a programme of care.
- Re-insertion of a naso-gastric tube.
- Re-insertion of percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy tubes, balloon type gastrostomy tubes or low profile devices except as advised in an emergency.*
- Intramuscular or sub-cutaneous injections involving assembling syringe or intravenous administration.
- Programming of syringe drivers.
- Filling of oxygen cylinders.
- Laryngo Pharyngeal (Nasal or Oral) suctioning into the pharynx past the epiglottis but above the vocal cords, this should be carried out by a registered nurse due to the risk of laryngeal spasm
- Siting of indwelling catheters.
- Ventilation care for an unstable and unpredictable child.