



Minor Illness and School Attendance

A Guide for Parents and Carers to Support Attendance in Schools

When should I keep my child off school?

Your child should only be kept away from school due to illness if they:

1. Have an infectious illness which could spread
2. Need care during school hours that cannot be carried out in school
3. Are so unwell that they are not able to cope with lessons

The NHS website has useful advice here: www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school

If you are not sure, check the guidance in this leaflet.

If you are still unsure, contact:

- * Your school
- * The school nurses
- * A pharmacist or GP

Medical appointments

Please arrange doctors, dentists, and opticians' appointments outside school hours. If this is not possible, your child should attend school for the rest of the day.

INTRODUCTION

As a parent, it can be difficult to decide whether your child is well enough to go to school.

To help avoid unnecessary school absences, in line with NHS School Nursing Guidance, Windhill21 has produced this leaflet as a general guide to help you decide whether your child is well enough to attend school when they have a minor illness.

Missing lessons is upsetting for children and disruptive for the whole class and there is good evidence that children achieve better at school when they have good school attendance rates.

Parents have a duty to ensure their child is not absent where this can be avoided. Schools may not authorise your child's absence for a minor illness if they thought it was not necessary.

Punctuality

Establishing good habits is important. Ensure that your child goes to bed early, because a lack of sleep will affect their ability to function in the morning, which may lead to lateness.

Long term illness

If your child has a long-term illness, you should discuss this with your doctor and the school. Usually, it is possible to arrange medication so that it is not taken during school hours. School staff may need to be made aware of the illness so that if it causes problems while your child is at school, they know how to help.

MINOR ILLNESSES

Raised temperature (fever)

If your child is shivery or feels hot, they may have a raised temperature. This may be due to a variety of reasons. If your child has a raised temperature (over 38°C), they should not be in school.

Medicines in school

Your child does not need to be kept at home just because they are taking medicines. If your child needs to take medicine during the school day, please talk to the school staff about this.

How can you help?

Please make sure that the telephone contact details the school has are up to date. It is important that the school can contact you during the day if your child is not well enough to stay in school. If you do need to keep your child off school, you should always contact the school in the morning to let them know why your child will not be coming to school.

Many children experience common illnesses from time to time. Most of these illnesses do not need a prescription or a visit to your doctor and do not need time away from school. Often treating your child's illness, yourself, or with advice and medicines from your pharmacist, can be the quickest and easiest way to deal with it.

Please remember that early morning aches and pains often pass, so do not keep your child at home 'just in case' when they could be learning in class. When you send your child to school with minor aches or pains, tell the school staff and they will phone you if your child continues to have symptoms.

Health tips

To ensure that your child is happy, healthy, and able to participate fully in school activities, your child should:

- Be registered with a GP and a dentist
- Have regular checks with their dentist and optician
- Have all the childhood immunisations recommended by the Department of Health
- Have a healthy diet and exercise

It is important to measure the temperature accurately with a digital thermometer, which you can buy from a supermarket or pharmacy. Please follow the instructions for use carefully. Your child should be able to return to school once they feel and look better. For further information please visit: www.nhs.uk/conditions/fever-in-children

Rashes

A rash could be one of the first signs of many childhood illnesses, such as chickenpox or measles. The rash or 'spots' may cover the entire body or may only appear in one area. If your child has an unexplained rash, please seek medical advice. Do not send a child to school with an unexplained rash that may be infectious, until you have consulted your doctor. For further information please visit: www.nhs.uk/conditions/rashes-babies-and-children

Colds and coughs

Children can attend school with a mild cold and cough. If your child has asthma, remember they may need their reliever inhaler more often. They should have a spare inhaler and spacer which they can use when they are at school. Occasionally coughs can be persistent and last for weeks. Children with bad or long-lasting coughs need to see their GP. Once treated, or when the cough is improving and the child is feeling better, they need to return to school.

Headache

If the only complaint is a slight headache, your child will not usually need to be kept at home. If a headache is persistent and not responding to pain relief, contact your GP.

Tummy ache

If your child complains of mild tummy ache and has no other symptoms, they should go to school. If the tummy ache is associated with vomiting/diarrhea, then your child must stay off school until the symptoms have stopped.

When a parent or sibling is ill

You should make other arrangements to get any well children to school. Family or sibling illness is not considered a good enough reason for children to be absent from school. Developing good family or parent networks can be helpful, **as schools will not usually authorise absence due to parental or sibling illness.**

Please discuss any difficulties with the school, as they may be able to offer support. Any continued absence may be referred to the local authority for consideration.

- Get enough sleep by going to bed on time

Speak to school staff or the school nurse if you have any concerns about your child.