



The Cowplain School

Work Hard. Enjoy Learning. Achieve Highly.

Medical Policy for Children unable to attend School

Approved: Summer 2026

Review date: Summer 2028

1 Rationale

The Cowplain School is committed to ensuring that all students receive a full-time education and attend school regularly. The school maintains a strong presumption that children are medically able to attend school unless there is clear, substantive evidence from an appropriate medical specialist that attendance is not possible.

The school recognises that a very small number of children may experience significant medical conditions which temporarily prevent them from accessing education in school. However, absence from school due to medical needs will only be considered appropriate in the most exceptional circumstances.

The school believes that attendance at school is usually in the best interests of children's educational progress, wellbeing, social development and long-term outcomes. Wherever possible, support and reasonable adjustments will be implemented to enable students to remain in school, even where they are experiencing medical, emotional or mental health difficulties. The school will not routinely accept letters, notes or recommendations from GPs, duty clinicians or other non-specialist professionals stating that a child is "unable to attend school" or should be "signed off" from education. The school expects medical evidence to clearly explain:

- the diagnosed condition;
- how the condition specifically prevents attendance at school;
- what treatment is being provided;
- what reasonable adjustments are recommended to facilitate attendance; and
- a clear review date and reintegration plan.

Evidence from consultants, paediatricians, CAMHS specialists or other relevant NHS specialists may be requested where appropriate.

The school will continue to work closely with Hampshire County Council Inclusion Support Service, healthcare professionals and families. However, the expectation will remain that students attend school wherever possible, including through phased timetables, supported placements, alternative in-school provision, pastoral support or reasonable adjustments. The school recognises that emotionally based school avoidance, anxiety and emotional difficulties are best addressed through attendance, structured support and gradual reintegration rather than prolonged absence from education. The presence of anxiety or emotional distress does not automatically mean that a child is medically unfit to attend school.

1.2 Objectives

- To arrange suitable education for students on roll who cannot attend The Cowplain School due to health needs
- To ensure students, staff and parents understand what the school is responsible for when this education is being provided by Hampshire County Council Inclusion Support Service (the local authority)

2. Legal framework

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

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- DfE (2013) 'Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs'
- DfE (2015) 'Supporting students at school with medical conditions'

3. Definitions

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

- Physical health issues
- Physical injuries
- Significant mental health conditions supported by specialist involvement
- 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 service that acts as a communication channel between schools and students on occasions where students are too ill to attend school and are receiving specialist medical treatment.
- Medical PRUs: these are LA establishments that provide education for children unable to attend their registered school due to their medical needs.

4. The responsibilities of the school

4.1 If the school makes arrangements

The school will apply a high threshold before agreeing that a student is medically unable to attend school. The school will expect students to attend, with reasonable adjustments where appropriate, unless there is compelling evidence that attendance is not possible. In most cases, the school will implement support and reasonable adjustments designed to secure and improve attendance rather than authorise prolonged absence. In doing so, the school will consider each case individually and proportionately, taking account of medical advice, safeguarding responsibilities and the individual needs of the child.

The school will not normally regard parental opinion, GP letters, duty clinician notes or generic medical statements as sufficient evidence, in isolation, that a child cannot attend school. The school may request additional evidence from specialist medical professionals, which must normally be recent and relevant to the child's current presentation. The school reserves the right to challenge advice that is inconsistent with Department for Education guidance or with the school's professional judgement regarding attendance, education and reasonable adjustment obligations.

Where appropriate, the school may:

- require attendance at reintegration meetings;
- implement reduced or supported timetables;
- provide in-school pastoral or SEND support;
- use alternative in-school provision;
- refer to external agencies; and/or
- pursue legal attendance interventions where attendance concerns persist without sufficient evidence.

Arrangements will be coordinated and monitored by the Attendance Manager, the appropriate Head of Year and AHT responsible for Inclusion, with work being set by the class teacher. In most instances, work will be made available via EdClass and/or other online learning tools and platforms (see Remote Learning Policy).

Parents will be contacted by email and/or telephone as appropriate to make arrangements. If the child is under the care of a hospital and attending provision through a hospital school, the school will liaise directly with tutors via email.

Reintegration to full-time education will begin at the earliest appropriate opportunity. The school will expect all students to engage with reintegration plans and reasonable adjustments. Reintegration meetings will be held with parents and students, and clear attendance expectations and timelines will be established.

Where attendance is not achieved despite support and reasonable adjustments, the school will consider whether absences should be authorised in line with statutory guidance and may pursue formal attendance procedures where appropriate.

Waiting for assessment, diagnosis or therapeutic intervention will not, in itself, be regarded as sufficient reason for prolonged absence from school.

4.2 If the local authority makes arrangements

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

In cases where the local authority makes arrangements, the school will:

- Work constructively with the local authority, providers, relevant agencies and parents to ensure the best outcomes for the student
- Share information with the local authority and relevant health services as required
- Help make sure that the provision offered to the student is as effective as possible and that the child can be reintegrated back into school successfully

The involvement of the local authority or other agencies does not remove the expectation that students should return to school as soon as possible. The school will continue to monitor attendance closely and may challenge recommendations which unnecessarily prevent reintegration into education.

5. Links to other policies

Accessibility plan
Attendance Policy
Supporting students with medical conditions
Remote Learning Policy

6. Hampshire County Council Inclusion Support Service (ISS)

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By post

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Children's Services Department
Hampshire County Council
Elizabeth II Court North
The Castle
Winchester
SO23 8UG

7. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The policy is monitored by Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team. The effectiveness of the policy (against the Objectives) will be reviewed by Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team every 2 years.

Date Reviewed and approved:	Summer 2026	Reviewed by:	JPS	Next Review:	Summer 2028
Summary of changes made:	Rewrite of sections 1, 3 and 4				
Approved by Academy Trustees on:	7 th July 2026				