



St. Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy



Children with Health Needs that Cannot Attend School Policy 2025-26

Policy updated: September 2025

Policy Review: September 2026

Signed

by:

M. A. Galbraith

M. Galbraith: Chair of Governors



Children with Health Needs

That Cannot Attend School Policy

September 2025

Content:

1. Aims
2. Legislation and guidance
3. The responsibilities of the school
 - 3.1 If the school makes arrangements
 - 3.2 If the Local Authority makes arrangements
 - 3.3 The Governing Board and Head Teacher are responsible for
 - 3.4 The SENDCO is responsible for
 - 3.5 Teachers and Support Staff are responsible for
4. Absences
5. Support for pupils
6. Monitoring arrangements
7. Definitions
8. Links to other policies



1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Suitable education is arranged for pupils on roll who cannot attend school due to health needs; Pupils, staff and parents understand what the school is responsible for when this education is being provided by the local authority.

St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy aims to ensure that all children who are unable to attend school due to medical needs, and who would not receive suitable education without such provision, continue to have access to as much education as their medical condition allows, to enable them to reach their full potential.

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 in school and will work with the LA, healthcare partners and families to ensure that all children with medical needs receive the right level of support to enable them to maintain links with their education.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, 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 pupils at school with medical conditions'.
- DfE (2023) 'Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.'

3. The responsibilities of the school

3.1 If the school makes arrangements

Initially, the school will attempt to make arrangements to deliver suitable education for children with health needs who cannot attend school.

The Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral), Director of Student Support and SENDCO will be responsible for making and monitoring these arrangements. A meeting will be made with parents / carers to discuss arrangements for working from home or hospital. A plan will be drawn up detailing agreed actions from the discussion, the plan will be signed by school and parents / carers. The plan will then be carried out to deliver education to the child.

Arrangements could include sending work home, attending a hospital school or making an application for a home tutor where appropriate.

The pupil will be slowly integrated back into school with either alternative arrangements to make it possible such as alternative provision for break or lunch times or the pupil may come back into school on a reduced timetable until their health needs have been met.

3.2 Responsibilities of the LA

Please see Together for Children LA policy – Appendix 1



3.3 The Governing Board and Head Teacher are responsible for:

- Ensuring arrangements for pupils who cannot attend school as a result of their medical needs are in place and are effectively implemented.
- Ensuring the termly review of the arrangements made for pupils who cannot attend school due to their medical needs.
- Ensuring the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the arrangements to support the needs of pupils are clear and understood by all.
- Ensuring robust systems are in place for dealing with health emergencies and critical incidents, for both on- and off-site activities.
- Ensuring staff with responsibility for supporting pupils with health needs are appropriately trained.
- Appointing a named member of staff who is responsible for pupils with healthcare needs and liaises with parents, pupils, the LA, key workers and others involved in the pupil's care.
- 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.
- Notifying the LA when a pupil is likely to be away from the school for a significant period of time due to their health needs.

3.4 The SENDCO is responsible for:

- Dealing with pupils who are unable to attend school because of medical needs.
- Working alongside Pastoral Teams and the Director of Pupil Support to actively monitor pupil progress and reintegration into school.
- Supplying pupils' education providers with information about the child's capabilities, progress and outcomes.
- Liaising with the Headteacher, education providers and parents to determine pupils' programmes of study whilst they are absent from school.

3.5 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.

4. Absences

- Parents are advised to contact the school on the first day their child is unable to attend due to illness.
- Absences due to illness will be authorised unless the school has genuine cause for concern about the authenticity of the illness.
- School may request medical evidence to support long term absences
- School may refer to the school's attendance officer to complete a home visit to support families when a child is unable to attend school



5. Support for pupils

- Where a pupil has a complex or long-term health issue, the school will discuss the pupil's needs and how these may be best met with the LA, relevant medical professionals, parents and, where appropriate, the pupil. The LA expects the school to support pupils with health needs to attend full-time education wherever possible, or for the school to make reasonable adjustments to pupils' programmes of study where medical evidence supports the need for those adjustments.
- The school will make reasonable adjustments under pupils' individual healthcare plans, in accordance with the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.
- Pupils admitted to hospital will receive education as determined appropriate by the medical professionals and hospital tuition team at the hospital concerned.
- During a period of absence, the school will work with the provider of the pupil's education to establish and maintain regular communication and effective outcomes.
- Whilst a pupil is away from school, the school will work with the LA to ensure the pupil can successfully remain in touch with their school using the following methods: School newsletters, Emails, Invitations to school events, cards or letters from peers and staff.
- Where appropriate, the school will provide the pupil's education provider with relevant information, curriculum materials and resources.

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 named staff member
- Access to additional support in school
- Movement of lessons to more accessible rooms
- Places to rest at school
- Special exam arrangements to manage anxiety or fatigue (with a paediatrician letter of support).



6. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the SENDCO. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

Any changes in the policy will be clearly communicated to all members of staff involved in supporting pupils with additional health needs, and to parents and pupils themselves.

7. 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 difficulties where a student is being supported by a mental health professional or paediatrician.
- Progressive conditions.
- Terminal illnesses.
- Are receiving specialist medical treatment.

Chronic illnesses.

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

- Hospital school/tuition: a special school within a hospital setting where education is provided to give continuity whilst the child is receiving treatment
- Home tuition: many LAs have home tuition services that act as a communication channel between schools and pupils on occasions

8. Links to other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Accessibility plan
- Attendance policy
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) policy
- Supporting pupils with medical needs policy.



Appendix 1

[Additional health needs guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Sunderland Virtual School

Policy for Pupils with Medical Needs

June 2022

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the Sunderland Local Authority standards for the education of children who are unable to attend school because of medical needs. The Authority recognises that all children and young people are entitled to an education of high quality and is committed to ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable groups of learners are met.

Provision for pupils who are physically ill, injured or who have mental health problems is the responsibility of all schools and services.

Sunderland Virtual School

Sunderland Virtual School is part of Children's Services, Sunderland City Council. It provides a Tuition Service for pupils whose physical or mental ill-health prevents their attendance at school and for pupils receiving medical treatment in hospital.

The Statutory Framework

In 2013, the Department for Education published statutory guidance for local authorities entitled 'Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs'. This publication provides comprehensive guidance to Local Authorities and related services on national standards for the education of pupils unable to attend school because of medical needs. The roles and responsibilities including those of the Local Authority and school are outlined in detail. Sunderland Local Authority has full regard to this statutory guidance and this policy should be read alongside this guidance.

There is a requirement that each Local Authority publishes a policy detailing standards, procedures and responsibilities for those pupils unable to attend school due to medical needs. In line with Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 we have a duty to:

"make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them".

In this context 'suitable education' is defined as: *"efficient education suitable to the age, ability, aptitude and to any special needs the child (or young person) may have".*



This policy is based on the understanding that there is a shared responsibility between the Local Authority, schools and partner agencies to successfully implement this policy. It is centred on high quality integrated service provision in order to promote better outcomes for potentially vulnerable children and young people.

2 Aims

The primary aim of the policy is to minimise, as far as possible, the interruption and disruption to a child's education caused by their medical condition and enable the child to continue to have access to as much education as their medical condition allows so that they are able to maintain the continuity of their education.

This policy covers all pupils who reside in Sunderland who are of compulsory school age, on the roll of a school who are unable to attend due to:

- physical health problems
- physical injuries
- recovery from medical intervention
- mental health illness

The policy also applies to those children in hospital from Sunderland and other Local Authorities.

Sunderland Virtual School aims to maximise the life chances of pupils with medical needs by:

- working in partnership with pupils, parents and carers, school and health and other professionals.
- ensuring that children and young people with diagnosed medical needs have access to as much high quality education as soon as possible and as their condition allows
- providing education that is flexible and sensitive to the changing needs of pupils
- supporting the reintegration of children and young people back into full-time mainstream or special education at the earliest opportunity
- providing a flexible and responsive service that meets the educational needs of children and young people with medical conditions that prevent them from attending school
- ensuring continuity of education, including access to public examinations
- contributing to recovery by providing a secure and stimulating experience and a sense of normality



3 The Personalised Education Plan (PEP)

Schools should liaise with Sunderland Virtual School - Tuition Service to draw up a PEP (Personalised Education Plan) to cover the complete education package of a pupil who is likely to require tuition for more than 10 working days and pupils with chronic illnesses who regularly miss school; this plan should then be agreed with appropriate health service personnel.

The Personalised Education Plan outlines:

- pupil details
- school details and contact person
- curriculum details and resources
- partnership agreement
- start and re-integration dates
- plan for re-integration
- dates of review meetings
- venue for tuition – hospital or home; in all cases where tuition is provided in the home, a responsible adult member of the family must be present
- approximate duration of the tuition
- contributions from other agencies as part of the integrated support to be provided for the pupil.

4 The Responsibilities of the School

The pupil remains the responsibility of the school where they are on the roll, and schools have a vital part to play in ensuring that pupils who are absent from school because of their medical needs have the educational support they need to maintain their education.

Schools must not remove a pupil from school roll, even during a long period of ill health, unless the school medical officer certifies that s/he will be unlikely to be well enough to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age. The school will retain the funding for the pupil while on their roll.

The school must ensure that:

- there is a designated member of teaching staff responsible for dealing with pupils who are unable to attend school because of medical needs
- the designated teacher informs parents/carers that other professionals are being consulted about their child's absence from school
- the designated teacher takes responsibility for submitting a Referral Form for Pupils with Medical Needs to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel along **with supporting medical evidence** for consideration by the Panel for the Tuition Service
- there is close collaboration with the Attendance Team in establishing the status of the absence and that this information is shared with all relevant agencies



- staff are active in **maintaining weekly contact** with the family and monitoring of progress of the pupil during absence from school, liaising regularly with other agencies and are responsible for the pupil's reintegration
- staff ensure that where appropriate (mental health, medical and or Physical) **the child is on the SEND register and that their needs are Ranged accordingly** and specifically for SEMH and/or Physical
- suitable programmes of work are readily available to pupils receiving Home tuition/Hospital tuition, and that these are consistent with what the pupil would be studying while at school
- target and current levels/grades are provided for each subject
- appropriate resources and materials are provided to support the pupil's education
- there is a written policy in place and procedures for dealing with the education of pupils with medical needs, which should be reviewed annually
- pupils absent from school because of medical needs are kept informed about school social events and that they are able to participate as fully as possible in the life of the school, for example in homework clubs, study support, liaising with peers as appropriate
- pupils are prepared for, and entered for, public examinations/national tests and that they meet all the fees associated with this process
- staff maintain contact with the pupil and their family, keeping them informed of all the issues associated with their education
- staff participate in planning and review meetings, especially with regard to the arrangements for reintegration at school
- staff are flexible and supportive when a pupil is returning to school and fully support the reintegration

5 The Responsibilities of Together For Children (Sunderland LA)

The Local Authority (LA) is responsible for ensuring that children and young people with medical needs are able to access suitable education. This includes developing and implementing policy, which secures individual entitlement. **The key to successful implementation is partnership** and the LA holds a pivotal role in initiating, developing and sustaining those partnerships, which are necessary to provide suitable, high-quality education to pupils with medical needs.



The LA will ensure that:

- there is a named officer with responsibility for the provision of education for children and young people who are unable to attend school because of medical needs

Helen Whewell - Tuition Service Lead

helen.whewell@togetherforchildren.org.uk

07920835074

- pupils absent from school for more than 15 days for medical reasons will receive suitable education
- pupils whose diagnosed medical condition indicates prolonged or recurring absence from school have access to education from day one of each absence where possible
- current and target levels/grades are used as part of the monitoring progress
- a Personalised Education Plan is central to integrated provision
- accurate attendance records are maintained and regular reports are provided on the pupil's progress
- a named contact for parents/carers is provided
- up to 5 hours tuition is provided each week of term as a minimum entitlement, ensuring that planning is appropriately informed by medical advice and that the pupil can cope with the educational programme offered
- integrated working is promoted, with clear lines of communication, ensuring appropriate liaison with medical professionals, including where appropriate, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), relevant staff in the pupil's school, attendance team, educational psychologists and any other professional parties involved
- Tuition Service Tutors receive appropriate professional support via in-service training and performance management in order to sustain the quality of the teaching and learning
- the Tuition Service is monitored and evaluated to ensure that the needs of the pupils are met, that the service is cost effective and that all relevant statutory requirements and guidance is adhered to
- pupils have access to an effective broad and balanced education tailored to their individual needs and those pupils make progress by continued liaison with the home, school and other agencies where relevant
- there is liaison with the school to plan a personalised reintegration plan that meets multiagency approval for each pupil before returning to school
- medical advice is sought and acted upon



- clear procedures are in place for ensuring the early and accurate identification of pupils who may require access to Sunderland LA Evolve, with access to specialist mental health services where necessary
- education begins as soon as possible
- continuity in education is supported, including promoting access to school activities and events

Specialist Teachers

- Specialist teachers provide a range of curricular expertise as well as specialist knowledge in teaching strategies for pupils with medical needs.
- All teaching staff are subject to Enhanced CRB checks.
- All teaching staff are required to complete safeguarding training.
- Teaching and learning is monitored regularly by the Headteacher of Sunderland Virtual School.
- All teachers are subject to performance management; specific training needs are identified as a part of this process and all teachers attend integrated training programmes.
- All teachers have half termly 1-1 Supervision meetings with the Headteacher of Sunderland Virtual School.
- For quality assurance purposes, feedback is an integral part of monitoring, evaluation and review.

6 Vulnerable Pupils Panel

The Vulnerable Pupils Panel is the gateway for the alternative provision services provided by Together for Children. It meets on a fortnightly basis and its members include senior personnel from Together For Children, Children's Services, and School Leaders/Managers.

7 Home Tuition

Home Tuition is a service delivered by Sunderland Virtual School – Tuition Service for children and young people of compulsory school age who are unable to attend their usual school for reasons of medical conditions, illness or if a child has been discharged from hospital and requires a period of convalescence.

Pupils who are unable to attend school for a period of 15 working days or more because of medical needs will have access to tuition in the home.



Referrals must be authorised by an appropriate member of a health trust at a level of a senior clinical medical officer, or a consultant paediatrician. **General Practitioners cannot authorise requests for tuition in the home.**

The pupil will have access to education, as far as possible, from day one of their absence from school. However, re-referrals to the service may be required for prolonged or recurring absences.

In the absence of commissioned places within the Local Authority, schools may be requested to fund tuition, provided externally by the Virtual School, in the short term.

It is essential that effective and efficient links exist among parents/carers, the Tuition Service and schools to ensure the continuity of work.

Reintegration into school, on a gradual basis and with input from all relevant agencies, is facilitated as soon as a child becomes well enough to attend school.

7.1 Referral Procedure for Home Tuition

The Designated Teacher in school should complete the Referral Form for Pupils with Medical Needs and send it to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel, **together with the appropriate medical evidence from the consultant paediatrician/senior medical officer.**

The duration of the tuition programme for individual pupils is allocated according to their needs – up to 5 hours per week, depending on the individual pupil's medical condition.

The pupil is also allocated a set number of weeks of tuition based on the duration of the illness as indicated by the school's Designated Teacher or Medical Officer.

Following a decision by the Vulnerable Pupils Panel to provide tuition, schools and parents/carers will be notified. A Home Tutor will then contact the school and parents/carers to arrange an initial meeting to complete the Personalised Education Plan. The school is required to provide a plan for the reintegration of the pupil as part of the Personalised Education Plan, to be implemented as soon as the child becomes well enough to attend school.

The Designated Teacher may delegate the responsibility to another member of staff, referred to as the 'Named Person'.

If the parents/carers are not able to attend the PEP meeting, an introductory meeting with the pupil, Home Tutor and Named Contact Person from the school will be arranged at the pupil's home prior to tuition commencing.



8 Hospital Tuition

Any child or young person of compulsory school age who is admitted to hospital will be educated from day one if appropriate, and if not from day one, when they are well enough, if they meet the following criteria:

- in hospital for 5 school days or more
- illness is for 15 days or more and includes a stay in hospital
- frequent and/or recurrent admissions to hospital for regular treatment

For continuity, the hospital tutor will continue to tutor the pupil during convalescence at home.

Teaching is usually provided on the ward and in the day room depending on the child's medical condition.

When the pupil is discharged from hospital, support ceases if the pupil is well enough to return to school immediately or if the pupil attends a school in another LA.

For pupils who attend hospitals outside of Sunderland LA, schools can submit a Referral Form for Pupils with Medical Needs to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel and Sunderland Virtual School will contact the hospital to arrange tuition.

8.1. Referral Procedure for Hospital Tuition

To access hospital education, the named person at the child's school or the designated member of the hospital staff can complete and submit a Tuition Referral Form for Pupils with Medical Needs to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel, indicating when the pupil will be in hospital.

In cases where the child or young person has been admitted to hospital without the submission of a Tuition Referral Form to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel, or the patient is not a Sunderland resident, the Ward Manager will submit a Hospital Tuition Referral Form for Pupils with Medical Needs to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel.

The Vulnerable Pupils Panel will log the request and pass the referral immediately to the Headteacher of Sunderland Virtual School.

Sunderland Virtual School – Tuition Service will immediately arrange for a Tutor to contact the Ward Manager, the pupil's school and the parents/carers of the child to complete a PEP as soon as possible.

A set number of hours and weeks of provision will be allocated depending on the advice of the Ward Manager.

For pupils from other Local Authorities, Hospital Tutors will liaise with the pupil's school, parents/carers and their Local Authority Service for Pupils with Medical Needs to ensure that all educational information is shared.



In cases where the child is a resident of Sunderland and will require home tuition following their hospital stay, this will continue for the duration indicated by the Hospital Tuition Referral Form, otherwise a re-referral is made to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel.

No tutor is allowed to teach a pupil without a Hospital Tuition Referral Form for Pupils with Medical Needs having been submitted to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel.

9. High Quality Provision

All pupils who access Sunderland Virtual School Tuition Service will receive an effective education, tailored to meet individual needs, of similar quality to that available to pupils in schools. Good teaching and effective teaching methods are essential in achieving higher standards. Sunderland Virtual School is committed to continuing professional development for teachers of pupils with medical needs. This includes:

- continuous updates on curriculum developments at all key stages
- knowledge of a range of medical conditions and the impact of the condition on the child and family
- expertise in setting realistic yet challenging goals for pupils in different circumstances
- opportunities for shared training with health and social care professionals in order to facilitate multi-disciplinary intervention
- a commitment to sustained investment and ongoing professional development as part of performance management

10. Partnerships and Collaboration with other Agencies

Successful partnership working and collaboration between the LA, schools, families, education services, health professionals and all agencies involved with a child or young person is essential to support the educational progress and emotional and physical well-being of pupils with medical needs and successful reintegration into school.

Effective collaboration that prioritises the pupil's needs will ensure that on re-entry to school there will be realistic expectations and goals which are attainable for the pupil within their current context, resulting in a confident pupil who can re-engage and learn with their peers. Forward planning and effective collaboration with relevant agencies can facilitate a successful reintegration to school.

Sunderland Virtual School links with Children's Services of other Local Authorities to ensure relevant information is shared and to recoup the cost of providing education for pupils from other Local Authorities during their period in Sunderland Royal Hospital.



11. Partnership with parents/carers and pupils

Parents/carers hold key information and knowledge; they are considered to be collaborative partners in their child's educational programme and performance, as is the views and contribution of the pupil. The LA has a duty to ensure all parents/carers are consulted before teaching begins either in the home or in the hospital.

Wherever possible, parents/carers are informed about the education available before a child is admitted to hospital. Leaflets are available in Sunderland Royal Hospital and schools which provide information on the education of pupils with medical needs.

Parents'/carers' views of their child's education are taken fully into account when planning programmes. This includes the Personalised Education Plan and Reintegration Plan. The positive involvement of parents/carers with the school and other professionals provides reassurance for the child, teachers and for parents/carers themselves.

In the case of a child or young person in care, the Local Authority, as the Corporate Parent, is responsible for safeguarding and promoting their welfare and education.

12. Health and Safety

Sunderland Virtual School - Tuition Service complies with the LA Safeguarding Children and Young People and Health and Safety policies and procedures and training for staff.

The Tuition Service Lead is the Designated Person for Safeguarding and there are a number of Deputy Safeguarding Leads in the Virtual School.

There is a policy with safeguarding guidance for Home Tutors and Others who are Lone Working.

13. Withdrawal of Provision

Tuition will be withdrawn if one or more of the following applies:

- The pupil's re-integration and return to school is successful.
- The pupil fails to attend tuition on a regular basis without producing an appropriate medical certificate or having a valid reason for absence.
- The pupil consistently ceases to follow a therapeutic programme recommended by health professionals as part of a rehabilitation or reintegration plan. In this case, a report should be submitted to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel.

Anyone wishing to appeal against a decision to withdraw provision should submit an appeal report to the Vulnerable Pupils Panel.