

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ATTENDANCE AWARDS HELP FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS

You may find the following information helpful in conversations with your child's school related to attendance and attendance reward schemes:

What you need to know:

1. It is not generally acceptable for schools to penalise children for their attendance if absences are related to a medical condition that the school has been notified about.
2. Schools are required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled children, including those with medical conditions, are not placed at a disadvantage compared to other pupils. If attendance awards are issued, reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure pupils with medical conditions are not disadvantaged.
3. Legally, all schools in England should now have a policy on supporting pupils with medical conditions.

Questions you can ask your child's school and ways to open the conversation:

- Please can I see a copy of the school's medical conditions policy?
- Does the school's medical conditions policy cover attendance?
- Please can I request a meeting to update my child's individual healthcare plan (or to put one in place if child does not have one). I would like to include the issue of attendance and to put in place measures to ensure that my child is not penalised for absences because of their medical condition.
- I would like to discuss how attendance rewards at this school can be reasonably adjusted to take my child's medical condition into account.

Where this information comes from:

Children and Families' Act 2014 (Section 100)

- This places a duty on governing bodies "to make arrangements for supporting pupils at their school with medical conditions"

Department for Education document 'Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions' (page 23)

- contains the advice "it is not generally acceptable practice...to penalise children for their attendance record if their absences are related to their medical condition e.g. hospital appointments."

Equality Act 2010

- Says that schools "**must** make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled children and young people are not at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers. This duty is anticipatory: adjustments must be planned and put in place in advance, to prevent that disadvantage.

Useful online references for parents:

Department for Education guidance relating to pupils with medical needs, including school attendance guidance:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

Advice from Health Conditions in Schools Alliance

- <http://medicalconditionsatschool.org.uk>

Advice from charity Child Law

- <https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/education-for-children-out-of-school/>
- <https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/supporting-children-with-medical-needs-in-schools/>

New NASEN guide for schools

- <http://www.nasen.org.uk/resources/resources.children-with-medical-needs-what-schools-and-settings-need-to-know.html>

Parents Union

- <http://www.theparentsunion.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/statement-for-schools-nov-17.pdf>

You can also call the advice line here: <https://www.ipsea.org.uk> (for information and advice on disability and SEN) or contact your local IAS service <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/information-advice-and-support-services-network>