



Consortium of Local Medical Committees

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Chief Executive & Secretary: Peter Higgins

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To: All School Head Teachers in the Lancashire County Council Area

Dear Head Teacher

Requests for medical evidence to support authorised absence due to illness

It is the responsibility of schools (not parents) to decide whether a pupil absence should be marked as authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

The Department for Education guidance explains that it is a matter for schools to determine if they require evidence to support the authorisation of an absence in the form of a prescription or appointment card. The guidance relating to the marking of registers for illness and medical appointments states:

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments):

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

GPs do not provide sick notes for children to excuse absence from school. When children are absent from school owing to illness, schools may request a letter from a parent or guardian. Where this includes sickness during an exam period, or if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, schools could request that parents provide medical evidence (not a doctor's sick note) as per the DfE guidance above. GPs cannot provide retrospective sickness certification. When a child is absent due to a long-

term medical condition, any certification will be provided by the responsible specialist. In such circumstances, school must consider if it can meet the child's health needs and enable the child to continue to access education and return to school. If this is not possible, a referral to the Local Authority's Alternative Provision Service may be required.

It is estimated that a potential 47,000 appointments could be saved by correcting misconceptions on the role of GPs in issuing sickness certification and GPs should not be asked for appointments for children that do not need to see the doctor.

When a pupil has excessive absence due to illness and the school has concerns, including concerns about appropriate sickness certification, they should contact their school nurse for assistance and support for the pupil. LCC School Attendance Consultants can offer advice on managing long-term absence, if required (see link below for contact details).

Yours faithfully



Mr P Higgins
Chief Executive
Consortium of Local Medical Committees



Julie Lloyd
Thematic Lead for Attendance
School Improvement
Lancashire County Council

Your School Attendance Consultant's contact information can be found on the Lancashire County Council Schools' Portal:

https://schoolsportal.lancsngfl.ac.uk/view_sp.asp?siteid=5049&pageid=26126