



Lancashire & Cumbria Consortium of Local Medical Committees

449-451 Garstang Road (Ambulance Service HQ), Broughton, Preston, PR3 5LN

enquiries@nwlmc.org

01772 863806

March 2025

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 which is said by parents to be due to illness.

[Working Together to Improve School Attendance - August 2024](#) states the following in relation to the marking of registers for illness and medical appointments:

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

362. The pupil is unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related). Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness.

363. Schools are not expected to routinely request that parents provide medical evidence to support illness absences. Schools should only request reasonable medical evidence in cases where they need clarification to accurately record absence in the attendance register – i.e. making a decision that code I is the absence code that accurately describes the reason the pupil is not in school for the session in question. In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend school will be that evidence and can be accepted without

question or concern. Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence.

364. Where medical evidence is deemed necessary, school should not be rigid about the form of evidence requested and should speak to the family about what evidence is available. Schools should be mindful that requesting additional medical evidence unnecessarily places pressure on health professionals, their staff and their appointment system, particularly if the illness is one that does not require treatment by a health professional. Where a parent cannot provide evidence in the form requested but can provide other evidence, schools should take this into account. Where a parent cannot provide any written evidence the school should have a conversation with the parent and pupil, if appropriate, which may in itself serve as the necessary evidence to record the absence.

GPs do not provide fit notes for children to excuse absence from school and cannot provide retrospective certification. When children are absent from school owing to illness, schools may request a letter or evidence from a parent or guardian if they feel that this is needed to provide clarity around the situation. This is often easily accessible via online access to medical records. 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 fit note) as per the DfE guidance above.

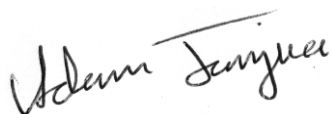
Many thousands of appointments could be saved by correcting misconceptions on the role of GPs in issuing sickness certification and GPs should not be asked for appointments for children that do not need to see the doctor.

When a child is absent due to a long-term medical condition, any certification will be provided by the responsible specialist. In such circumstances, schools 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.

When a pupil has excessive absence due to illness and the school has concerns, including concerns about appropriate sickness certification, they can request School Health input. This can be done by completing the referral form and will require parental consent.

Schools can also discuss any concerns with their LCC School Attendance Support Worker (see overleaf) who can offer advice on managing long-term absence, if required and can raise concerns regarding sickness certification which has been received with the relevant bodies.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam Janjua". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the top of the 'A'.

Dr Adam Janjua
Chief Executive
Consortium of Local Medical Committees

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Hardy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'y' at the end.

Aby Hardy
Head of Education Improvement
Lancashire County Council

Your [School Attendance Support Worker's contact information](#) can be found on the Lancashire County Council Schools' Portal. Alternatively, schools can email the central mailbox schoolattendance@lancashire.gov.uk

Schools may also find it helpful to refer to the following guidance:

- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

February 2023 - DfE Guidance: A summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance and examples of effective practice.

- [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)

December 2015 - DfE Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England.

- [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

DfE guidance - Amended and becomes statutory guidance from August 2024 - Guidance for schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities on maintaining high levels of school attendance, including roles and responsibilities.

- [Emotionally Based School Avoidance \(EBSA\) - toolkit and training link](#)

A Resource developed by Lancashire Education Psychologists to assist schools in assessing situations and putting plans in place to increase attendance levels, where absence may be due to anxiety or a mental health issue.

- [School Attendance Support Checklist](#)

A resource developed by Lancashire's attendance team to assist schools in exploring the strategies that could be implemented to support a pupil who is experiencing difficulties with their attendance at school.