
Feniscowles Primary School

Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School

Policy 2026–27

Striving for Excellence

Policy details	
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1. Our values and aims

At Feniscowles Primary School we believe that every child, whatever their circumstances, is entitled to a good education that enables them to shape their own future. When a child cannot attend school because of their health, our school values guide how we respond:

Value	What it means for this policy
Inclusion	Children with health needs remain full members of our school community, stay on our roll and are helped to stay connected with their class.
Safety	We keep children safe and their welfare checked throughout any period away from school.
Respect	We listen to children and families, respect medical advice and treat information sensitively.
Integrity	We act promptly, honestly and in line with our statutory duties, and we do what we say we will do.
Forgiveness	We welcome every child back without judgement, recognising that illness disrupts learning and friendships.
Endeavour	We keep expectations high, so children continue to make progress, particularly in English and maths.

This policy aims to ensure that:

- suitable education is arranged promptly for pupils on roll who cannot attend school because of physical or mental health needs;
- pupils, parents and staff understand what the school will do, and what Blackburn with Darwen Local Authority (the LA) is responsible for;
- children keep learning, stay connected to school life and are supported to return successfully as soon as their health allows.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- **Education Act 1996, section 19:** the LA duty to arrange suitable, normally full-time, education for children of compulsory school age who would not otherwise receive it because of illness or other reasons.
- **Children and Families Act 2014, section 100:** the duty on governing bodies to make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions.
- **Equality Act 2010:** including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.
- **School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024:** attendance codes, sickness returns and grounds for removal from roll.

- DfE statutory guidance: **Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs** (December 2023, replacing the 2013 version).
- DfE statutory guidance: **Working together to improve school attendance** (July 2026).
- DfE statutory guidance: **Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions** (2015, updated 2017).
- DfE statutory guidance: **Keeping children safe in education** (2026).
- HM Government statutory guidance: **Working together to safeguard children** (2026).
- **SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years** (2015).

It also draws on the DfE non-statutory guidance on mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance, and on Blackburn with Darwen's published policy statement for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

Guidance under review

The DfE consulted (closing 1 May 2026) on revised statutory guidance for supporting pupils with medical conditions, including new content on allergy safety, publishing the medical conditions policy and Individual Healthcare Plans. Until it is published, the 2015 guidance remains in force. This policy will be reviewed as soon as the revised guidance is issued.

3. Scope and definitions

This policy applies to any pupil on the roll of Feniscowles Primary School who is unable to attend school, or can attend only intermittently, because of a **physical or mental health need**. This includes:

- long-term or recurring conditions, injuries, and recovery from surgery or treatment;
- planned or unplanned hospital admissions;
- mental health needs that prevent attendance, where supported by appropriate professional involvement.

The 15-day threshold. Where it is clear that a pupil will be away from school because of health needs for **15 school days or more**, whether **consecutive or cumulative over the school year**, the LA should arrange suitable alternative education. The school will not wait for 15 days to pass before acting.

Children below compulsory school age. The section 19 duty applies to children of compulsory school age. Some children in Reception will be below compulsory school age; the DfE recommends that the same principles are followed, and we will apply this policy to them too.

This policy does not replace our Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, which covers how we support children with health needs who **can** attend school.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Who	Responsibilities
Governing body	Ensures arrangements are in place to support pupils with health needs and that this policy is implemented, published on the school website and reviewed. Receives anonymised reports on pupils supported under this policy as part of the headteacher's report.
Headteacher	Has overall responsibility for the policy and decides on the education arrangements for each pupil. Ensures the LA is notified promptly and that staff understand their responsibilities.
Named person for children with health needs (SENDCo)	Is the school's point of contact for parents, the LA, health professionals and providers. Coordinates Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs), provision, reviews and reintegration plans, and liaises over any SEND support or EHCP.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL	Ensure welfare checks are in place, prolonged absence is considered as a potential safeguarding concern, and any social worker or Virtual School Head is informed.
Class teachers	Provide work and resources that match the class curriculum, maintain contact with the pupil, and support the pupil's return.
Parents and carers	Tell the school as early as possible about a health need or planned admission, share relevant medical information, and work with the school and LA on provision and return.
Blackburn with Darwen LA	Arranges suitable education where the school cannot, through its named officer for children with health needs, in line with section 19 and the DfE statutory guidance.

5. Provision arranged by the school

Wherever possible, the school will manage a pupil's health needs itself so that the pupil can stay on roll, continue to be supported by staff who know them, and keep learning. When we become aware that a pupil cannot attend because of their health:

1. The **named person** will contact the family promptly to understand the pupil's health need, the likely length of absence and any barriers to attending.
2. The **headteacher** will decide, with the family and any health professionals involved, on the most suitable arrangements and whether the LA needs to be notified (see section 7).
3. Arrangements are agreed and recorded in an **Individual Healthcare Plan** where appropriate. These may include additional adult support in school, a phased return, attendance at a hospital school, or education provided at home.
4. **Welfare and safeguarding arrangements** are agreed at the outset (see section 9).

5. Arrangements are **reviewed regularly** with the family and professionals, with the aim of returning the pupil to full-time education in school as soon as their health allows.

Medical evidence

Medical evidence helps us understand a pupil's needs, but we will **not delay provision while waiting for it**. Where evidence is not readily available, we will consider information from other professionals working with the child. In line with DfE attendance guidance, medical evidence will be sought only where needs are complex, long-term or recurring, and we will not ask repeatedly for evidence about a long-term condition without good reason.

Remote and online learning

Remote learning is a last resort

Digital learning, including Purple Mash and other school platforms, may **complement** face-to-face education but will not be the only provision for a pupil. It will be used only where a pupil is well enough to learn but unable to attend, for a time-limited period, and as part of a plan to return to school.

Work sent home will match, as far as possible, what the pupil's class is learning, so the pupil can return without falling behind.

6. Part-time provision and reduced timetables

Where full-time education would not be in a pupil's best interests because of their health, a **part-time timetable** or reduced provision may be agreed. In these cases the school will:

- agree the timetable with the parent the pupil normally lives with, and record it in the pupil's plan;
- set a **proposed end date** and review it regularly, aiming to increase hours to full time as the pupil's health allows;
- focus provision on achieving good outcomes, particularly in English and mathematics;
- inform the pupil's social worker, where they have one, and discuss the timetable with the LA where the pupil has an EHCP;
- record absence under the timetable with the correct attendance code (see section 8).

A part-time timetable will never be used to manage behaviour.

7. When the local authority becomes responsible

If the school cannot make suitable arrangements itself, or the pupil is likely to miss 15 school days or more (consecutive or cumulative), the school **will notify Blackburn with Darwen LA as soon as this becomes clear**. The LA is then responsible for arranging suitable, normally full-time, education. The DfE statutory guidance expects that:

- provision starts as soon as possible, and **no later than the sixth day** of the absence;

- for **planned absences**, such as a planned hospital admission, arrangements are made in advance so that education starts **from the first day**;
- online education complements, and does not replace, face-to-face education;
- where provision is part-time for health reasons, it is reviewed with the aim of increasing to full time.

The LA does not normally need to be involved where the school has arranged suitable full-time education itself, or where a pupil is educated by an on-site hospital school, unless the education is not suitable or not for the number of hours the pupil could benefit from.

Blackburn with Darwen named officer

Named officer for the education of children with health needs: [To confirm: name, role, telephone, email]

Referral route: [To confirm: BwD referral form and process]

Parents can also contact the named officer directly. Contact details will also be shared with families when a referral is made.

The school's role when the LA arranges provision

The pupil remains on the Feniscowles roll and the school will:

- work constructively with the LA, providers, health services and parents to secure the best outcomes for the pupil;
- share information about the pupil's curriculum, attainment and needs so provision is consistent with what the class is learning;
- attend review meetings and help keep provision as effective as possible;
- plan the pupil's return to school with the LA and provider from the start (see section 11).

8. Attendance recording, reporting and the school roll

Attendance will be recorded accurately using the codes set out in the 2024 Pupil Registration Regulations and DfE attendance guidance:

Code	Meaning	When we use it
I	Illness	The pupil is too unwell to attend school or any education provision.
K	Attending education provision arranged by the LA	The pupil is attending health needs education arranged by Blackburn with Darwen LA.
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	The pupil is taking part in supervised off-site education arranged by the school.
D	Dual registered: at another school	The pupil is dual registered with another school, such as a hospital school, and is attending there.

Code	Meaning	When we use it
C2	Part-time timetable	Sessions the pupil is not expected to attend under an agreed part-time timetable.

Reporting to the local authority

- The school will make a **sickness return** to the LA where there are reasonable grounds to believe a pupil will miss **15 consecutive school days or more** through illness, in line with the attendance regulations.
- The school will provide attendance returns to the LA as required, including pupils who are not attending regularly.

Staying on the school roll

A pupil will **not be removed from the school roll** because of health needs, including when the LA has taken responsibility for their education. The only exception set out in the Pupil Registration Regulations is where the school medical officer certifies that the pupil is unlikely to be fit to attend school before the end of compulsory school age, and neither the pupil nor their parent has said they intend the pupil to return.

9. Safeguarding

Children who are away from school for long periods can be more vulnerable. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026):

- the **DSL** will be informed whenever a pupil is to be educated away from school because of health needs, and prolonged absence will be considered as a potential safeguarding concern;
- **welfare checks** will be agreed at the outset and proportionate to the provision, for example contact with the family, home visits, or liaison with the hospital school or other professionals;
- where a pupil has a **social worker**, they will be informed of any change in provision or attendance;
- for a **looked-after child**, the designated teacher will contact the **Virtual School Head** as soon as alternative provision becomes likely; for previously looked-after children, the Virtual School will be informed where appropriate;
- any concerns will be recorded on CPOMS and acted on in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

10. Mental health and emotionally based school avoidance

Mental health needs can prevent a child from attending school, and this policy applies to them. Many children also experience normal but difficult emotions, such as nervousness, about coming to school; in these cases we will support them to attend, in line with our Improving Attendance Policy and DfE guidance on mental health and attendance.

Where a pupil is struggling to attend because of anxiety or emotionally based school avoidance, the school will:

- work with the family to understand the barriers and agree a support plan, which may include a time-limited phased return;
- involve the Early Help Co-ordinator and relevant services, such as CAMHS or the school nursing service;
- consider whether the pupil's needs meet the threshold for this policy and for an LA referral.

Staff are not expected to diagnose or treat mental health conditions, but will work closely with families and professionals so the child can attend as fully as possible.

11. Reintegration and keeping connected

Planning for a pupil's return begins as soon as provision away from school is arranged. The school will work with the family, the LA and health professionals to:

- create an **individually tailored reintegration plan** for each pupil, which may form part of their IHP and be finalised closer to the return date;
- plan consistent provision during and after the absence, so the pupil can follow the same curriculum and use the same materials as their class as far as possible;
- consider any **reasonable adjustments** needed under the Equality Act 2010, and any extra support to fill gaps in learning;
- agree a gradual return where this is in the pupil's interest;
- make a **personal education plan** in advance of any planned hospital admission.

Keeping connected

We will help pupils stay part of school life while they are away, for example through newsletters, messages from their class, invitations to school events and, where appropriate, access to assemblies or lessons online. We will help the pupil's classmates to stay in touch in ways the family is comfortable with.

12. Information sharing

Information about a pupil's health is sensitive. The school will share it only with those who need it to support the pupil, including the LA, providers and health services, in line with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the school's Data Protection Policy. Parents will be told what information is shared and why. Information will never be withheld where it is needed to keep a child safe.

13. Monitoring, review and linked policies

This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher and approved by the governing body, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes. The headteacher will report to governors

on the number of pupils supported under this policy and the effectiveness of provision, without identifying individual pupils.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Allergy Safety Policy
- Improving Attendance Policy
- SEND Policy and SEN Information Report
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Data Protection Policy