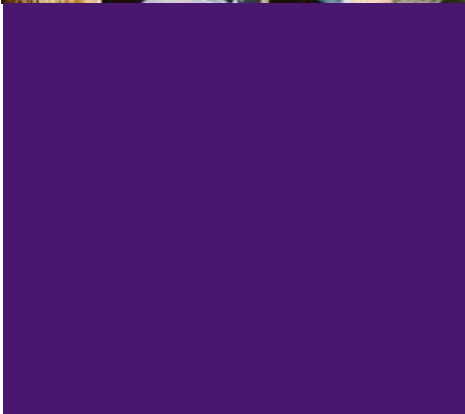


Providing support for children and young people with health needs in schools

A joint statement from the
Royal College of Nursing and UNISON



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Introduction

This statement has been drawn up in partnership by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and UNISON – the leading unions that represent health care professionals and school staff that support children and young people with additional health needs in schools.

It is our view that children and young people with additional health needs should enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other children and should be fully included in every aspect of school life.

This statement is intended to assist employers, local authorities, health professionals, trade union representatives and schools to work in partnership to ensure pupils' health needs are met. It aims to improve understanding of the roles, responsibilities, training and governance required to enable children and young people with health needs to safely access mainstream education.

This statement applies to all schools, including local authority maintained schools, faith schools, academies, free schools and independent schools.

We want to see the good practice outlined in this statement applied in all schools and education settings.

The RCN and UNISON will continue to campaign to ensure that our members are given the support, training and protection they need to provide safe and effective health care to children and young people.



Providing support for children and young people with health needs in schools

An increasing number of children and young people with health needs, including long-term conditions and highly complex needs, are attending mainstream school. While some of these pupils have short-term needs for support, such as being helped to take prescription medicines, many require continuous and ongoing care and intervention while at school, including intimate or invasive health care procedures.

Employers, local authorities, school leaders and governing bodies are required to develop policies and procedures on the provision of support for pupils with health needs and to ensure that these are regularly reviewed, updated and publicised. When developing and reviewing these policies and procedures, schools should engage their designated school nurse (i.e. a nurse on the Nursing and Midwifery Council register who has completed a specific programme for the role of school nurse) and, where appropriate, a medical practitioner (GP or a community paediatrician).



The responsibilities of employers and school leaders

All schools have a duty to promote the well-being of pupils and not to discriminate against disabled pupils, or those with additional health needs, in relation to their access to education. Schools also have a duty to promote the health and safety of pupils and employees. These duties are set out in legislation including the Education Act 2002 (England and Wales); the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004 (Scotland), the Equality Act 2010 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

To effectively support pupils with health needs in schools, employers, local authorities, school leaders and governing bodies should make sure that:

- A clear, ratified policy is in place regarding the management of medicines and health care procedures, which is understood by staff, parents and pupils.
- Facilities and resources are available to meet the health needs of pupils, prior to admission to school.
- Risk assessments and risk management are undertaken in conjunction with approved health care personnel, as appropriate.
- Children and young people with health needs have an up-to-date Individual Care Plan in place, which is drawn up in conjunction with the school nurse, community children's nurse or children's nurse specialist.
- The roles and responsibilities of those providing health care support to pupils are clearly set out, including those tasks which should be undertaken by a registered healthcare practitioner.
- Staff who are providing health care support to pupils receive specific and accredited training, with

access to ongoing updates and appropriate supervision.

- All staff are aware of what action to take in an emergency.
- There are systems in place to ensure proper record keeping, confidentiality and the safe storage and use of medicines/medical equipment.
- Adequate insurance cover is in place, with appropriate assurance given to staff.

Individual Care Plans

All children and young people with additional health needs should have an up-to-date Individual Care Plan, drawn up in conjunction with a school nurse or other relevant health professional. These plans must be regularly reviewed and updated and should record:

- triggers, signs, symptoms, medication and other treatments (including dose and time)
- signed permission from parents and headteacher for medication/procedures to be administered
- the level of support needed (including in emergencies)
- who will provide this support, including their training details, qualifications and confirmation of proficiency from a health professional
- contingency arrangements for staff absence/school trips.

Roles and duties

The duties of those providing health care support to pupils must be clearly set out, including the responsibilities of health care professionals and school support staff.



For the vast majority of support staff in schools, there is no legal requirement for them to administer medicines or health care procedures unless this is clearly specified in their contract of employment. A member of staff may volunteer to support children with additional health needs, however they cannot be forced to do so. Any duties are by agreement and must be taken on willingly and not imposed.

Duties must be assessed and assigned on a pupil-by-pupil basis. It should not be assumed that if a member of staff has volunteered to support a pupil with health needs that they have therefore agreed or are competent to support other pupils, even if they may appear to have similar conditions.

Any proposed amendment to an individual's job role or employment contract must be agreed with staff and their trade unions. Simply including a line in a contract that mentions "medical support" or "as required" is not acceptable and could put pupils and staff at risk as a result of inadequate specific training, assessment and supervision.

In all cases, the remuneration such staff receive should be reviewed in these instances so that it takes account of the additional responsibilities, knowledge and skills required to support pupils with health needs.

Training and skills

Individuals who provide health care support to pupils in schools should receive specific and accredited training, on a named child basis, with access to ongoing updates and appropriate supervision. Training should be given by an appropriate registered health professional or accredited training provider. Refresher training should be provided at least once a year. First aid training is not sufficient when meeting the needs of children and young people with additional health needs.

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The responsibilities of health care professionals

Health care staff, including school nurses and other registered health professionals, have a responsibility to:

- Provide an Individual Care Plan in collaboration with education staff, outlining the child's specific health needs and actions to take, including who might undertake health care in line with agreed clinical guidelines, policies, procedures and government guidance – and specifying when the plan should be updated/reviewed.
- Provide training to enable identified school staff to provide specific support on a named child basis. This includes confirming that an individual is proficient before they provide support to a pupil. A health professional should enable identified school staff to: care for a child who is medically stable; to recognise signs and symptoms of when the child is becoming unwell and to know how to report and seek appropriate help.
- Ensure that adequate supervision from a registered health professional is in place for identified school staff, alongside training updates and regular reassessment of competence and confidence.
- Assist with risk assessments where required.

The responsibilities of school support staff

Individual members of school staff should only agree to undertake tasks and procedures if:

- The specific tasks and duties are clearly defined.
 - They have agreed to undertake these tasks, feel competent and confident to do so and are clear about the limits of their responsibilities.
 - They have completed approved education and training and continue to have access to updated and specific training at least once a year.
 - They are fully indemnified by their employer for duties they are undertaking. (Individuals should seek assurances that they are adequately covered by their employer's insurance policy).
- School support staff who are supporting pupils with health needs have a responsibility to:
- Maintain a thorough knowledge of the health care protocols and guidelines in place in their school.
 - Deliver care and undertake procedures according to set protocols and guidelines.
 - Know who to contact and what to do if a named child becomes unwell or in an emergency (care by a registered nurse may be required in such instances). There should be no expectation that a non-health care member of staff will make independent decisions about a pupil's care, instead they should refer these to either a parent or a registered health professional.

Additional guidance

Additional guidance documents that support this joint statement include:

- Managing Medicines and Providing Medical Support in Schools and Early Years Settings: UNISON advice (UNISON, 2010) <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/19084.pdf>
- Managing children with health care needs: delegation of clinical procedures, training and accountability issues (RCN, 2012) http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/254200/Managing_children_with_health_care_needs_delegation_of_clinical_procedures_training_accountability_and_governance_issues_2012.pdf
- In addition, the RCN accredits a range of learning initiatives including educational events, resources and courses. For more information go to: http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/learning/accreditation/what_we_accredit

UNISON

UNISON represents 1.3 million people working to deliver public services, including around 450,000 health care professionals and nearly 250,000 school support staff. They include teaching and learning support, administrative, technical and professional staff who play an indispensable role in giving children and young people the best start in life. Contact: education@unison.co.uk

RCN

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the voice of nursing across the UK and is the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world, with more than 400,000 members. The RCN promotes the interest of nurses and patients on a wide range of issues and helps shape health care policy by working closely with the UK government and other national and international institutions, trade unions, professional bodies and voluntary organisations.