



Dealing with health needs in schools

School staff are facing increased pressure to administer medicines and provide medical care for children at school. That's enough to keep anyone awake at night.

We hear from members that one in five school support staff feel pressurised into administering medication to pupils. UNISON doesn't think that's acceptable and is supporting members who find themselves in that position. If you're not a member, there's never been a better time to join so we can support you as well.

For most school support staff, administering medical procedures is not part of your contract. Your employer can't change your contract to include medical procedures without your agreement.

Statutory guidance in England means schools must have suitable policies in place and staff providing medical support must have received suitable training. UNISON is pushing for similar guidance in other UK countries.

UNISON's advice to our members is to only administer medication and provide support to pupils with health needs if:

- You've agreed and the specific tasks are clearly defined in your existing contract.

Generic references to 'medical support' or 'as required' are not acceptable and could put children and staff at risk.

- You feel competent and confident to undertake the task and are clear about the limits of your responsibilities.
- You've completed approved training and continue to have access to updated and specific training at least once a year.
- You're fully indemnified by your employer for tasks you're undertaking (check that you are adequately covered by your employer's insurance policy).

If you're supporting children with health needs at school, make sure you know who to contact and what to do if a named child becomes unwell or if there is an emergency.

UNISON members should contact their branch to access help and support. If you're not a UNISON member, don't lie awake at night worrying, join UNISON today at joinunison.org or call 0800 171 2193.