Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy 2026-27

Legislation and guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of the Education Act 1996.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following: -

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- DfE (2013) 'Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs'
- DfE (2015) 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions'

1. Introduction

Southam College is committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a suitable and effective education regardless of their health needs. The school recognises that some children may experience periods of absence because of physical illness, injury, medical treatment or mental health difficulties. During such periods, every effort will be made to minimise disruption to learning, maintain educational progress and support pupils to remain connected to their school community.

The school believes that children with health needs should have access to education that is appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude, and which takes account of any special educational needs they may have. Educational support will be planned with the individual pupil's circumstances in mind and will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains effective.

2. Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that pupils who are unable to attend school because of health needs continue to receive an education that enables them to achieve their potential. The school seeks to work collaboratively with families, healthcare professionals, the local authority and other agencies to ensure that barriers to education are reduced wherever possible.

The policy also aims to ensure that pupils maintain social connections, receive appropriate pastoral support and are successfully reintegrated into school when they are well enough to return.

3. Responsibilities

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties towards pupils with medical and health needs. Governors will ensure that appropriate policies, procedures and systems are in place and that the effectiveness of provision is regularly reviewed.

The Headteacher retains overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that staff understand their duties in supporting pupils whose attendance is affected by health needs.

The Assistant Headteacher/SENCO will act as the named lead for coordinating support for pupils who are unable to attend school because of health needs. This will include liaising with families, healthcare professionals, local authority services and other relevant agencies. The SENCO will oversee the planning, implementation and review of educational provision and reintegration arrangements.

The attendance team will work closely with families where attendance is affected by health needs. They will monitor attendance patterns, identify emerging concerns and coordinate support where absence risks becoming prolonged.

Parents and carers have an important role in informing the school about any health needs that may affect attendance, sharing relevant medical information and engaging positively with support and review processes.

4. Educational Provision

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because of a health condition, Southam College will consider what reasonable steps can be taken to maintain access to education. The nature and level of support will depend upon the individual circumstances of the pupil, the medical advice received and the anticipated duration of absence.

Support may include the provision of learning resources, access to online learning platforms, remote teaching opportunities, curriculum materials and regular contact with staff. The school will seek to ensure that learning remains closely aligned to the curriculum being delivered in lessons, allowing pupils to maintain progress and successfully re-engage when they return.

Where health needs prevent regular attendance for an extended period, the school will work with Warwickshire Local Authority and other agencies to secure appropriate alternative educational provision where necessary.

5. Mental Health Needs

Southam College recognises that mental health difficulties can have a significant impact on attendance and engagement in education. Anxiety, depression, emotionally based school avoidance and other mental health conditions may affect a pupil's ability to attend school in the same way as a physical illness.

Where mental health is impacting attendance, the school will work collaboratively with the pupil, family and any involved professionals to understand the barriers to attendance and identify appropriate support strategies. This may include pastoral interventions, mentoring, timetable adjustments, SEND support, attendance plans and external professional involvement.

The school will seek to promote attendance while recognising that sustainable improvement is most likely when support is tailored to individual need and delivered through a collaborative and graduated approach.

6. Safeguarding

Pupils who are absent from school due to health needs remain subject to the same safeguarding protections as pupils attending school regularly. The school will maintain appropriate contact with pupils and families and ensure that safeguarding concerns are identified and responded to promptly.

Where concerns arise regarding a pupil's welfare, staff will follow the procedures outlined in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

7. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

The school recognises that many pupils with significant health needs may also have special educational needs or disabilities. In these circumstances, educational provision will be planned in a coordinated manner, taking account of any Education, Health and Care Plan, professional recommendations and identified support needs.

The school will adopt a person-centred approach and ensure that health, attendance and SEND considerations are addressed through joined-up planning and regular review.

8. Reintegration Following Absence

Returning to school following a prolonged period of absence can be challenging for some pupils. Southam College is committed to ensuring that reintegration is carefully planned and appropriately supported.

Where necessary, a reintegration plan will be developed in partnership with the pupil, their family and relevant professionals. The plan may include a phased return, adjustments to the timetable, pastoral support, access to a key adult, modified expectations or other reasonable adjustments designed to support a successful transition back into school.

Reintegration arrangements will be reviewed regularly and amended in response to the pupil's progress and wellbeing.

9. Examinations and Assessments

The school will work closely with pupils, families, healthcare professionals and the Examinations Officer to ensure that pupils with health needs are able to access assessments and public examinations wherever possible.

Where appropriate, access arrangements, reasonable adjustments or alternative arrangements will be explored to enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and skills fairly.

10. Monitoring and Review

Southam College will regularly monitor the effectiveness of support provided to pupils with health needs. Individual arrangements will be reviewed throughout periods of absence, and the school will seek feedback from pupils, families and professionals to inform future practice.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if changes to legislation, statutory guidance or local procedures require amendment.

Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside the Attendance Policy, SEND Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy and Alternative Provision Policy.

Equality Statement

Southam College is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that pupils with health needs are not disadvantaged in accessing education. The school will make reasonable adjustments where required and will work proactively to remove barriers to participation, learning and achievement.