

Sickness Absence in Schools

A Guide for Parents



Most children with mild illness can attend school providing that they feel well enough. This guidance is designed to help you know when it's okay to send your child into school and when it's best for them to stay at home.

Infections can be passed from person to person resulting in infection and disease. Infections can spread easily in “closed” environments such as schools are due to the number of people together in close proximity. The spread of infection can be prevented or reduced by measures such as:

- Vaccinations
- Keeping yourself clean, including regular hand washing
- Keeping areas your children go into clean.

In some situations children or staff with certain infections should not attend school to reduce the risk of spread to others.

The below advice is based on national Public Health England guidance, and your individual school policy may differ.

Condition	Absence Advised	Length of absence from school	Comments
Headache Earache Stomach ache	No	None	Take plenty of fluids, and if you feel it is needed, you can give your child paracetamol. Check the patient information leaflet, label or packaging before hand. Seek medical advice if it continues or seems worse than normal.
High temperature	No	None	If a rash is present, seek medical advice from GP or NHS Direct before attending school. A high temperature can be draining and your child may not feel well enough to attend
Coughs and colds	No	None	Take plenty of fluids, and eat well. Liquid forms of paracetamol are available for children
Sore throat and tonsillitis	No	None	Take plenty of fluid and speak to your pharmacist or GP for over the counter treatments
Head lice	No	None	There are several products that can be applied to the scalp and hair to kill head lice.
Warts and varrucae	No	None	Varrucae should be covered with a waterproof plaster
Conjunctivitis	No	None	Encourage the child not to touch their eye and to wash hands frequently
Flu	Yes	Until recovered	Flu is highly infectious and can be dangerous to the vulnerable. Flu vaccine is available to certain year groups.
Diarrhoea and vomiting caused by infection	Yes	Until 48 hours after the last symptom	Most cases will be caused by viruses such as norovirus. Other infections are less common, but may require longer absence. Ring NHS Direct or contact your GP for advice
Scabies	Yes	After the first treatment	Everyone living in the same household will need to be treated at the same time
Impetigo	Yes	Until lesions have healed or 48 hours after starting antibiotics	The main treatments prescribed by a GP will include creams or tablets. They usual have to be used for around a week.
Measles	Yes	Must be absent for four days after the rash has appeared	Measles is highly infectious and can be dangerous to vulnerable adults and children who haven't been vaccinated. Measles can be prevented through the MMR vaccine
Chickenpox	Yes	Until the vesicles have dried over	Paracetamol can help your child if they have a high temperature. Calamine and moisturising creams can help soothe the skin and reduce the need to itch.
German measles	Yes	Must be absent for four days after the rash has appeared	German measles (Rubella) can be prevented through the MMR vaccine.
Mumps	Yes	Must be absent until 5 days after the swelling started	Mumps can be prevented through the MMR vaccine
Whooping cough	Yes	Until the child has taken 5 days of antibiotics or if not taking antibiotics, should be off for 21 days	Whooping cough can be prevented by a vaccine
TB	Yes if pulmonary	Not all types of TB are infectious	Local Health Protection team will be able to advise

Remember that you can contact the School Nursing Service for advice, particularly if a child has on-going health need that is affecting their attendance.

The Sandwell School Nursing Service can be contacted on 0121 612 2974 or email BCHNT.SHNSANDWELL@nhs.net

Website: www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/children-and-young-people/services-parent-portal/school-health-services-school-nursing/sandwell-school-nursing/

Further advice can be found from NHS Choices:
www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx

For further more detailed information including advice on diseases / conditions not covered here see Public Health England's guidance: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522337/Guidance_on_infection_control_in_schools.pdf