



Advice and guidance on the management of medicines in schools

In 2005 The Department for Education and the Department of Health produced a document titled *MANAGING MEDICINES IN SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS SETTINGS*, specifically to help schools develop policies for pupils with medical needs, so that the best education could be provided to all.

In the document, there are very important points that must be addressed when creating a policy for the storage and administration of medicines.

First of all, it should be noted that there is no legal duty that requires school or setting staff to administer medicines. *It is not a legal obligation.*

Staff managing the administration of medicines and those who administer medicines should receive appropriate training and support from health professionals. Where local authority policy is that schools and settings should manage medicines, there should be robust systems in place to ensure that medicines are managed safely.

INTERNAL POLICIES

A clear policy, understood and accepted by staff, parents and children provides a sound basis for ensuring that children with medical needs receive proper care and support in a school or setting.

A policy needs to be clear to all staff, parents and children. It could be included in the prospectus, or in other information for parents. A policy should cover:

Procedures for managing prescription medicines which need to be taken during the school or setting 'day'

Procedures for managing prescription medicines on trips and outings

A clear statement on the roles and responsibility of staff managing administration of medicines, and for administering or supervising the administration of medicines

A clear statement on parental responsibilities in respect of their child's medical needs

The need for prior written agreement from parents for any medicines to be given to a child

The circumstances in which children may take any non-prescription medicines

The school or setting policy on assisting children with long- term or complex medical needs

Policy on children carrying and taking their medicines themselves

Staff training in managing medicines safely and supporting an identified individual child

Record keeping

Safe storage of medicines

Access to the school's emergency procedures

Risk assessment and management procedures

GOVERNANCE

Parents have the prime responsibility for their child's health and should provide schools and settings with information about their child's medical condition. Parents, and the child if appropriate, should obtain details from their child's General Practitioner (GP) or paediatrician, if needed. The school doctor or nurse or a health visitor and specialist voluntary bodies may also be able to provide additional background information for staff.

However, it is important to note that, according to DfE guidance, medicines should only be taken to school or settings when essential; that is where it would be detrimental to a child's health if the medicine were not administered during the school or setting 'day'. Schools and settings should only accept medicines that have been prescribed by a doctor, dentist, nurse prescriber or pharmacist prescriber. Medicines should always be provided in the original container as dispensed by a pharmacist and include the prescriber's instructions for administration and dosage.

Paragraph 26 states that schools and settings should never accept medicines that have been taken out of the container as originally dispensed ***nor make changes to dosages on parental instructions***.

Given the above, it is advisable for schools to request written confirmation of the dose and frequency of prescription-only medicines from the pupil's GP, and that this forms part of the child's care plan record.

OFSTED

Ofsted's new common inspection framework, effective from 1 September 2015, judges how well a school meets the needs of the full range of pupils, including those with medical conditions. Key judgements will be informed by the progress and achievement of these children alongside those of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and also by pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

To that end, it is important for a school to create holistic policies around medicines, so that there is clarity and accountability, and that the law, with respect to the administration of prescription medicines, is adhered to.

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the Head teacher's responsibility to develop policy with regard to the management and administration of medicines (especially prescription-only medicines) for pupils in school, where it is necessary to treat and manage medical conditions in order that individual pupils may attain the best quality of education.

GPs and paediatricians, should notify the school when a child has been identified as having a medical condition that will require support at school. They may provide advice on developing individual healthcare plans. Specialist local health teams may be able to provide support in schools for children with particular conditions (e.g. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy).

Healthcare plans must be properly formatted and unambiguous. The following actions are required of school staff when they take on the responsibility of the care and administration of medicines, the same actions are required of any person, healthcare professional or otherwise, who is charged with the responsibility of managing and administering medicines:

- 1. You must be aware of the patient's care plan**
- 2. You must know the therapeutic use of the medicine to be administered including normal dosage, side effects, precautions and contra-indication**
- 3. You must check that the prescription or the label on medicine dispensed is clearly written and unambiguous**
- 4. You must be certain of the identity of the patient to whom the medicine is to be administered**
- 5. You must make a clear, accurate and immediate record of all medicine administered, intentionally withheld or refused by the patient, ensuring the signature is clear and legible; it is also your responsibility to ensure that a record is made when delegating the task of administering medicine**
- 6. You must not leave any medicines unsecured and must ensure all medicinal products are stored in accordance with the patient information leaflet and in accordance with any instruction on the label**

KEY POINTS

1. School staff are under no legal obligation to administer medicines
2. Medicines should only be brought to school when it is essential that they be administered during the school day or in the event of an emergency (i.e. asthma)
3. Ambiguous labels, containers or dosage and frequency instructions should not be accepted. For safety and security, dosage and frequency should be confirmed in writing by the prescribing practitioner.
4. Medicines that are to be taken two or three times a day, for example antibiotics, should be taken in the home setting (i.e. morning before going to school, afternoon when arriving home and night before bed time), unless specifically timed by the prescribing practitioner.
5. Parents are singularly responsible for the safekeeping and delivery of medicines to schools and ensuring that medicines provided adhere to school policy and are in date.

PRS strongly advises schools to consider reproducing this document wholly as part of their medicines policy. Alternatively, the drafting of a letter to parents, highlighting the key points, should be considered.

REFERENCES

'Managing medicines in schools and early years settings', Department for Education and Skills / Department of Health, 2005. (1448-2005DCL-EN)

'Guidelines for the Administration of Medicines', NMC (2008) Standards for Medicines Management