



Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and the Administration of Medicines in Schools

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Is there any guidance about supporting pupils with medical conditions?

A. Yes. In 2014, the Department for Education (DfE) produced guidance 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' which sets out the responsibility Governing bodies have to ensure arrangements are in place to support pupils at school with medical conditions and how staff should be supported. It states that all schools should have a policy in place which sets out who is responsible for ensuring that sufficient staff are suitably trained; a commitment that all relevant staff will be made aware of the child's condition; cover arrangements in case of staff absence or staff turnover to ensure someone is always available; risk assessments for school visits, holidays, and other school activities outside the normal timetable and monitoring of individual healthcare plans. The guidance also states, "Any member of school staff may be asked to provide support to pupils with medical conditions, including the administration of medicines, **although they cannot be required to do so.**"

Since 2014 though, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of pupils with medical conditions and there are concerns being raised that this Guidance is now being incorrectly interpreted and used to pressurise school support staff to provide medical care in place of qualified clinicians.

Q. Why is GMB concerned?

A. GMB is concerned about what is being expected of members and the risks and potential liability they could be exposed to. GMB also knows that these expectations are taking an emotional toll on members which is unfair and for many they did not know their role would change to include meeting the medical needs of pupils. This is why GMB along with other Unions has written to the Royal College of Nursing and the



Education Select Committee. School Support Staff are not an appropriate substitute for healthcare professionals, and it is not acceptable to try and make them carry out this work.

Q. I am a First Aider. Is it ok for me to be carrying out clinical tasks and supporting pupils with medical conditions?

A. No, the DfE is clear that a first-aid certificate does not constitute appropriate training in supporting children with medical conditions.

Q. My job description does not detail healthcare or the administration of medicines, can it be changed?

A. Any changes to a job description should be done in full consultation with staff and Trade Unions to ensure there is not a fundamental change. If changes are being proposed, you may want to present a collective position to the Head Teacher in response and GMB can help you with this. DfE is clear that School Support Staff are not healthcare professionals although some support staff may have a specific duty to administer medicines as part of their contract.

Q. I am happy to carry out duties relating to health and medicines. Is this ok and should health care duties be in my job description?

A. If you are currently happy to be working with a pupil with medical needs, there should be an explicit job description that sets out the main elements and competencies of the role being required, and it should be clear that the requirement only relates to delegated tasks relating to a named child in their care. You should also have received training, seen any Risk Assessments and know that you are insured when carrying out such work and in event of anything happening. It is also important you are being properly paid and recognised for the work and responsibilities you have and an accurate job description is key to this.



Q. I do not want to be responsible for a pupil's medical care and/or administer medicines. What shall I do?

A. Tell your Head Teacher you do not feel safe, competent or confident to do what is being asked of you. GMB will support members who do not feel confident or comfortable administering medicines or supporting healthcare needs, or who believe they are being pressured into doing so. It is not just GMB that is concerned about the increase in the level of healthcare support being expected of schools and school support staff, the Head Teachers' Unions NAHT and ASCL are also.

Q. What about the children with healthcare and medical needs?

A. Children with medical needs deserve to have these needs met by appropriate healthcare professionals and services. The medical care which some support staff are being asked to deliver (**including intermittent catheterisation, enteral feeding and tracheostomy care**) with minimal or no NHS-commissioned clinical support, goes far beyond the health support a school can reasonably be expected to provide under their statutory duties which include safeguarding and promoting welfare, Health and Safety, first aid, Duty of Care and making reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. Children with healthcare needs should receive the high-quality NHS care they are entitled to under the NHS Constitution, and the health sector should be given the resources it needs to achieve this.

Q. Is there anything else I can do?

Talk to your colleagues. Although GMB will support any individual member, it is often more effective for support staff to set out their boundaries and expectations collectively as it is a stronger position if it includes all support staff. Even if someone is not currently being asked to perform any healthcare or medical duties, it is reasonable for them to be part of any discussions as they could be asked to do something similar in the future. If anyone in your school is not in a Union, please talk to them about joining GMB. Our strength is in our numbers so you should try to have as many colleagues as possible in GMB.