



Administering medication

In most schools there are pupils who may need to take medication during school hours for long- or short-term medical needs or in emergency situations. Administering of medication to pupils is a common source of concern for education staff.

Teachers are not contractually obliged to give medication or supervise a pupil taking it. It is, therefore, a voluntary activity. However, support staff may, as part of their contract, have specific duties to provide medical assistance to pupils.

Prime responsibility for a pupil's health rests with the parents/guardians, who should write to the headteacher giving sufficient information on their child's medical needs, requesting that medication be administered to him or her.

Agreement should be reached between the parents and the school as to the latter's role in supporting the child's medical needs, in accordance with the school's policy. Staff should then be consulted by the headteacher and asked to volunteer. Individual decisions on involvement must be respected.

The employer, usually the local authority or the governing body, is legally responsible for producing and keeping under review a health and safety policy.

The policy should include written procedures for managing and administering medication to pupils. Under the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1996, every school should have an appropriate room for the medical examination, treatment and care of pupils during school hours.

What to consider

Staff are advised to consider the following:

- Ensure you receive appropriate training beforehand from a medically qualified person.
- Ask your employer to confirm in writing that its insurance arrangements fully indemnify staff against claims for alleged negligence.
- Ideally, sufficient numbers of staff should volunteer to cover for possible absences. The headteacher can set an example by being one of the volunteers.
- Think carefully before volunteering to administer conventional injections, rectal Diazepam or other invasive treatment when allegations of assault or sexual abuse are more likely to arise. Two adults (preferably the same gender as the pupil) should be present in these circumstances.
- All staff should know how to call the emergency services.
- Pupils should not be taken to hospital in staff cars. Allegations of negligence may be made if a seriously ill pupil is placed unsupervised in a vehicle without medical support. An ambulance should be called.

School trips

When organising educational visits, schools will need to consider taking additional precautions, such as the presence of staff who are able to administer medication and/or inclusion of the pupil's parent. Advice should be sought from the pupil's GP or the school health service.

Adverse reactions

If a pupil suffers an adverse reaction, a member of staff could only be deemed to be personally liable if he or she were proved to be negligent.

It is therefore important to administer the medication as per your training and to follow the procedures that have been laid down. ATL would naturally provide legal assistance to any member who is in the unusual position of being pursued legally.

Further information

If you require further information on this or any other health and safety issue, please contact ATL's member advisor on health and safety by calling 020 7782 1598 or mailing hs@atl.org.uk.

You can also find lots of advice and information in the health and safety section of our website at www.atl.org.uk/hands.



Need advice?

Your first point of contact is the ATL rep in your school/college. Your local ATL branch is also available to help, or you can contact ATL's member advisors on 020 7930 6441, email info@atl.org.uk. Don't forget there's lots more advice on ATL's website at www.atl.org.uk.

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