

Guidance for prescribing OTC medicines for children attending nurseries and schools

GPs are not required to prescribe non-prescription medicines that can be bought over the counter (OTC) for administration in schools, nurseries and a childminders.

It is a misuse of GP time to take up an appointment to get a prescription just to satisfy the needs of a nursery or school.¹

The MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) licenses medicines and classifies them as over-the-counter, based on their safety profiles. This is to enable access to those medicines without a GP. The classification also applies in the educational setting.¹

Information relating to medicines in schools can be found in the Department for Education (DfE) 'Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage' (EYFS)² which sets the standards that all early years (0-5 years) providers must meet to ensure that children are kept healthy and safe. The Department for Education 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' guidance also contains information on medicines with statutory and non-statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England.

Main points from DfE documents:

- The provider must promote the good health, including the oral health, of children attending the setting. They must have a procedure, discussed with parents and/or carers, for responding to children who are ill or infectious, take necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection, and take appropriate action if children are ill.
- Medicines should only be administered at school when it would be detrimental to a child's health or school attendance not to do so.
- Where clinically possible, medicines should be prescribed in dose frequencies which enable them to be taken outside school hours.
- Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, for administering medicines. It must include systems for obtaining information about a child's needs for medicines, and for keeping this information up-to-date. Training must be provided for staff where the administration of medicine requires medical or technical knowledge.
- Schools should set out the circumstances in which non-prescription medicines may be administered.
- Medicine (both prescription and non-prescription) should only be administered to a child under 16 years where written permission for that particular medicine has been obtained from the child's parent and/or carer - except in exceptional circumstances where the medicine has been prescribed to the child without the knowledge of the parents. In such cases, every effort should be made to

encourage the child or young person to involve their parents while respecting their right to confidentiality.

- Providers must keep a written record each time a medicine is administered to a child, and inform the child's parents and/or carers on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Prescription medicines must not usually be administered unless they have been prescribed for a child by a doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist.

References

¹ British Medical Association, Prescribing over-the-counter medicines in nurseries and schools, September 2020. Available at: [Prescribing over-the-counter medicines in nurseries and schools \(bma.org.uk\)](https://www.bma.org.uk/prescribing-over-the-counter-medicines-in-nurseries-and-schools)

² Department for Education, Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, 1 September 2021. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

³ Department for Education, Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions, December 2015. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/803956/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions.pdf