

## Guidance for General Practice regarding sick notes & toilet passes

### Background

General Practice has experienced a lot of additional pressures by the rules Education impose, which is complicated by the Academy system. Schools have insisted on having doctors notes to allow children to leave classes to use the toilet, including requests for medical certificates to excuse them from activities. This has created an unnecessary burden of work in Primary Care.

Further guidance from the government, in “Working together to improve school attendance” does reference this: **“220. In the majority of cases a parent’s notification that their child is ill can be accepted without question or concern. Schools should not routinely request that parents provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily as it places additional pressure on health professionals, their staff and their appointments system particularly if the illness is one that does not require treatment by a health professional. Only where the school has a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence.”** The national DfE guidance also advises school and academies not to do this.

This guidance has been created for General Practice to refer to when these requests are received. GPs **do not** provide sick notes for children. There is also no requirement for the GPs to be providing toilet passes, or any other passes for children for school and they can refuse this extra work. Should a GP feel this is appropriate, this can be classed as private work and therefore a chargeable service.

### Wording for General Practice Websites or Letters

It has recently come to our attention that local Schools have changed their toilet access policy to state that a Doctor’s note should be provided in order to allow the provision of a “toilet pass” to pupils. This has been done without consultation with the local surgeries.

Access to safe, timely and appropriate personal hygiene is a considered to be essential to human dignity. This is particularly important to people who have periods, which often vary in timing and heaviness, especially in the years surrounding menarche.

While discipline issues are important and a small percentage of pupils abuse their right to access personal hygiene, this is not a medical issue. It is also not an NHS matter to provide evidence of a child’s lack of continence, urinary or faecal urgency or menstrual difficulties. It is not dignified for a pupil to be singled out as having toileting difficulties and there are significant potential medical ramifications in either deliberately dehydrating to prevent the need for a toilet or in withholding either stool or urine and both can worsen continence issues. It is also significantly harmful to a young person’s mental wellbeing to risk an episode of incontinence within the classroom or to prevent them accessing menstrual hygiene, leading to soiling.

In addition, especially in these uniquely challenging times, where both workload and finance are significantly strained in all public sectors, it is not possible for us to take on additional non-funded work. We are also not prepared to charge the children or their families for paperwork to allow them basic dignity.

As such, this surgery will not be providing separate notes to specific pupils to allow them to use the toilet. Whether an individual child can delay their needs until the end of a lesson is a matter for the school, the child and their family. If you feel it necessary, please accept this letter as confirmation that we consider that all children have a need to access a toilet when they need to use it for urinary, defecation or menstrual reasons.

Please note, the above wording has been taken from Consortium of Lancashire and Cumbria LMC. The full letter template can be found here: <https://nwlmc.org/guidance/workload>.

### **Supporting Guidance**

[Disability rights: Education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Children with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\): Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Equality Act Advice Final.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Rotherham SEND Local Offer – Here you will find help, advice and information about the services available for your child or young person from birth to 25 years with a Special Educational Need or Disability \(SEND\).](#)

[Supporting individual learning needs – Sendco Rotherham](#)

[Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<https://nwlmc.org/>