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**To Whom it May Concern**

I am writing to you at the start of a new School year, following on from last term’s busy exam season when your pupils, our patients, go through a stressful time and consequently consult more frequently with us.

We had the usual peak in requests for letters from GPs to support absences from exams, extra support for exam requests and general sick notes.

I thought it would be useful to highlight our approach to these requests which is in keeping with the national picture and guidance. I would be grateful if you could share this with the relevant staff in your organisations.

I have covered the following areas:

* Requests for information about medical conditions
* Requests for sick notes for absence from school
* Requests for sick notes for missing exams
* Requests for authorisation to give medications
* Inhalers in School.

**Requests for information about medical conditions**

We understand schools have a duty to reduce non-attendance by pupils, as there is good evidence of the correlation between non-attendance and reduced academic achievement.  There is guidance for school governing bodies on how they can best support pupils who have medical conditions to attend school.  For schools to comply with this guidance it is important for them to understand the nature of a child’s medical condition.  The guidance states that GPs and other healthcare professionals should provide this information and advice.

Thus, requests from schools for information about a child’s health conditions should be provided, as long as there is consent from the parents and child.  There is no fee applicable to this information.  These requests should be made by the school, and not the parents.

**Requests for sick notes for absence from school**

GPs do not provide short term sick notes for pupils and requests for these will be declined.

If a child is absent from school for longer than seven days, the child may have a condition which may affect their long-term ability to attend school, and thus more information may be needed by the school in accordance with the guidance above.  In this circumstance it would be advisable for the school to discuss with the child and the parents what if any information is needed from the GP to best achieve the aim of supporting the child in returning to regular school attendance.

**Requests for sick notes for missing exams**

As a result of several practices querying whether GPs are required to provide evidence that children were unwell and thus missed exams, the GPC wrote to Ofqual to get the official stance.  The response from Ofqual states:

“Awarding Organisations make no requirement for pupils to obtain a medical certificate in support of an application for special consideration. Students are asked for information in support of their application, but this may take the form of a statement by the school.  The Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ) has confirmed that as far as they are concerned, if a student was absent from an examination as a result of illness and has the support of the school or centre to be absent, special consideration will be granted in that basis.  Awarding Organisations do not insist that medical proof is provided”.

**Requests for authorisation to give medications**

The “Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions” guidance states “no child under 16 should be given prescription or non-prescription medications without their parents’ written consent”.

This statement implies two things:

* that GPs do not need to provide authorisation for medications to be administered by school staff, as this is the role of the parent
* that GPs do not need to prescribe medications which are available over-the-counter so that the medication can be administered in school, as non-prescription medication can be given with parental consent.

Requests from parents or schools to provide authorisation or prescriptions will be declined.

**Inhalers in School**

Children should have their own reliever inhaler at school to treat symptoms and for use in the event of an asthma attack. If they can manage their asthma themselves, they should keep their inhaler on them, and if not, it should be easily accessible to them. This is not an “extra” inhaler for schools to keep for each individual child.

From 1st October 2014 the Human Medicines (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2014 allowed schools to buy salbutamol inhalers, without a prescription, for use in emergencies.

The emergency salbutamol inhaler should only be used by children, for whom written parental consent for use of the emergency inhaler has been given, who have either been diagnosed with asthma and prescribed an inhaler, or who have been prescribed an inhaler as reliever medication.

I hope the above information is a useful summary and reminder for your staff and mine about supporting your pupils’ medical needs.

Yours sincerely