

A Survey Report on Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs

June 2014

A SURVEY REPORT ON SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH MEDICATION NEEDS - 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary sets out the main findings of the report on supporting pupils with medication needs. The report was commissioned by the Department of Education (DE) to find out if the guidance issued to schools for medication was sufficient and appropriate and if any improvements were necessary. The report is based on a variety of evidence, including questionnaires to selected schools and parents, and discussion of current practice across a sample of mainstream and special schools. The report highlights the value of the medication guidance to schools and concludes with a small number of recommendations for schools and policy-makers. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out the survey in February 2014.

THE OVERALL FINDINGS

The majority of the schools in the survey sample find the guidance document "Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs" very helpful and indicated that it is used to inform the development of school policy in relation to the use of medication in schools. A minority of schools find the guidance not sufficiently detailed for the administration of more complex medication. A minority of schools would also value an additional summary version of the guidance both to distribute to parents and to provide schools with an easy to follow synopsis of the overall guidance.

The parental responses are very positive regarding the level of information, support and practice by schools for their children with serious medication needs.

The interviews with relevant school staff by members of the inspection team found that practice across the schools was based on the guidance and adapted appropriately to meet the practical considerations of the pupils. The strong commitment of school staff to the holistic needs of the pupils requiring medication needs in school was evident.

CONCLUSION

This report concludes that almost all schools taking part in this survey are satisfied that the guidance document 'Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs' is sufficiently clear regarding advice and guidance and that parents are content the guidance document enables their child's school to support effectively his or her medication needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this survey report are that the guidance document is reviewed regularly with additional information on new medication and procedures added as necessary. A short synopsis of the guidance would be helpful for schools and parents, and an on-line editable version of the forms for schools in the guidance document would also be useful. Schools also need to remain vigilant to the level of medication needs of their pupils.

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Contents

Section	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Context of the report	1
3. Methodology	1
4. Summary of main findings	1
5. Findings	2
6. Recommendations	3
7. Conclusion	3
Appendix - List of participating schools	

1. Introduction

The Department of Education (DE) commissioned the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) to carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of the guidance document “Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs” 2008 (referred to in this report as the guidance). The survey seeks to ascertain whether the joint guidance from DE and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) meets effectively the requirements of schools and school staff in their assisting pupils with medication needs.

2. Context of the report

The report is intended to help inform DE on the efficacy of the guidance document in supporting pupils with medication needs in schools. The report focuses on the guidance and the perceptions of schools and parents regarding its usefulness in schools.

The report recognises the wide variety of medication needs of pupils and the growing complexity of some medical procedures and medication prescribed for them, consequently the training and support needs for some schools has grown significantly over the past few years.

3 Methodology

Questionnaires were sent to a sample of 60 primary, post primary and special schools, selected by DE, with pupils who have serious or long term medical conditions, and to the parents of those children. The completed questionnaires from schools and parents were evaluated by the ETI team. A small sample of seven schools across the five Education and Library Boards had visits from one of a team of three Education and Training Inspectors and three Associate Assessors during the week beginning 24 February 2014 to explore further any issues raised by schools or parents and to discuss the guidance document.

During the visits, the inspectors:

- talked to principals, senior managers, teachers and classroom assistants regarding their experience of using the guidance; and
- scrutinised a wide range of documentation related to medication in schools.

4 Summary of the main findings

The majority of the schools in the survey sample find the guidance very helpful and indicated that it contributes well to the writing of school policy and to the use of medication in schools. A minority of schools find the guidance not sufficiently detailed for the administration of more complex medication. A minority of schools would also value an additional summary version of the guidance to distribute to parents and to give schools an easy to follow synopsis of the overall guidance.

The parental responses are very positive regarding the level of information, support and practice by schools for their children with serious medication needs.

The interviews with relevant school staff by members of the inspection team found that practice across the schools was based on the guidance and adapted appropriately to meet the practical considerations of the pupils. The strong commitment of school staff to the holistic needs of the pupils requiring medication needs in school was evident.

5. Findings

School questionnaires

A total of 37 out of 60 schools responded to the questionnaire. The schools were asked to give the nature of pupils' conditions that required support with medication in school; schools responded with a wide variety of conditions with up to 59 pupils in mainstream schools and up to 60 pupils in special schools requiring support.

Nearly all of the schools found the guidance document adequate in supporting pupils with medication needs in schools.

Table 1 – the questionnaire responses

	Yes	No	No response to the question
Is the guidance document adequate to meet the requirements of staff in supporting pupils with medication needs?	34	*	*

*fewer than five

Schools were also asked if the guidance document could be improved further and for any additional suggestions. A minority of the schools indicated that a shorter information sheet could be produced to provide schools and parents with the essential information. In addition, a suggestion was made that an on-line editable version of the forms in the guidance document would be helpful to schools.

In summary, the schools responded that although the guidance document is lengthy, it is helpful to schools informing policy and practice towards supporting pupils with medication needs.

Parental questionnaires

A total of 46 parental questionnaires were returned from a total of 23 schools; 34 of the parental returns indicated that they were familiar with the guidance.

	Yes	No	No response to the question
Are you familiar with the guidance document?	34	12	0

A total of 40 parents commented and wrote of the good levels of contact they have with their schools, including regular meetings, information packs, leaflets, care plans, school policies, home diaries, copies of emergency plans, daily records of blood levels and medication, and sensitive consideration for the needs of their children. Given that a number of parents were unaware of the guidance, schools need to raise the profile of the guidance and perhaps a shortened version would help achieve this.

Interviews with schools

Interviews with staff of the seven schools chosen for visits by members of the team revealed that some schools have significant numbers of children with medication needs, for example a percentage of 12.5 of the enrolment in one primary school. The strong commitment by the schools to the medication and any subsequent emotional needs of their pupils is evident from the discussions with school staff.

The points itemised below were raised by the school staff interviewed.

- The large numbers of children with medication needs in some schools has put pressure on their resources to provide essential equipment such as refrigerators and lockable medication cabinets throughout the school building.
- There is considerable time involved in keeping the essential records of medication for pupils, and in maintaining regular and frequent contact with parents.
- There are inconsistencies in the support and provision, including training for staff, for pupils with medication needs available to schools by the Education and Library Boards and Health Trusts.
- There are a few inconsistencies in some of the advice given in the guidance document, specifically regarding pupils carrying their own medication in schools.
- The co-operation of parents with schools is an important factor in the success of schools' support for the pupils with medication needs.

6. Recommendations

The recommendations of this survey report are that the guidance document is reviewed regularly with additional information on new medication and procedures added as necessary. A short synopsis of the guidance would be helpful for schools and parents, and an on-line editable version of the forms for schools in the guidance document would also be useful.

7. Conclusion

This report concludes that almost all schools taking part in this survey are satisfied that the guidance document 'Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs' is sufficiently clear regarding advice and guidance and that parents are content the guidance document enables their child's school to support effectively his or her medication needs.

List of participating schools

Ballyclare High School
Ballyclare Primary School
Ben Madigan Preparatory School
Carrickfergus Grammar School
Castleberg High School
Ceara Special School
Cookstown High School
Cookstown Primary School
Currie Primary School
De La Salle High School
Downshire School, Carrickfergus
Florencecourt Primary School
Hart Memorial Primary School
Holy Cross Girls' Primary School, Belfast
Jones Memorial Primary School
Jordanstown Special School
Killowen Primary School
Longstone Special School
Magherafelt High School
Nettlefield Primary School
Rathore School
Riverdale Primary School
Rossmar Special School
St Anthony's Primary School
St Brigid's College
St Colmcille's Primary School
St Columban's College
St Joseph's Boy's School
St Joseph's College
St Joseph's Primary School, Strabane
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School
St Mary's Primary School, Newry
St Mary's Primary School, Dungannon
St Patrick's College, Belfast
St Patrick's High School
The High School, Ballynahinch
Willow Bridge School

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