SECTION 19 GUIDE FOR PARENTS

As parents, there are naturally concerns when a child is unable to attend school full time, or has a series of absences for health reasons, which may be for medical conditions, or for mental health, such as anxiety, or depression.
Good attendance in school has a host of benefits, not just short term, but lifelong. It is a known protective factor in the lives of all children and young people.

WHAT CAN SCHOOL DO

In many cases, where a child is unable to attend school, or has periods of absence, school has the capacity to meet needs, through making adaptations to ensure children do not miss out on education. This might be adaptations to the school day, transport arrangements, where and when the curriculum is delivered, referring on to other support services and developing a multi-agency plan.

WHY MIGHT SUPPORT BE NEEDED

Your child requires short term education in another setting, such as a hospital school. Or where your child requires help to catch up on missed learning.
However, if your child's health conditions are complex or long term, or too great to be managed by the home school, your child may require additional support from the local authority.

WHAT SHOULD PARENTS DO

If your child's health is affecting their learning, there are things you can do:
Contact your child's school to share your concerns
Share any medical evidence you may have, hospital visits or other information relevant to your child's health
Work with the school on an action plan of strategies and adaptations with gradual build up to returning full time.
If your child is in the process of having an Education, Health & Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA), or already has an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP), then speak with the case officer, request an early Annual Review with professionals to review your child's needs.

WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS DO

Wherever possible, your child's home school should continue to provide education, making adaptations as necessary, to ensure your child does not miss out on their education.
If a school has concerns that it cannot meet your child's needs, the school should:
Contact the local authority and make a referral to request support through Section 19
Provide the local authority with health or medical information
Provide attendance data and attainment data
Keep in close contact with you, as the parent, to ensure you are clear about processes and what happens next.

REINTEGRATION

The aim of any intervention, by schools or by the local authority, is always for your child to return to full time education as soon as their health conditions permit. As a parent, you will always be informed of any decisions made about your child and consulted with before any adaptation starts. You will be involved in review meetings with the school and decisions made about your child's education at all stages of the journey.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS

Speak to your child's school and request further support, information or guidance.
This might include requesting an EHCNA, if that is an appropriate next step.
Raise concerns about delays in provision or the type of support offered with your child's school.

Gov.Uk: Illness and your child's education
NHS: Is my child too ill for school?

SECTION 19 GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Local authorities must arrange suitable education for children of compulsory school age who cannot attend school due to illness, exclusion, or other reasons.

The Section 19 medical needs panel is applicable when absence reaches 15 days (consecutive or cumulative) due to health needs.

WHAT IS THE AIM OF SECTION 19

Section 19 panel is there to consider short term intervention or support for a child who cannot attend school for a medical reason or other in order for them to return to their current school placement.
(Section 19 panel does not consider excluded students as these needs are met through the 6th day provision of the exclusions process).

HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK

Referral must be made by the school, directly to the LA, once the school has considered if Support First and legal intervention may be required and with the agreement of the family. Referral is through an online form; school is notified of the panel date and the outcome within 15 term time working days of the panel. All communication will be via the school and not directly with parents.

WHAT SECTION 19 IS

Short term
Part of a reintegration plan
Educational Learning Support
To return the pupil to the school they are on roll with
On a case by case basis

WHAT SECTION 19 IS NOT

Cannot provide a permanent alternative provision school place
Cannot be instead of an EHCP application process (or fast-track this process)

HOW DOES THE PANEL WORK

The panel includes professionals across LA services, SEND, School Nursing, Paediatric consultant, CAT, and Educational Psychology.
The panel will have access to the information provided by the school, in advance of the panel meeting, along with medical records and information held by LA services.
Up to 12 cases are discussed at each panel meeting on a case by case basis and one of 5 outcomes is determined for action in each case.

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES

No case is rejected by the panel. The panel will determine one of five outcomes:
1 - Referral returned to school for more information.
2 - School must take further actions at their level.
3 - Case is suitable to be referred onwards to James Brindley Academy to assess if they can support.
4 - Other educational learning is required through the use of AV1 technology with home school.
5 - Support from other LA services may be offered / suggested for referral.

It is not possible to appeal the decision of the Section 19 panel. Where the Local Authority offers an outcome, that it deems to be reasonably practicable for that child, it is not under a duty to provide further alternative education because the child is not taking advantage of that facility. Parents should be aware that it is their duty, under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to secure an education for children of compulsory school age which, in this circumstance, is available.

However, Section 19 should form part of a reintegration plan between the school and the family and should be regularly reviewed with progress steps towards the child returning to school full time. As part of this, a school may submit a new referral for the panel to consider after a 2 month period of the initial referral.