Local Operational Procedure: Return to School Following Illness and Management of Acute Illness During the School Day.

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Document No: 1 Edition No: 2 No. of pages: 4 Author: Kate Fleming Reviewed By: Marie Burke Carmona School Principal Des North Director of Services	Date of implementation: 04/04/2024 Reviewed on: 05/06/2025 Approved By: Des North, Director of Services. Marie Burke School Principle Kate Fleming Date:02/07/2025 Next Review Date: 05/06/2027

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework for the assessment and management of students returning to school following illness, hospital admission or infectious disease, and for the management of students who become acutely unwell during the school day.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Registered Nurses
- Principal and Senior Leadership Team
- Teaching Staff
- Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- All students attending the school
- Parents/Guardians

Policy Statement

Carmona School is committed to providing a safe learning environment for students with complex medical needs while minimising the risk of infection transmission and ensuring timely clinical intervention when required.

Students should only attend school when they are medically stable and well enough to participate safely in the school day.

Decisions regarding sending a student home or emergency escalation will be based on individual clinical assessment, the student's medical baseline, professional nursing judgement and current HSE infection control guidance.

Procedure

Management of Students Who Become Unwell During the School Day

The nurse will assess the student's overall condition.

If the student:

- Appears clinically stable and within their normal baseline, they may remain in school.
- Appears unwell, clinically unstable or significantly outside their normal baseline, the nurse, in consultation with the Principal where appropriate, may determine that the student is not fit to remain in school and parents will be contacted to collect them.

Temperature Assessment

- Obtain the student's temperature.
- If temperature is 38.0°C or above, administer prescribed antipyretic medication in accordance with the student's Kardex and parental consent.
- Reassess the student after approximately one hour.

If

- temperature returns to the student's normal range
- the student is clinically well
- and there are no other concerns

The student may remain in School

- If the temperature remains **38.0°C or above**, and or the student is presenting as clinically unwell, parents/guardians must be contacted to collect the student.
- Students must be **temperature free for a minimum of 24 hours without the use of antipyretics before returning to school.**

Vomiting and/or Diarrhoea
If a student develops:
- vomiting;
- diarrhoea; or
- vomiting/diarrhoea accompanied by a temperature greater than 38°C

staff must:
1. Implement appropriate infection prevention and control precautions.
2. Nurse the student using standard and transmission-based precautions as required.
3. Isolate the student where appropriate.
4. Inform the Principal.
5. Contact parents/guardians for immediate collection.

Students with suspected infectious gastroenteritis must not return to school until **48 hours after the last episode of vomiting and/or diarrhoea**, in in accordance with current HSE guidance.

Clinical Deterioration
If a student's condition deteriorates beyond their usual baseline, Carmona School nurses will use clinical judgement to determine the most appropriate course of action.
This may include:
- continued monitoring;
- parental collection;
- contacting emergency services (999/112).

Students with Reflux or Feed-Related Symptoms
Some students may experience vomiting or loose stools as part of their normal medical condition due to reflux, enteral feeding or medication.

The nurse should assess whether symptoms are:
- consistent with the student's usual baseline; or
- suggestive of an infectious illness (for example, norovirus).

Where infectious illness is suspected, the student should not attend school until **48 hours after the last episode of vomiting and/or diarrhoea**, in in accordance with current HSE guidance.

Students with Thermoregulation Difficulties
Some students are unable to regulate body temperature effectively and may develop elevated temperatures due to overheating.
The nurse should first implement environmental cooling measures, including:

- reducing room temperature;
- removing excess clothing;
- encouraging fluids where appropriate;
- other individual cooling measures identified within the student's care plan.

If:

- temperature remains elevated; or
- other vital signs fall outside the student's normal baseline,

parents should be contacted to collect the student for further medical assessment.

Hospital Transfer

Where a student requires hospital transfer:

The following documentation must accompany the student whenever possible:

- Current Kardex
- Hospital Passport
- Communication Passport
- Any additional relevant clinical documentation
- Parents/guardians should be informed immediately.

Return to School Following Illness

Prior to, or on return to school:

- Students must be temperature free for **a minimum of 24 hours without the use of antipyretics.**
- Students with suspected infectious gastroenteritis must not return to school until **48 hours after the last episode of vomiting and/or diarrhoea**, in in accordance with current HSE guidance.
- Parents/guardians should communicate with the school nurse regarding the student's illness where appropriate.
- Any new medication prescribed following illness or hospital admission**, students must be taking them for a minimum of 24hours before returning to school**.
- All new medications must be added to the student's Kardex before administration in school.
- Where clinically indicated, the nurse may complete a full set of baseline observations (vital signs) to ensure the student has returned to their normal clinical baseline.

Antibiotic Guidance

Students receiving antibiotics may return to school only when they meet the following criteria:

Respiratory infections

- Minimum of **48 hours after commencing antibiotics**
- Clinically stable and well enough to attend school
- No longer considered infectious

Other bacterial infections requiring antibiotics

- Minimum of **24 hours after commencing antibiotics**
- Clinically stable and well enough to attend school
- Fit to participate safely in school activities

Hospital Admission and Return to School

Students should not return to school until:

- they have been **discharged from hospital for at least 24 hours**
- they are medically stable and well enough to attend school.

Where there are ongoing concerns regarding fitness to return, the school nurse may request further clarification from parents or the treating medical team.

Parent and Emergency Contact Responsibilities

Parents/guardians must:

- provide up-to-date emergency contact details;
- provide an alternative Next of Kin (NOK) who can collect the student promptly if parents are unavailable;
- ensure emergency contacts understand that the student may be discharged into their care or transferred to hospital if clinically required.

Professional Judgement

This policy provides guidance for the management of students following illness and those who become unwell during the school day. Due to the complexity of Carmona school's student's, our school nurses are expected to apply professional clinical judgement in every situation.

Individual medical care plans, baseline observations and specialist advice should always take precedence where appropriate to ensure the safest outcome for each student.