

School policy guidelines



ALERT!
to asthma

SCHOOL

Contents

Section 1: Developing a school asthma policy

Introduction	4
Example school asthma policy	5
Background	5
Asthma medicines	5
Record keeping	6
Exercise and activity – PE and games	6
Out-of-hours sport	7
School environment	7
Making the school asthma-friendly	7
When a child or young person is falling behind in lessons	8
Asthma attacks	8
Using a <i>School Asthma Card</i>	9

Section 2: Roles and responsibilities

Employers	11
Head teachers and principals	11
School staff	12
PE teachers	12
School nurses	12
Individual doctor/asthma nurse of a child or young person with asthma	13
Parents/carers	13
Pupils	13
Frequently asked questions	14



Developing a school asthma policy

In this section:

Introduction	4
Example school asthma policy	5
Background	5
Asthma medicines	5
Record keeping	6
Exercise and activity – PE and games	6
Out-of-hours sport	7
School environment	7
Making the school asthma-friendly	7
When a child or young person is falling behind in lessons	8
Asthma attacks	8
Using a <i>School Asthma Card</i>	9



School policy guidelines

Developing a school asthma policy for your school

Introduction

A school asthma policy can be a stand-alone policy or it can be incorporated into part of another school policy, for example the health and safety, first aid, pupils with medical needs or general health policy. Every school is different so every policy will vary slightly. However, every policy should incorporate the following principles.

The school:

- recognises that asthma is a widespread, serious but controllable condition and the school welcomes all pupils with asthma
- ensures that pupils with asthma can and do participate fully in all aspects of school life, including art lessons, PE, science, visits, outings or field trips and other out-of-hours school activities
- recognises that pupils with asthma need immediate access to reliever inhalers at all times
- keeps a record of all pupils with asthma and the medicines they take
- ensures that the whole school environment, including the physical, social, sporting and educational environment, is favourable to pupils with asthma
- ensures that all pupils understand asthma
- ensures that all staff (including supply teachers and support staff) who come into contact with pupils with asthma know what to do in an asthma attack
- understands that pupils with asthma may experience bullying and has procedures in place to prevent this
- will work in partnership with all interested parties including the school's governing body, all school staff, school nurses, parents/carers, employers of school staff, doctors, nurses and pupils to ensure the policy is planned, implemented and maintained successfully.

An asthma policy should outline how each of the above points will be implemented within a particular school. Each school will need to develop and agree their own policy.

Every school is different so every policy will vary slightly.





Example of a school asthma policy

Below is an example of a school policy for a primary school in England.

Background

This policy has been written with advice from the Department for Education & Skills, Asthma UK, the local education authority, local healthcare professionals, the school health service, parents/carers, the governing body and pupils.

This school recognises that asthma is a widespread, serious but controllable condition affecting many pupils at the school. The school positively welcomes all pupils with asthma. This school encourages pupils with asthma to achieve their potential in all aspects of school life by having a clear policy that is understood by school staff, their employers (the local education authority) and pupils. Supply teachers and new staff are also made aware of the policy. All staff who come into contact with pupils with asthma are provided with training on asthma from the school nurse who has had asthma training. Training is updated once a year.

Asthma medicines

- Immediate access to reliever medicines is essential. Pupils with asthma are encouraged to carry their reliever inhaler as soon as the parent/carer, doctor or asthma nurse and class teacher agree they are mature enough. The reliever inhalers of younger children are kept in the classroom in a spice rack.
- Parents/carers are asked to ensure that the school is provided with a labelled spare reliever inhaler. The class teacher will hold this separately in case the pupil's own inhaler runs out, or is lost or forgotten. All inhalers must be labelled with the child's name by the parent/carer.
- School staff are not required to administer asthma medicines to pupils (except in an emergency), however many of the staff at this school are happy to do this. School staff who agree to administer medicines are insured by the local education authority when acting in agreement with this policy. All school staff will let pupils take their own medicines when they need to.

School policy guidelines

Example of a school asthma policy (continued)

Record keeping

- At the beginning of each school year or when a child joins the school, parents/carers are asked if their child has any medical conditions including asthma on their enrolment form.
- All parents/carers of children with asthma are consequently sent an Asthma UK *School Asthma Card** to give to their child's doctor or asthma nurse to complete. Parents/carers are asked to return them to the school. From this information the school keeps its asthma register, which is available to all school staff. *School Asthma Cards** are then sent to parents/carers of children with asthma on an annual basis to update. Parents/carers are also asked to update or exchange the card for a new one if their child's medicines, or how much they take, changes during the year.

Exercise and activity – PE and games

- Taking part in sports, games and activities is an essential part of school life for all pupils. All teachers know which children in their class have asthma and all PE teachers at the school are aware of which pupils have asthma from the school's asthma register.
- Pupils with asthma are encouraged to participate fully in all PE lessons. PE teachers will remind pupils whose asthma is triggered by exercise to take their reliever inhaler before the lesson, and to thoroughly warm up and down before and after the lesson. It is agreed with PE staff that each pupil's inhaler will be labelled and kept in a box at the site of the lesson. If a pupil needs to use their inhaler during a lesson they will be encouraged to do so.
- Classroom teachers follow the same principles as described above for games and activities involving physical activity.



Pupils with asthma are encouraged to participate fully in all PE lessons.



43%

of children with asthma,
who took part in The *Blue Peter*/Asthma UK
Survey said they often have to use their
inhaler when they play sport

Out-of-hours sport

- There has been a large emphasis in recent years on increasing the number of children and young people involved in exercise and sport in and outside of school. The health benefits of exercise are well documented and this is also true for children and young people with asthma. It is therefore important that the school involve pupils with asthma as much as possible in after school clubs.
- PE teachers, classroom teachers and out-of-hours school sport coaches are aware of the potential triggers for pupils with asthma when exercising, tips to minimise these triggers and what to do in the event of an asthma attack. All staff and sports coaches are provided with training from the school nurse, who has had asthma training.
- This information is also provided on the Asthma UK *Out There & Active* poster*, which is displayed in several locations around the school. The poster helps to encourage pupils with asthma to be active and get more involved in PE and exercise and has tips to help them do this. An accompanying Asthma UK parent pack that informs parents/carers about the changes in PE at the school and how their child can get involved at different levels is also available for staff to give to parents/carers of pupils with asthma.

School environment

- The school does all that it can to ensure the school environment is favourable to pupils with asthma. The school does not keep furry or feathery animals and has a definitive no-smoking policy. As far as possible the school does not use chemicals in science and art lessons that are potential triggers for pupils with asthma. Pupils with asthma are encouraged to leave the room and go and sit in the school office if particular fumes trigger their asthma.

Making the school asthma-friendly

- The school ensures that all pupils understand asthma. Asthma can be included in the National Curriculum Key Stages 1 and 2 in science, design and technology, geography, history and PE (for more details see *Asthma Resources for Pupils*, page 4).
- Pupils with asthma and their friends are encouraged to go to a club that is run at lunchtimes once a month by the school nurse, who has had asthma training.

School policy guidelines

Example of a school asthma policy (continued)

When a pupil is falling behind in lessons

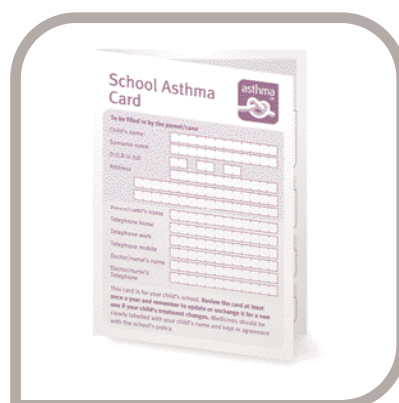
- If a pupil is missing a lot of time at school or is always tired because their asthma is disturbing their sleep at night, the class teacher will initially talk to the parents/carers to work out how to prevent their child from falling behind. If appropriate, the teacher will then talk to the school nurse and special education needs coordinator about the pupil's needs.
- The school recognises that it is possible for pupils with asthma to have special education needs due to their asthma.

Asthma attacks

- All staff who come into contact with pupils with asthma know what to do in the event of an asthma attack.
- In the event of an asthma attack the school follows the procedure outlined by Asthma UK in its *School Asthma Pack*. This procedure is visibly displayed in the staffroom and every classroom (see page 2 and 3 of *Asthma Awareness for School Staff*).

Using a *School Asthma Card*

If your school is planning to use a *School Asthma Card**, you will need to send a *School Asthma Card** to the parents/carers with a letter so parents/carers can ask their child's doctor or asthma nurse to fill it in. Opposite is a sample letter you may like to adapt for your school.



A School Asthma Card is an ideal way to record information about a pupils asthma.



'When we had PE at school my teacher made me sit out. It made me feel different and I felt left out.'

NATALIE MILLER, 16

St John's School
Guildford
Surrey
GU7 2WS

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: The School Asthma Card

Thank you for informing us of your child's asthma on his/her registration form. As part of accepted good practice and with advice from the Department for Education & Skills, Asthma UK and the school's governing bodies, our school has recently established a new School Asthma Policy for use by all staff.

As part of this new policy, we are asking all parents and carers of children with asthma to help us by completing a school asthma card for their child/children. Please take this card to your child's doctor/asthma nurse to fill in and return it to the school by 25 September 2006.

The completed card will store helpful details about your child's current medicines, triggers, individual symptoms and emergency contact numbers. The card will help school staff to better understand your child's individual condition.

Please make sure the card is regularly checked and updated by your child's doctor or asthma nurse and the school is kept informed about changes to your child's medicines, including how much they take and when.

I look forward to receiving your child's completed school asthma card.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely



Head teacher

A young boy in a white shirt is seen from behind, with his right hand raised high in the air. He is in a classroom setting, with other students and a teacher visible in the blurred background.

Roles and responsibilities

In this section:

Employers	11
Head teachers and principals	11
School staff	12
PE teachers	12
School nurses	12
Individual doctor/asthma nurse of a child or young person with asthma	13
Pupils	13
Parents/carers	13



Asthma prevalence is **higher among boys** than girls in the UK (under age 14)

Roles and responsibilities

Asthma UK recommends the following roles in developing an asthma policy:

Employers

Employers have a responsibility to:

- ensure the health and safety of their employees (all staff) and anyone else on the premises or taking part in school activities (this includes pupils). This responsibility extends to those staff and others leading activities taking place off site, such as visits, outings or field trips. Employers therefore have a responsibility to ensure that an appropriate asthma policy is in place
- make sure the asthma policy is effectively monitored and regularly updated
- report to parents/carers, pupils, school staff and local health authorities about the successes and failures of the policy
- provide indemnity for teachers who volunteer to administer medicine to pupils with asthma who need help.

Head teachers and principals

Head teachers and principals have a responsibility to:

- plan an individually tailored school asthma policy with the help of school staff, school nurses, local education authority advice and the support of their employers
- plan the school's asthma policy in line with devolved national guidance
- liaise between interested parties – school staff, school nurses, parents/carers, governors, the school health service and pupils
- ensure the plan is put into action, with good communication of the policy to everyone
- ensure every aspect of the policy is maintained
- assess the training and development needs of staff and arrange for them to be met
- ensure all supply teachers and new staff know the school asthma policy
- regularly monitor the policy and how well it is working
- delegate a staff member to check the expiry date of spare reliever inhalers and maintain the school asthma register
- report back to their employers and their local education authority about the school asthma policy.



School staff

All school staff have a responsibility to:

- understand the school asthma policy
- know which pupils they come into contact with have asthma
- know what to do in an asthma attack
- allow pupils with asthma immediate access to their reliever inhaler
- tell parents/carers if their child has had an asthma attack
- tell parents/carers if their child is using more reliever inhaler than they usually would
- ensure pupils have their asthma medicines with them when they go on a school trip or out of the classroom
- ensure pupils who have been unwell catch up on missed school work
- be aware that a pupil may be tired because of night-time symptoms
- keep an eye out for pupils with asthma experiencing bullying
- liaise with parents/carers, the school nurse and special educational needs coordinators or Learning Support & Special Educational Needs Department if a child is falling behind with their work because of their asthma.

PE teachers

PE teachers have a responsibility to:

- understand asthma and the impact it can have on pupils. Pupils with asthma should not be forced to take part in activity if they feel unwell. They should also not be excluded from activities that they wish to take part in if their asthma is well controlled
- ensure pupils have their reliever inhaler with them during activity or exercise and are allowed to take it when needed
- if a pupil has asthma symptoms while exercising, allow them to stop, take their reliever inhaler and as soon as they feel better allow them to return to activity. (Most pupils with asthma should wait at least five minutes)
- remind pupils with asthma whose symptoms are triggered by exercise to use their reliever inhaler immediately before warming up
- ensure pupils with asthma always warm up and down thoroughly.

School nurses

School nurses have a responsibility to:

- help plan/update the school asthma policy
- if the school nurse has an asthma qualification it can be their responsibility to provide regular training for school staff in managing asthma
- provide information about where schools can get training if they are not able to provide specialist training themselves.

NB: In some boarding schools, school nurses may hold further responsibilities in the management and monitoring of pupils' asthma (for example, ensuring all pupils with asthma have a written personal asthma action plan).



‘One of Alex’s teachers had a little “code” to remind him to take his inhaler with him to PE – so that no unnecessary attention was drawn to him.’

DI TREECE, TALKING ABOUT HER SON ALEX

Individual doctor/asthma nurse of a child or young person with asthma

Doctors and asthma nurses have a responsibility to:

- complete the school asthma cards provided by parents/carers
- ensure the child or young person knows how to use their asthma inhaler (and spacer) effectively
- provide the school with information and advice if a child or young person in their care has severe asthma symptoms (with the consent of the child or young person and their parents/carers)
- offer the parents/carers of every child a written personal asthma action plan. Every young person should also be offered a written personal asthma action plan themselves.

Pupils

Pupils have a responsibility to:

- treat other pupils with and without asthma equally
- let any pupil having an asthma attack take their reliever inhaler (usually blue) and ensure a member of staff is called
- tell their parents/carers, teacher or PE teacher when they are not feeling well
- treat asthma medicines with respect
- know how to gain access to their medicine in an emergency
- know how to take their own asthma medicines.

Parents/carers

Parents/carers have a responsibility to:

- tell the school if their child has asthma
- ensure the school has a complete and up-to-date school asthma card for their child
- inform the school about the medicines their child requires during school hours
- inform the school of any medicines the child requires while taking part in visits, outings or field trips and other out-of-school activities such as school team sports
- tell the school about any changes to their child’s medicines, what they take and how much
- inform the school of any changes to their child’s asthma (for example, if their symptoms are getting worse or they are sleeping badly due to their asthma)
- ensure their child’s reliever inhaler (and spacer where relevant) is labelled with their name
- provide the school with a spare reliever inhaler labelled with their child’s name
- ensure that their child’s reliever inhaler and the spare is within its expiry date
- keep their child at home if they are not well enough to attend school
- ensure their child catches up on any school work they have missed
- ensure their child has regular asthma reviews with their doctor or asthma nurse (every six to 12 months)
- ensure their child has a written personal asthma action plan to help them manage their child’s condition.



School policy guidelines

Frequently asked questions

Q Why is an asthma register at school important?

It is important to identify all pupils at school with asthma so that all school staff and supply teachers are aware of the pupils with asthma and their asthma triggers. An asthma register will:

- help staff to remind the right pupils to keep their reliever inhalers with them at all times
- help inform staff and supply teachers about the individual needs of pupils with asthma
- allow important contact details for pupils with asthma to be kept in one central location
- assist the school and parents/carers to ensure asthma medicines kept at school are within the expiry date
- help the school identify common asthma triggers that they can reduce or control in the school environment
- allow pupils with asthma to participate more fully in all aspects of school life.

Q How should the school asthma register be kept up to date?

- An identified member of school staff should have responsibility for the school asthma register. Part of this responsibility should be to ensure that the expiry dates of all spare reliever inhalers at school are checked every six months.
- This member of staff should also ensure that all parents/carers are asked every year if their child has asthma. This could be part of their registration form.
- This member of staff should ensure a follow up letter is sent to all parents/carers of children and young people with asthma (see the draft letter to parents/carers, page 9).
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers to provide the school with details of what medicines their child is taking during the school day. Asthma UK produces a *School Asthma Card** that all parents/carers of children and young people with asthma can be given to pass on to their child's doctor or asthma nurse to complete. Parents/carers should then return these completed cards to the school.



Doctor-diagnosed
asthma accounts
for **5%**
of all
consultations in children
in the UK

Q How should the school get agreement and support for the school asthma policy?

Involve all relevant groups in developing the policy including:

- pupils with and without asthma
- all school staff
- the school health service and other local health professionals
- the local health authority
- parents/carers and their representative bodies
- the local education authority.

To ensure ongoing support for the policy, regular monitoring and updates of school asthma policies are essential. It is also important to make sure the policy is achievable and realistic for each individual school.

Q Do school staff need training?

- It is important that all school staff who come into contact with pupils with asthma are trained and that the training is updated regularly. School staff cannot be expected to be responsible for a particular condition without training.
- If the school nurse has an asthma qualification it could be their responsibility to provide training for school staff in managing asthma.
- If the school nurse does not have an asthma qualification it is their responsibility to provide information about where schools can get training, through their local health authority or local healthcare contacts.

1 in 10 children has asthma



Where can I find out more?

Asthma UK is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the 5.2 million – including 1.1 million children – people in the UK with asthma.

Asthma UK **Adviseline**

Ask an asthma nurse specialist

08457 01 02 03

asthma.org.uk/adviseline

Asthma UK **website**

Read the latest independent advice and news on asthma

asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK **publications**

Request booklets, factfiles and other materials with independent, specialist information on every aspect of asthma

020 7786 5000

info@asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK **membership**

Become a member of Asthma UK and receive *Asthma Magazine* four times a year

020 7786 5000

membership@asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK

Summit House
70 Wilson Street
London EC2A 2DB
T 020 7786 4900
F 020 7256 6075
info@asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK Cymru

Eastgate House
35–34 Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 0SB
wales@asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK Northern Ireland

Peace House
224 Lisburn Road
Belfast BT9 6GE
ni@asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK Scotland

4 Queen Street
Edinburgh EH2 1JE
scotland@asthma.org.uk