

4th October 2023

Dear Headteacher

Over the Counter (OTC) Medicines for Children

In 2022/23, the NHS Kent and Medway spent more than £18million on medications for self-limiting, short-term illnesses and minor conditions that could potentially be bought over the counter.

NHS Kent and Medway is committed to delivering the best value to patients by ensuring we use our resources well. Therefore, the NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB) has issued a position statement to all prescribers within the area stating, “**Prescribing of items available OTC for self-care is NOT supported**”. This statement is in line with the [NHS England guidelines](#) for conditions for which over-the-counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care.

This means that certain medicines may no longer be prescribed if you can buy them ‘over the counter’ (OTC) in shops and pharmacies. It is unlikely that a prescribers will issue a prescription for OTC medications for any patient, including children, and a doctor’s prescription should therefore not be required before administering such medicines to a child.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) licenses all medicines and classifies them as OTC when it considers it safe and appropriate that they may be used without a prescription. It is therefore appropriate for these medicines to be given, or authorised, by parents when they consider it necessary. This may be in a home or nursery or school environment.

Considering this, we are writing to ask you to kindly review your policy for administration of medicine within your school to ensure that it is up to date, reflecting that a prescription is not required for administration of medicine to children that can be bought OTC.

The statutory framework for the early year’s foundation stage “Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five” (effective 12 July 2023) and The Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions - December 2015 statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England states that non-prescription medication (OTC medicines) can be administered if the parent has given prior written consent for the administration of any medication. Further information on this guidance can be found in the supporting information of this letter.

We hope that this information is useful to you and will assist in ensuring that your school policy is fully up to date and reflects the best practice that NHS Kent and Medway ICB promotes.

If you have any comments or concerns regarding this information, then please email kmicb.medicinesoptimisation@nhs.net where a member of the Medicines Optimisation Department will be able to support.

Yours sincerely

Gaye Lewington
Chief Pharmacist – NHS Kent and Medway



Supporting information

Statutory framework for the early year's foundation stage "Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five" (effective 12 July 2023)

[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Page 33 states:

3.46. Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, for administering medicines. It must include systems for obtaining information about a child's needs for medicines, and for keeping this information up-to-date. Training must be provided for staff where the administration of medicine requires medical or technical knowledge. Prescription medicines must not be administered unless they have been prescribed for a child by a doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist (medicines containing aspirin should only be given if prescribed by a doctor).

3.47. Medicine (both prescription and non-prescription⁵⁵) must only be administered to a child where written permission for that particular medicine has been obtained from the child's parent and/or carer. Providers must keep a written record each time a medicine is administered to a child and inform the child's parents and/or carers on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

⁵⁵ Non-prescription medicines can include those that can be purchased from pharmacies (including some over the counter medicines which can only be purchased from a pharmacy), health shops and supermarkets. See also BMA advice: [Prescribing over-the-counter medicines in nurseries and schools \(bma.org.uk\)](https://www.bma.org.uk/prescribing-over-the-counter-medicines-in-nurseries-and-schools)

Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions - December 2015 statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Page 20 states:

No child under 16 should be given prescription or non-prescription medicines without their parent's written consent – except in exceptional circumstances where the medicine has been prescribed to the child without the knowledge of the parents. In such cases, every effort should be made to encourage the child or young person to involve their parents while respecting their right to confidentiality. Schools should set out the circumstances in which non-prescription medicines may be administered.

A child under 16 should never be given medicine containing aspirin unless prescribed by a doctor.

Medication, e.g., for pain relief, should never be administered without first checking maximum dosages and when the previous dose was taken. Parents should be informed.

British Medical Association: Prescribing over-the-counter medicines in nurseries and schools.

[Prescribing over-the-counter medicines in nurseries and schools \(bma.org.uk\)](https://www.bma.org.uk/prescribing-over-the-counter-medicines-in-nurseries-and-schools)