

Foreword

Chief Officer for Learning and Achievement

Most children with asthma can lead a full and active life. These policy guidelines are offered to schools as a starting point for developing and adopting their own policies and procedures in order to help children and young people to manage their asthma while they are at school. It will make sure that Wrexham County Borough Council, school staff, governors, doctors and nurses work closely together to improve the day to day management of asthma in schoolchildren, allowing them to participate as fully as possible in day to day school activities and enabling them to reach their full potential.

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Introduction

Asthma is one of the most common chronic childhood conditions. Its impact on daily life ranges from mild to severe. Childhood deaths from asthma, though thankfully rare, still happen.

Children spend over a third of their waking hours at school, so it is important that their daily health needs are acknowledged. This is endorsed by the Wales Assembly Government and schools should also refer to Welsh Assembly Government guidance; in particular **Access to Education and Support for Children and Young People with Medical Needs May 2010** Circular No: 003/2010 and also to *Asthma UK Guidance for schools*.

Indemnity

Staff in schools who volunteer to administer medication will be provided with indemnity.

In emergencies, staff should act as any reasonable prudent parent would, which may include giving medication.

General Information

Access to Inhalers

Delay in taking reliever inhalers can result in severe asthma attacks.

Do

- Allow access to inhalers during breaks, before exercise and during exercise. Pupils whose asthma is triggered by exercise should take their inhaler before warming up for exercise
- Allow children to carry their inhalers when mature enough (around age 7)
- Remind shy children to take their inhalers
- Remember inhalers for swimming and off site activities
- Talk firmly to non-asthmatics who experiment with relievers about the need to treat medicines with respect. They may experience a fast heart rate or tremor, but no long term effects

Don't

- Lock inhalers in central offices

Tips

- Keep young children's inhalers and spacers in a box in the classroom
- Take the inhaler box with the register for fire drills
- PE teachers need to encourage those with exercise-induced symptoms to take their reliever just before activity; warm up with a few short sprints over 5 minutes; take it again during exercise if they get symptoms; take a rest until they feel better.
- Encourage children with asthma to participate in all school activities

Other Medication and School Trips

As well as relievers, children may use preventer inhalers although use in school time would be unusual.

Some children may also take other medication for asthma. Any of these may be needed during residential or long day trips. School letters about trips etc, should include a reminder to pack inhalers and any other medication required.

Staff Awareness in Asthma Emergencies

- All staff need to be able to manage attacks
- 'Staff will do what a "reasonable parent" would do in the circumstances prevailing at the time'
- Triggers such as dust or cold air can cause breathing difficulty, sometimes accompanied by cough and wheeze. This is an asthma attack, when reliever inhalers are needed
- For mild attacks children should take their usual reliever inhaler
- Classroom posters which contain emergency information should be displayed in key areas throughout the school

The School Environment

Training

Head teachers are responsible for assessing and arranging for training needs to be met. Ideally, all staff should have asthma management knowledge. Schools should liaise with School Nurses or other organisations who provide school training such as *Alert to Asthma* on the Asthma UK website www.asthma.org.uk and inform the school nurse if they have done this.

Asthma Link People

- Each school should have identified asthma link people (ALPs)
- Training and updates – see above

Home/School Liaison

- Inform parents about the school's policy
- Ask parents to complete and update asthma records. It is recommended that Asthma UK School Cards are used which are available free from Asthma UK. For pupils under the care of a hospital consultant some may require a "Severe asthma school care plan." This will be written in conjunction with parents / carers and the Children's Community Asthma Nurse
- Remember that absence of parental consent should not stop staff from acting appropriately in emergencies

- ALPs should report concerns to parents, who in turn would refer to their GP about:

- frequent inhaler use
- lack of attention in class
- unusual tiredness

These signs may indicate potentially undiagnosed or poorly controlled asthma.

Minimising Triggers

Minimise exposure to potential triggers. Avoid:

- feathery and furry school pets
- pollen producing plants
- fumes - use fume cupboards where possible and allow affected children to leave the room
- smoking - a completely smoke free environment is mandatory in Wrexham schools.

Sample Letters

Sample Letter A

(sent to all parents of children with asthma, as identified by the link person from admission forms)

Dear Parent

Why are we writing to parents of children who have asthma?

I am pleased to advise you that this school takes its responsibilities for pupils with asthma very seriously.

As part of accepted good practice, we are now asking all parents of pupils with asthma to help us to complete a school Asthma Record for their child. The record will help school staff to ensure that pupils with asthma receive the best possible treatment at all times.

What will happen in school if your child has an asthma attack?

The record will give details of your child's current treatment and what steps to take if an asthma attack happens at school. In case of asthma emergencies, the school keeps a spacer for use with your child's metered dose inhaler

What are we asking you to do?

Please fill in your child's details on the asthma record form. You may like to ask your doctor or asthma nurse to help you with this. Also ask your pharmacist to label your child's inhaler, not just the box which it comes in

What will happen every year?

You will be asked to update the record yearly, but please inform the school in writing if treatment is changed before this time so that the record can be updated.

I look forward to receiving the completed record. Thank you for your co-operation in this important matter. Please return your completed form to me as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Sample Letter B

(for annual updates of asthma records)

Dear Parent

Re: Annual Update of School Asthma Record

Your child's **asthma record** / school asthma card for last year is enclosed. Please fill out a new form for this year and return it as soon as possible. Could I also remind you to check that your child has enough inhalers and that all inhalers are in date and labelled by your pharmacist with your child's name and dosage details.

Yours sincerely

Roles and Responsibilities

Headteachers

- Be responsible for overall implementation
- Communicate, maintain and monitor policy
- Assess staff training needs and arrange for these to be met
- Nominate and support link person / people
- Ask parents to update records
- Define responsibilities for checking expiry dates on medications and washing spacers in soapy water once a month and letting air dry as per instructions.

School Governors

- Approve policy
- Monitor and report on effectiveness

Local Authority

- Support the policy
- Provide indemnity for staff who administer medication

School Staff

- Understand policy
- Allow immediate access to relievers
- Report concerns
- Ensure pupils have inhalers on school trips and pre-exercise

School Asthma Link People

- Distribute information
- Maintain emergency spacer kit
- Record asthma concerns and relay to school nursing staff
- Identify pupils newly diagnosed with asthma and send parents record to complete
- Update records annually
- Promote positive asthma messages

School Nursing Staff

- If there is a significant problem liaise with and support link person, and liaise with Community Asthma Sisters
- Offer initial training and annual updates

Pupils

- Treat children with and without asthma equally
- Allow inhalers to be used when appropriate. Ensure a staff member is called
- Treat medication with respect

Parents

- Inform school if child has asthma, medication required and changes as they happen
 - Complete and return asthma record
- Provide spacer
- Ensure inhalers are in date, and pharmacy have labelled them with child's name and dosage
 - Take inhalers home at the end of the school year
 - Keep child at home if he/she is too ill to attend school

GPs and Practice Asthma Nurses

- Prescribe suitable device for child's ability
- Prescribe metered dose inhaler compatible with school spacer for use in severe attacks, labelled 10-20 puffs via spacer
- Prescribe preventers twice daily
- Help complete school records

Pharmacy

- Label inhaler not just the box