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Statutory:	Policy provided centrally for adoption by schools with minimal amendment to the core text. Changes are allowed to the text where indicated

Management of Infectious Illness

St Christopher's Cowley

Approved by:	**JGB**
Date:	**July 2026**
Next review date:	**31 July 2027**

Adopted by school:	**JGB**
Date:	**September 2026**

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how ODST schools manage infectious illnesses in children and young people, including when medical absence from school is required. Its purpose is to reduce transmission, protect pupils and staff, and ensure decisions are proportionate and based on national guidance.
The policy is informed by UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) guidance and the EYFS statutory framework. It should be read alongside:

- UKHSA: *Health protection in schools and other childcare facilities*
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities
- *Preventing and controlling infections in children and young people's settings*
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities/preventing-and-controlling-infections
- *Specific educational settings and populations: additional considerations*
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities/specific-educational-settings-and-populations-additional-health-protection-considerations

2. Principles

Children are more susceptible to infection, particularly in group settings. While unnecessary absence from school creates avoidable disruption for families, failure to exclude when required may increase the risk of outbreaks.

ODST schools will balance these factors by following national guidance and applying consistent, evidence-based decisions.

Core principles are:

- maintaining good hygiene practices across all settings
- identifying symptoms early and responding appropriately
- excluding pupils and staff only where necessary
- supporting prompt return to education once safe

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Headteachers are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented effectively. Staff must follow procedures and report concerns promptly.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- keep children at home when they are unwell and meet medical absence criteria
- inform the school of diagnoses where relevant
- follow public health advice on return to school

4. Infection Prevention and Control

All schools must implement effective infection prevention measures as part of their statutory health and safety duties.

In practice, this includes:

- regular handwashing and respiratory hygiene
- cleaning of frequently touched surfaces
- safe handling of bodily fluids and first aid incidents
- ensuring good ventilation where possible

Transmission can occur through direct contact, airborne droplets, contaminated surfaces, or ingestion of contaminated food or water. Schools must ensure staff understand these routes and apply appropriate control measures in line with UKHSA guidance.

Where a child becomes unwell whilst in school or an early years setting, they will be cared for in a safe and appropriate area and supervised at all times. Parents or carers will be contacted promptly and expected to collect the child as soon as possible. Appropriate hygiene and infection control measures will be followed throughout.

5. Medical Absence from School

Medical absence decisions must follow UKHSA guidance on infectious diseases affecting children and young people.

A pupil should be excluded where they:

- have symptoms that indicate an infectious illness
- are within the infectious period of a confirmed condition
- are unable to follow hygiene practices (particularly younger children)

Common examples include:

- diarrhoea and vomiting: exclude for 48 hours after last symptoms
- chickenpox: exclude until lesions have crusted
- measles: exclude for 5 days after onset of rash
- scarlet fever: return 24 hours after starting antibiotics
- whooping cough: exclude for 5 days after starting antibiotics

Schools should not routinely exclude for mild illnesses where guidance does not require it (e.g. conjunctivitis), but should monitor symptoms carefully.

Where there is uncertainty, advice must be sought from UKHSA or local health protection teams.

6. Supporting Vulnerable Pupils

Some pupils are more vulnerable to infection due to underlying medical conditions or immunosuppression. Schools must take additional care and seek clinical or public health advice where exposure occurs.
Pregnant staff or pupils exposed to certain infections (e.g. rubella, parvovirus) should be advised to seek medical guidance promptly.

7. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Requirements

In Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) settings, the management of infectious illness must comply with the EYFS Statutory Framework (Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements – Health) alongside UKHSA guidance. This section sets out the specific expectations for early years provision within ODST schools.

Where a child becomes unwell whilst attending an EYFS setting, staff will respond promptly and appropriately. The child will be supervised at all times and cared for in a suitable area, with consideration given to minimising contact with other children where necessary. Parents or carers will be contacted without delay and expected to collect the child as soon as possible. Staff will follow appropriate hygiene and infection control measures throughout.

Decisions about medical absence from the setting will be based on UKHSA guidance and the child's symptoms. Children must not attend where they meet the criteria for absence due to infectious illness. Clear communication will be maintained with parents to ensure they understand when children can safely return.

EYFS settings must maintain high standards of hygiene, particularly when managing bodily fluids. This includes appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), effective handwashing, and safe cleaning and disposal of waste. Procedures for nappy changing, toileting accidents and first aid must reflect infection prevention principles at all times.

The administration of medicines must follow EYFS statutory requirements. Medicines will only be administered where there is written parental consent, and records of administration will be maintained. Medicines must be stored safely and securely in line with school procedures.

During periods of illness or outbreaks, parents and carers will be kept informed where appropriate, particularly where their child may have been exposed to an infectious condition. Schools will follow advice from UKHSA and may be required to implement additional control measures.

EYFS providers must ensure that staffing ratios are maintained at all times, including when children are unwell or require additional supervision. Staff who are unwell must also follow appropriate absence guidance to reduce the risk of transmission.

This section should be read alongside the main policy and relevant UKHSA guidance to ensure that all statutory requirements for early years provision are met.

8. Outbreaks and Notifiable Diseases

In the event of a suspected outbreak or notifiable disease, the school must:

- inform the relevant UKHSA Health Protection Team immediately
- follow all advice on medical absence, testing, and communication
- cooperate with any risk assessment or control measures
- urgent conditions such as suspected meningitis require immediate emergency referral

9. Immunisation

Schools should promote and support national immunisation programmes. Immunisation status should be checked at appropriate points, and parents encouraged to access catch-up vaccinations where needed.

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to align with updates to UKHSA and Department of Education guidance. Schools should monitor absence patterns and infection trends to ensure effective implementation.

17. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- ODST Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions
- ODST Attendance Policy