



# Medical Certificates for Schools in the East Riding of Yorkshire

Practice Management

There were just under 260,000 lost school days in the East Riding of Yorkshire in 2012/13 which is the worst attendance record in both our neighbouring and statistical local authorities making us second lowest in England for secondary schools. Improvement was made in 2013/14 of over 50,000 days but nationally we remain in the same position. The LMC Secretariat has had discussions with the Education Authority to find ways to assist in the reduction of this statistic. Normally the LMC advises doctors to refrain from providing numerous certificates for children taking part in school activities including examinations unless there are very compelling reasons to issue them.

However we consider it is reasonable for children who have a high rate of absence to ask GP receptionists to stamp a "Medical Appointment Card" with the practice's address and to sign and date it. As a profession we have an obligation to try and reduce the prolonged absence from school of some of our younger patients. There should be no charge for doing this. An example of this card is below. Consideration should also be made regarding the time of routine appointments.

Where a trivial illness does not merit a consultation doctors should take special care if asked to provide a certificate for an episode of illness where they did not attend the patient. Generally it would be unwise to issue a certificate in this situation. It would be more appropriate for the parent to provide the letter of excuse to the school.

Education Welfare officers, as part of their investigations into poor school attendance, may ask for corroboration of a child's illnesses. The purpose of this is to simply clarify whether the medical information available to you can clearly explain school absence of this level. Specific detail is not required. Doctors should provide information subject to parental written consent and they may charge NHS England Area Team a fee as this would come under the Collaborative Arrangements. This fee is set by the doctor and you should ensure that your fee will be paid by the Area Team before you commence the work.

Charging for certificates for school children has always been a thorny problem for some doctors, as most certificates for schools are likely to be outside the NHS arrangements. Many practices have made arrangements with schools that they will not provide certificates in any circumstances to excuse students from PE, games, cross country, etc. In these situations, a parent's letter should be the norm.

Where public examinations are involved, it is not necessary for a doctor to provide a private certificate as the BMA has received a letter from OFQUAL stating that certification is not required. A copy of this letter is appended below and doctors can print copies to give to parents to present to the school. You may like to pre-empt such requests by writing to your local schools enclosing a copy of this letter.

If you do have to provide a certificate for a special circumstance it is always best if the request for a certificate for examination purposes comes direct from the school, because this will endorse the genuineness of the request, but schools should point out to parents that the doctor may charge a fee.

Many fees are no longer agreed with the BMA and doctors should set their own fees to suit the local market. The BMA last recommended and agreed fees for these services in 2005 and those rates are set out for reference.

Straightforward certificates of fact	£13.00	
More complex certificates	£22.00 to £46.50.	Rate at April 2005

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It is, however, up to individual doctors as to whether they wish to waive their fee, and some practices, in clearly defined geographical areas, have made specific arrangements with schools and will only provide a certificate when the request is accompanied by a letter from the school signed by the head or deputy head teacher. In these circumstances it may be reasonable to offer not to charge a fee because experience shows that the schools will very rarely send a signed letter asking for a certificate.

**LMC March 2015**

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<p>School details:</p>	 <p><b>EAST RIDING</b> OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL</p> <p>Medical Appointment Card</p> <p>Working in partnership</p>  <p>East Riding of Yorkshire Clinical Commissioning Group</p>
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Pupil's Name:	Form/class:	Appointment Location: <small>(GP / Hospital / Dentist / Health Centre)</small>
Should you find this, please return to the school on the back of the card.		
Date & Time of Appointment	Stamp of practice or role of practice staff	Initials of practice staff







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