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Section 19 education for parents

Last Modified March 05, 2026



Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 requires the council to arrange suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, permanent exclusion or exceptional circumstances, would not otherwise receive suitable education.

“Suitable education” means education that is appropriate to a child’s age, ability and any special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

Section 19 is a safety net duty. It does not replace the responsibilities of parents or schools and is not intended to be a long term alternative to school.

Section 19 may be considered where:

- A child is permanently excluded from school
- A child is unable to attend school due to physical or mental health needs
- There are exceptional circumstances which mean it is not reasonably possible or practicable for the child to attend school

In most cases, schools are best placed to provide support and make reasonable adjustments. Section 19 is usually considered only after support within school has been explored.

Important things to know

Before making a request, please be aware:

- Your child must be on roll at a school or academy (unless they have been permanently excluded)
- Section 19 provision is short term and temporary
- Any provision agreed will include a clear plan for reintegration back into school, where appropriate
- Section 19 is not a long term alternative to school or elective home education
- The council must decide whether it is reasonably possible or practicable for your child to attend school before alternative provision can be agreed

Before applying

We strongly encourage you to:

- Speak with your child’s school about your concerns
- Ask what support and reasonable adjustments have already been put in place
- Work with the school to explore further options where possible

Many situations can be resolved through additional support within school.

Requesting consideration under Section 19

If you believe your child meets the criteria for Section 19, you can submit a referral form

When making a request, please include:

- A clear explanation of why your child is unable to attend school
- Details of support already provided by the school

- Any relevant professional advice or assessments
- Any recent changes in circumstances

If your child is unable to attend school due to physical or mental health needs, we will require appropriate medical evidence to support the request. This may include information from a consultant, specialist clinician, CAMHS practitioner or other relevant health professional. A GP note alone will not usually be sufficient unless it provides clear clinical evidence explaining why your child cannot attend school.

The school will normally be asked to provide supporting information as part of the assessment process.

Complete a referral

After the referral is made

Once your request is received:

- The council will review all information provided
- We may seek further information from the school or other professionals
- A decision will be made based on your child's individual circumstances

You will receive the council's decision by email, including the reasons for that decision.

If Section 19 is not agreed

If the council determines that Section 19 provision is not required at this time:

- The decision will explain why
- Your child should continue to access education through their school
- The school should continue working with you to address barriers to attendance or learning

There is no formal appeal process.

However, if:

- Your child's circumstances change, or
- You can provide additional information which was not known at the time of the original decision

You may submit a new referral for consideration.

Each request will be assessed based on the information available at the time.

Our commitment

We understand that situations leading to a Section 19 request can be stressful for families.

Every request is considered carefully and individually, with the aim of ensuring children receive suitable education while working towards a return to school wherever possible.

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