

Ambulance Calls in Schools and Residences

Briefing for Head Teachers and Managers

Purpose

To provide clear, practical guidance on when to call an ambulance, what to expect, and what to do next if an ambulance is not dispatched.

When to Call 999

Call 999 immediately if a pupil or member of staff has:

- Difficulty breathing
- Unconsciousness or reduced responsiveness
- Severe injury or suspected fracture
- Heavy bleeding
- Suspected head, neck or spinal injury
- Any condition you believe is life threatening

If in doubt, **call 999**.

What Happens When You Call

- Calls are assessed by a trained handler using a structured clinical triage system
- This determines the most appropriate response based on risk and need

Possible outcomes include:

- Ambulance dispatched

- Referral to a clinician or paramedic for further assessment
- Advice and direction to another service (e.g. NHS 24)

Key points:

An ambulance is not declined without further clinical input.

Every call receives assessment and appropriate follow-up.

Parents/Next of Kin should be contacted as soon as possible

If an Ambulance Is Not Dispatched

Where an ambulance is not sent, schools or residences should:

- Follow advice given by the call handler
- Continue first aid and monitor the pupil or staff member
- Keep the individual safe, calm and warm
- Contact parent, carer or next of kin immediately
- Arrange safe transport to hospital if advised

Not all injuries require an emergency ambulance.

This is part of normal NHS prioritisation.

What to Ask the Call Handler

If an ambulance is not dispatched, staff should ask:

- What should we do right now?
- Does the person need urgent hospital care?
- What should we watch for?
- Will there be any follow-up contact?
- Is it safe to move them?

Transporting Pupils or Staff – Managing Risk

In situations where an ambulance is not dispatched, schools and residences must balance normal safeguarding expectations with the immediate needs of the individual.



The first course of action should be to contact the parent, carer or (for staff) next of kin or nominated contact to attend and take responsibility for transport where this is appropriate and timely.

Where this is not possible, or where waiting would place the individual at greater risk, alternative arrangements may be required.

Where possible, established arrangements should be followed, including the presence of two adults when transporting a pupil.

However, **the overriding consideration is the immediate welfare and safety of the individual.**

It should be recognised that **life-threatening situations would normally result in an emergency ambulance response**, and it would therefore be unusual for a school or residence to be transporting a pupil or member of staff in such circumstances.

Decisions to transport must therefore be **carefully balanced**, taking account of:

- Clinical advice received
- Risk of deterioration
- Risks associated with delaying treatment
- Risks associated with transporting without full supervision

If there is a risk that the condition may deteriorate, or that delay could cause harm, it may be appropriate to proceed where no reasonable alternative is available.

In doing so, staff must recognise that **a driver cannot safely drive and provide care or supervision at the same time**, and this must be factored into the decision.

This judgement **must not be based on convenience or operational pressures**, but on a clear assessment of risk.

The decision must be:

- Necessary
- Proportionate
- Clearly justified

The rationale must be **recorded at the earliest opportunity**, including why normal arrangements were not followed.

Parents, carers or next of kin must be informed as soon as possible.



Business Insurance Requirement

Where staff use a vehicle to transport a pupil or member of staff, **appropriate business use motor insurance must be in place.**

Staff must not transport individuals in a private vehicle unless they are appropriately insured to do so.

Head Teachers and Managers must ensure there is local awareness of this requirement and that any use of vehicles for this purpose is compliant.

Expectations for Schools and Residences

- Use professional judgement and act in the best interests of the individual
- Staff should feel confident calling 999 where there is concern
- A non-dispatch does not mean the concern was inappropriate

Practical Steps

- Ensure trained first aiders are available
- Maintain up-to-date emergency contact details
- Record all incidents and actions taken
- Follow local health and safety reporting processes

Escalation

If there are concerns about the response received:

- Record details clearly
- Raise through Health and Safety channels
- Issues can be escalated to NHS partners where required

Key Message

If you believe urgent medical help is needed – call 999.

You will receive a clinical assessment and appropriate advice or response.

