UK Health Security Agency

NHS

Supporting vaccination for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Information for specialist providers and SEND co-ordinators in mainstream schools



immunisation
helping to protect everyone at every age

Specialist providers in this leaflet covers the following settings; special schools, alternative provision, resourced provision, Special Education Needs (SEN) units, specialist bases, and specialist post-16 institutions.

Who this leaflet is for and what it offers

This leaflet is designed for specialist providers and SEND coordinators (SENCOs) in mainstream schools to help you understand the School Age Immunisation Services (SAIS) and your vital role in supporting vaccination for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Inside, you will find practical steps to help children and young people with SEN and disabilities and their families understand why vaccination matters, the benefits of delivering these within school settings, and approaches to make vaccination accessible and inclusive, ensuring they receive the protection they need in a safe and supportive environment.



Why are vaccines important?

Protecting each child

Vaccines help give children the best start in life. The routine childhood immunisation programme is designed to offer the best protection to children at the right time. Vaccines help protect children and young people from serious illnesses that can lead to hospital admissions, long term complications and on occasion even death.

Making sure that every child is up to date with all their vaccines helps prevent outbreaks in early years, educational, and childcare settings. This helps keep children well, with all the benefits that brings to their development and future attainment.

Protecting others

Getting vaccinated also helps protect others who can't have certain vaccines, for example those with weakened immune systems, who are at greater risk of serious illness and complications from infections like measles.

Some individuals may have been fully vaccinated in the past but have since developed a medical condition and/or are receiving treatment, such as cancer therapy, that can wipe out their previous immunity, leaving them at much greater risk. We all have our part to play in helping protect those who are more vulnerable by ensuring we are fully vaccinated and support and maximise uptake of vaccinations, so as not to spread vaccine preventable diseases to those at greatest risk. They rely on the rest of us getting vaccinated to protect them.

Giving vaccines in school settings

The School Age Immunisation Service (SAIS) are providers of vaccination in schools and will contact your setting about arranging clinics. Young people in secondary schools are routinely offered vaccines that help protect them against some causes of meningitis and septicaemia (**MenACWY vaccine**), cancers caused by the Human Papilloma Virus **(HPV vaccine**) and tetanus, diphtheria and polio (**3-in-1 teenage booster**). The flu vaccine is additionally offered annually.

These NHS vaccines are offered at school to help children get them easily. It means children don't miss school for appointments, parents/carers don't have to miss work and helps reduce the risk of children and young people missing out on important protection. The offer of vaccines in schools is also an opportunity for parents to check if their children are up to date with all their vaccines and to offer **catch up** as needed. Vaccines may also be offered in schools when there is an infectious disease **outbreak**.



Routine childhood immunisation programme from January 2026

Most vaccines are given as an injection in the thigh or upper arm. Rotavirus vaccine is given as drops to be swallowed.

Age due	Vaccines that protect against	Vaccine given
Eight weeks old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and hepatitis B	DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB (6 in 1 vaccine)
	Meningococcal group B (MenB)	MenB
	Rotavirus gastroenteritis	Rotavirus
Twelve weeks old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and hepatitis B	DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB (6 in 1 vaccine)
	MenB	MenB
	Rotavirus	Rotavirus
Sixteen weeks old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and hepatitis B	DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB (6 in 1 vaccine)
	Pneumococcal (13 serotypes)	PCV
One year old (on or after the child's first birthday)	Pneumococcal Measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox (varicella) MenB	PCV MMRV MenB
Eighteen months old	DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB Measles, mumps, rubella, and chickenpox (varicella)	DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB MMRV
Three years four months old or soon after	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio	dTaP/IPV
Boys and girls aged twelve to thirteen years	Cancers and genital warts caused by specific human papillomavirus (HPV) types	HPV
Fourteen years old (school Year 9)	Tetanus, diphtheria and polio	Td/IPV
	Meningococcal groups A, C, W and Y	MenACWY

The role of your setting

It is extremely important for children and young people with SEN and disabilities, to take up the offer of vaccines in the routine immunisation schedule when they are offered, in order to give them the best protection as early as possible. A small number of children may not be able to receive some vaccines, for example due to them having a weakened immune system. They would be advised about this by their clinical team. Additionally, some children may need extra protection and may be offered additional vaccines by the NHS.

Specialist providers and SENCOs can ensure that vaccination support is proactive, inclusive, and tailored to the unique needs of children and young people with SEN and disabilities and their families. This requires collaboration, flexibility, and a commitment to equity, not uniformity.

1 Be informed

Familiarise yourself with the routine child immunisation schedule www.gov.uk/government/publications/routine-childhood-immunisation-schedule. Encourage uptake among students and invite parents/guardians to check vaccination status where they are uncertain.

For detailed guidance on supporting immunisation programmes including data sharing, a list of actions to complete on the day of a vaccination clinic and resources on specific vaccines see: Supporting immunisation programmes – GOV.UK.

2 SEND-friendly vaccination approach

Ensure that vaccination planning recognises the need for tailored approaches and reasonable adjustments to appropriately meet the individual access needs of children and young people with SEN and disabilities.

Put the child and their needs at the centre of vaccination planning. Work with the SAIS team recognising that each child and young person with SEN and disabilities may require a different approach – in the time allowed, the setting, the information provided, the level and type of support, and the number of attempts. Ensure that parents are asked for details of any reasonable adjustments or approaches which may better support a successful vaccination. Also, consider the opportunity for parents and carers to be present to help reduce anxiety and provide reassurance for children and young people with SEN and disabilities.

Advocate for strategies that respond to individual needs rather than applying a one-size-fits-all process. See the practical examples illustrated in the following sections.



3 Communication and information

Engage proactively with parents and carers of children and young people with SEN and disabilities, recognising they will require more time for preparation, and may require opportunities for personalised discussions with the school and SAIS team. Ensure all information and consent requests are shared as early as possible to ensure adequate time for any follow up that may be needed and circulate appropriate contact details for the SAIS team where queries can be directed to. Additionally, in consultation with the SAIS team share where a parent or carer can access alternative vaccination opportunities should the opportunities for school vaccination not be suitable or possible on the dates provided.

Signpost parents and carers to the Vaccination Information Leaflet for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, also ensure detail is shared of vaccine information suited to meet a child or young persons communication needs, e.g. easy read, pictorial guides, audio (see accessible list at the end of this document).

Involve children and young people, where appropriate, in planning their vaccination experience, respecting their preferences and anxieties. There are free resources for planning lessons to support all students to learn about vaccination in a fun and engaging way. eBug: https://www.e-bug.eu/

All vaccines offered through the routine childhood immunisation programme, seasonal influenza programme and vaccines recommended for particular risk groups are available for free on the NHS for eligible children and young people.

4 Collaboration with health services

Collaborate with the local SAIS team to plan sessions that accommodate any reasonable adjustments (e.g. a longer time, specific timings, such as the start or the end of the vaccination session, support of familiar staff or attendance of parents or carers, quiet spaces etc.) in an appropriate location. For guidance see: NHS England » Reasonable adjustments with further suggestions and easy read versions available at: About reasonable adjustments | Mencap | Easy Read.

Identify named designated point of contact between the school and vaccination teams to coordinate support and reasonable adjustments. Ensure all relevant consent forms, details of any reasonable adjustments provided and any health and care passports if provided by the parents or carers, are shared well in advance of the vaccination session planned. On the day, work closely with the SAIS team so everything runs well.



5 Preparation

Familiarisation: Where it would be helpful to reduce anxiety, work with the SAIS team to offer opportunities for pupils to visit the vaccination area and meet staff beforehand.

Clear information: Provide clear, easy to understand information and guidance for children, young people and their parents or carers, and ensure accessible formats (including easy-read, BSL) if needed.

Sensory friendly environment: Ensure calm, quiet, familiar areas, where the lighting can be dimmed if needed, are made available for vaccinations for those children who may find provision in busier, brighter and louder environments more challenging and upsetting. Aim to minimise sensory overload and disruption wherever possible.

Pain: Help manage expectations around pain, acknowledge sensory needs, and allow extra time to explain the process and reassure and support children and young people who may be more anxious, or who have greater levels of need.

Supportive adults: Arrange for a familiar staff member or buddy to accompany the child and consider allowing a parent or carer to attend the vaccination appointment if this will help reduce anxiety and ensure a successful vaccination.

Individual scheduling: Where practical, bring pupils individually to reduce waiting and anxiety, particularly in smaller settings.

Recovery area: Consider providing a quiet space after vaccination with staff support to help pupils reorientate.

Advance notice: Give families as much notice as possible so they can prepare and support the process.



6 Alternative arrangements

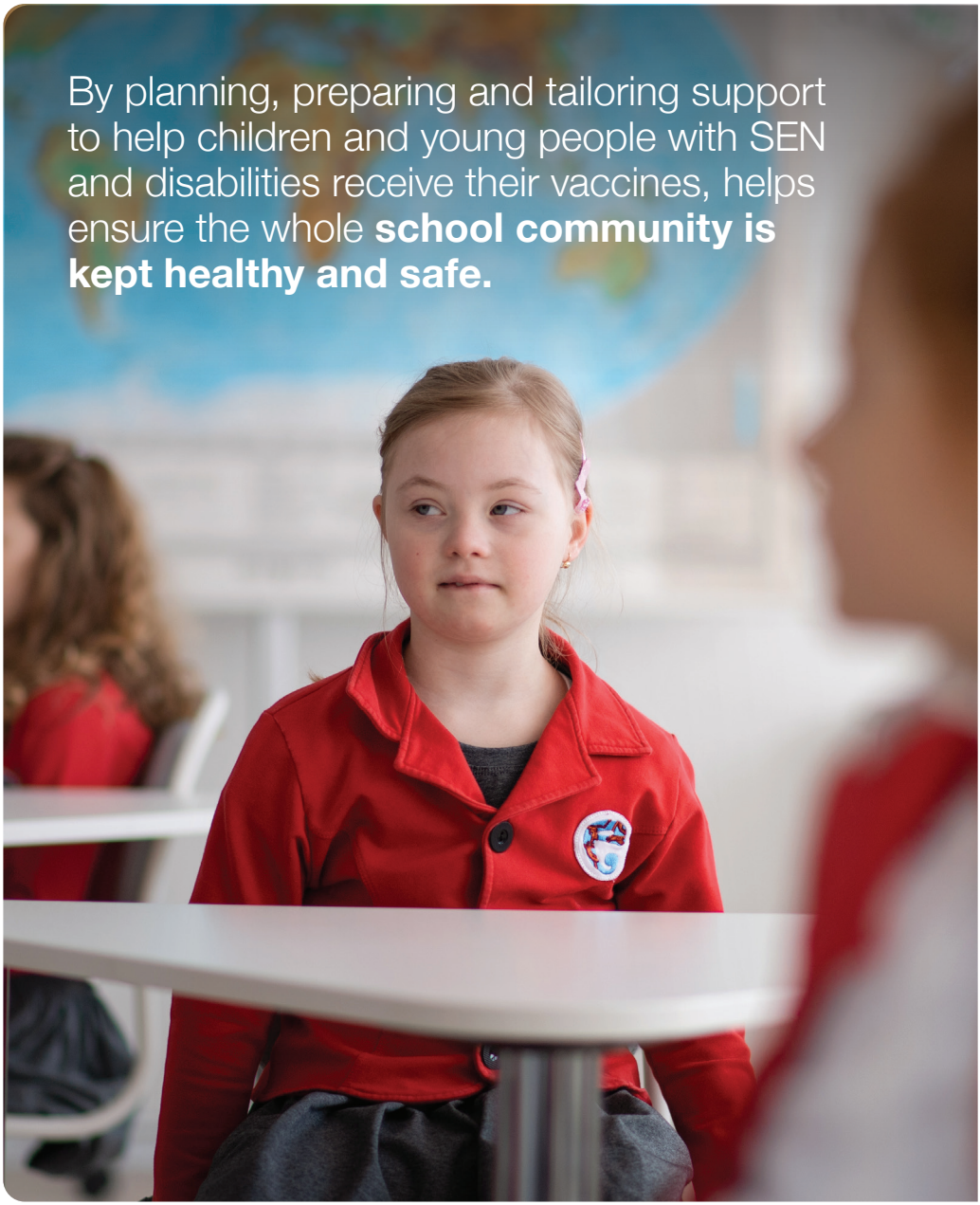
Make the SAIS team aware of children who are not currently attending school or not attending consistently, for example due to medical care, anxiety, or unmet needs. This helps ensure they can be referred for follow-up when appropriate.

In rare situations where vaccination in school is not possible for an individual child, support the family to explore options for vaccination outside of school (e.g. at home, GP surgery).

For detailed guidance on supporting immunisation programmes including a list of actions to complete on the day of a vaccination clinic and resources on specific vaccines see: Supporting immunisation programmes – GOV.UK.

7 Staff immunisation

It is important that all staff are up to date with their vaccinations to protect themselves but also to protect the wider school community; particularly those whose health may be more vulnerable. All staff should be encouraged to check their immunisation records and contact their GP practice if they have questions about vaccination or are unsure if they are up to date or if they need to catch up.

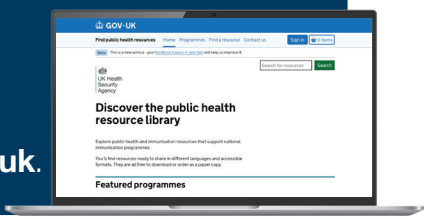

By planning, preparing and tailoring support to help children and young people with SEN and disabilities receive their vaccines, helps ensure the whole **school community is kept healthy and safe.**

For more information see

- **Primary schools:** Flu vaccination programme 2025 to 2026: briefing for primary schools – GOV.UK
- **Secondary schools:** Adolescent vaccination programme: briefing for secondary schools 2025 to 2026 – GOV.UK
- For a full list of the vaccines offered at each stage of life and how they are given: NHS vaccinations and when to have them – NHS
- **Reasonable adjustments:** NHS England » Reasonable adjustments with further suggestions and easy read versions available at: About reasonable adjustments | Mencap | Easy Read
- Health protection in children and young people settings, including education – GOV.UK

All schools are eligible to use the https://find-public-health-resources.service.gov.uk/ free service which provides leaflets, posters, record cards, digital assets and stickers to promote and or deliver vaccinations. Please register your school and place orders for the leaflets to give to parents and carers. You can order paper posters or download digital versions to make routine vaccination visible and create a vaccine positive environment in your school.

You can order up to 500 on the website but if you need larger orders you can call 0300 123 1002 or email Public Health Resources **publichealthresources@ukhsa.gov.uk**.



Accessible vaccine information

- HPV: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hpv-vaccine-vaccination-guide-leaflet/easy-read-guide-to-the-hpv-vaccination-from-september-2023
- 3 in 1 teenage booster: www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-the-3-in-1-teenage-booster-tdipv
- MenACWY: www.gov.uk/government/publications/menacwy-vaccine-information-for-young-people
- MMRV: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/easy-read-guide-to-the-mmr-vaccination
- Easy Read guide to the MMRV vaccination: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/easy-read-guide-to-the-mmrv-vaccination

Flu resources aimed at individuals with lower literacy levels, or those with learning disabilities:

- All about flu and vaccination – children www.gov.uk/government/publications/easy-read-childhood-nasal-flu-leaflet
- Protect yourself from flu: easy-read leaflet and Protect yourself from flu: Easy read poster: www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-leaflet-for-people-with-learning-disability
- Flu vaccination films for people with a learning disability and autistic people and their family or carers
  - www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqGSm0jaF9A
  - www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJ9QdwUitFg



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