

Date:

Dear Head Teacher or College Principal

**Medical Certificates for Students Absent from School or College**

I write on behalf of Somerset LMC, which is the statutory representative body for all general practitioners in the county.

Dr..... has recently been approached to provide a medical certificate for ..... concerning his/her absence from school or college.

This letter is to explain the contractual and legal position of GP practices in such circumstances.

**Certificates for School Absence due to Accident or Illness**

NHS GPs are contracted to provide certain medical services which do not include professional involvement in education or school attendance monitoring. Family doctors do not normally provide school absence certificates for children as the parent, guardian or carer's explanation for an absence will usually allow a school to ensure any health related concerns are addressed.

Furthermore, in any event GPs do not routinely provide short term sickness certification for periods of less than seven days for any purpose. For longer periods a doctor will be unable to issue a medical certificate unless the patient was seen by a health professional at the time of the illness.

Please note that Department of Work & Pensions medical certificates ("Fit Notes") are provided only for employment and statutory sick pay reasons. They may not be issued for any other purpose. If a certificate of sickness or absence is required by a school or college for education purposes, this constitutes a private service and the GP practice may levy a charge. The person or organisation that requests the certificate will be billed accordingly. Obviously any such request must be accompanied by the written consent of the parent, legal guardian or carer if the student is under 16 and the student's own consent if he or she is over this age. It is illegal, under competition legislation for anyone other than the individual practice to set or recommend a fee scale, so please contact the practice concerned to check their charges before submitting a request.

There is also no statutory obligation on NHS providers to produce certificates covering absences due to illness for students receiving a 16-19 Bursary.

In cases where recurrent short term illnesses or a more prolonged spell of illness is causing concern it may be helpful for an Education Welfare Officer to arrange to speak to the GP, again after proper consent has been obtained. You will appreciate that it is always important that a GP retains the full

Somerset Local Medical Committee Crown Medical Centre Venture Way Taunton TA2 8QY

Chairman: Dr Nick Bray  
Vice Chairman: Dr Karen Sylvester

Medical Director: Dr Harry Yoxall  
Executive Director: Jill Hellens  
Deputy Medical Director: Dr Barry Moyse

Phone: 01823 331428 Fax: 01823 338561  
Email: [LMCoffice@somersetlmc.nhs.uk](mailto:LMCoffice@somersetlmc.nhs.uk)

Website: [www.somersetlmc.co.uk](http://www.somersetlmc.co.uk)

confidence of any young person, but it is particularly important for those who have problems resulting in poor school attendance where a trusted doctor-patient relationship may be critical for the young person's future care.

I hope you will therefore understand that it was not possible for the GP to issue a medical certificate as requested on this occasion.

Yours faithfully



**Dr Harry Yoxall**  
**LMC Medical Secretary**

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