CARERS RIGHTS DAY 2026 / SCHOOLS AND JIA AWARENESS / ENGLAND

Supporting a Child with JIA: A Practical Guide for Families and Schools

Juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) can affect how a pupil moves, learns and joins in. Pain, stiffness and fatigue can change during the day, even when a pupil looks well. Use this guide to start a conversation about what helps at school.

What schools are responsible for

In England, maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units must arrange support for pupils with medical conditions. Schools must make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils under the Equality Act 2010. Ask whether an individual healthcare plan would help. Where needed, the school develops it with the family, relevant health professionals and the pupil where appropriate.

Practical ideas to agree together

Start with the pupil. Ask privately, “What would help today?” Agree a trusted adult, a discreet way to ask for help and what staff need to know. Review what works when needs change.

Make it easier to join in. Consider extra time between rooms, a movement or rest break, or a different way to record work. Agree options for PE and trips with the pupil and family, taking account of relevant clinical advice.

Plan for appointments and absence. Let the school know about appointments in advance and follow its absence reporting process on days your child is too unwell to attend. Agree which work to prioritise and what will help on return.

Who to ask for help

Start with the school’s medical conditions lead or special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). Speak to the attendance lead if absence is recurring. For health questions or advice on activity, contact the child’s paediatric rheumatology team. Raise bullying with pastoral staff and safety concerns with the school’s designated safeguarding lead.

For general awareness. Seek individual healthcare advice from the child’s clinical team.

Guidance checked 9 November 2026 · Medical conditions at school · Disability and school support · School attendance · NHS arthritis information

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