FARNHAM PARK
HEALTH GROUP

Re: ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL ON HEALTH GROUNDS

In general GPs do not provide statements of illness for children, as the parent's explanation of the absence should generally be sufficient for the purposes of the school. Provision of medical certificates for school children is not part of a GP's responsibility, and declining to provide this certification is in accordance with the Government policy to reduce GP bureaucracy and reserve valuable GP time for clinical care.

The Sickness certificate that is sometimes obtained from GPs (otherwise known as Fit Notes or a Med3 Form), are an official Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) document. The information given by the DWP states that the purpose of a Med3 Certificate is to "…provide advice to you and your employer about the impact of your health condition, where that may have an effect on your fitness for work"[1].This is very clearly designed for workplaces and is not appropriate for use in Educational settings.

In cases where a child has recurrent short-term illnesses, this is a matter for expert management by the school in consultation with the parent/guardians and the child. In cases where there is more prolonged absence, the school may wish to carry out a more detailed assessment of the situation. Where it is appropriate, and with consent, the school may seek additional medical information directly from the GP. However, schools should be aware that GPs are only qualified, and therefore indemnified, to provide factual information, and not opinions on how this would affect Education.

Absence during Examination Periods

Where a child has missed an examination, Examination Boards have confirmed that they do not require the GP to provide a certificate before special consideration of the case.

We hope you will understand therefore that it is not possible for the GP to issue a medical certificate in these situations.

1. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-fit-note-a-guide-for-patients-and-employees/the-fit-note-guidance-for-patients-and-employees - Search