WHAT TO DO WHEN A CHILD IS DIAGNOSED WITH A BRAIN TUMOUR

The child with a brain tumour will be encouraged by the medical team to return to school as soon as possible after initial diagnosis and treatment, even if only for a few hours or half days per week. Here are some tips for the time when the pupil is away from school having treatment and following their return to school:

**The school can help by:**
- Asking the pupil and parents how they would like the school to keep in touch with them
- Providing some school work in the pupil’s favourite subject
- Appointing a key-worker at the school who will deal with all contact with the family and the hospital
- Sending out letters about the potential dangers to children undergoing radiotherapy of chicken pox and measles
- Relaxing school rules regarding headwear and wigs, leaving class for a rest or medication, drinking water in class, staying inside during breaks, moving between classes when corridors are empty and leaving school a little early
- Considering implications for the pupil’s Education, Health and Care Plan

**Teachers can help by:**
- Continuing to call the pupil’s name on the register so classmates are reminded of their friend
- Recognising that re-integration into school may need to be gradual with attendance during lunch breaks or for favourite lessons to start with, depending on confidence and fatigue levels
- Being aware that siblings of a pupil with a brain tumour can be anxious and are likely to be deeply affected by their brother or sister’s illness and the ensuing disruption to family life
- Being aware that tumours can be hurtful and isolating; it is best to deal honestly with questions and encourage empathy

**Pupils & friends can help by:**
- Sending get well cards individually or as a class
- Continuing to invite the pupil to parties and events
- Participating in a buddy system
- Sending photos or making a video diary
- Contacting specialist hospital staff if school refusal or school phobia occurs
- Inviting outreach nurses or hospital teachers to speak to school staff, the class or entire school about the brain tumour, treatment and side-effects
- Talking sensitively about any potential changes in appearance or behaviour if needed and the family suggest this
- Ensuring the pupil can sit next to an identified friend in lessons when they start back
- Treating the pupil with a brain tumour as much as possible like everyone else
- Standing up for the pupil with a brain tumour if other pupils make insensitive comments
- Visiting the pupil (after checking with the family and hospital if the pupil is an in-patient) in small groups
- Sending texts, e-mails or contacting via social media – being cautious about privacy issues
- Providing a pupil card which the pupil carries to explain their situation and medical condition to any staff members who challenge them
- Appointing a key-worker at the school who will deal with all contact with the family and the hospital
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