

New school toolkits to aid children with juvenile idiopathic arthritis

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Children and young people naturally spend a large amount of their time at school, college or in other educational settings. And while most children with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) are able to access

education, many require adaptations or specific support to enable them to fully engage in learning. But families of children with JIA report a lack of awareness and understanding, and believe that schools need special resources to be able to support these children and young people.

In the U.K., Juvenile Arthritis Research (JAR) has developed a [toolkit](#) to allow teachers and [school staff](#) to confidently support children with JIA, and the initial rollout was assessed via a network of parents. In the first six months the toolkits had been delivered to 100 schools—potentially reaching over 100,000 families.

In the abstract presented at the [2023 EULAR congress](#) held May 31 to June 3, Rebecca Beesley from the JAR charity explains that the toolkit includes a variety of resources to help increase awareness around JIA, both in schools and for parents. This in turn could help improve diagnosis times, as well as help achieve timely access to treatment.

To do this, the toolkit contains information about what JIA is, resources for schools to provide targeted interventions, and information on how schools can successfully support children with JIA. Finally, each toolkit also contains materials to help staff explain arthritis to children in a classroom or group assembly setting, as well as digital copies of key materials for distribution to parents and families.

A short web-based survey was used to assess impressions of the initial rollout, with very positive feedback so far. The results show that some schools have used the toolkit resources to train staff and give lessons to children to explain what arthritis is; others have displayed posters highlighting the key signs and symptoms of JIA.

"Wow—it's fantastic," said one teacher who had used the toolkit. "The student presentation is particularly impressive with how it translates all the key information in a child-friendly manner."

The JAR team are confident that the development and supply of a toolkit specifically for use in education has already helped raise awareness that some [children](#) do get arthritis, while also providing resources to train school staff to be able to offer support. Building in the experience and skills of parents and teachers in the [development phase](#) has ensured all resources are relevant, addressing the needs of both families and schools.

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