



# WILLIAM FARR

## C of E Comprehensive School

## Sickness Absence Management Policy

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### 1 Scope

This policy applies to all staff within the school. Employers are responsible, under Health and Safety legislation, for the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Proper sickness absence management can play an important part in this process by providing staff welfare and support mechanisms. Staff sickness absence can also impact on the standard of education provided in the school, the financial management of the school and the additional demands placed on other staff.

### 2 Objectives

The policy seeks to achieve the fullest possible attendance of all staff, and management of sickness absence, with the best interests of both staff and the school. The objective of the policy is to ensure:

- That staff will be treated fairly and compassionately with all appropriate support being given;
- That management will be consistent in its approach to the procedure when dealing with individual cases;
- That high standards in health, safety and welfare will be a constant objective of all;
- That any information received during the sickness absence management procedure will be treated sensitively and confidentially.

### 3 Standards of Attendance

The levels of absence or trigger point to manage short term sickness absence (as outlined in Section 7) are as follows:

**4 separate occasions of absence or 12 working days in a 12-month period on a rolling programme.**

All days referred to (not the number of absences) will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for part time employees. These limits are the maximum after which action will be taken.

When calculating what counts towards absence trigger points for:

- Absences which are disability related the school will clearly record disability related sickness absence to help us differentiate it from non-disability related sickness absence. Where required, we will put into place all reasonable adjustments (Equality Act 2010) as soon as we can. Please be aware that there is no requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to discount period of disability-related absence providing all work place adjustments that have been agreed to be reasonable have been put in place.
- Absences which are pregnancy related or related to gender reassignment will be discounted for absence management purposes.

#### **4 Monitoring of absence**

The Headteacher (Teaching Staff) and School Business Leader (Support Staff) will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy;
- Ensuring that staff are aware of the procedure for reporting absence;
- Ensuring that both the duration and the reasons for absence are properly recorded;
- Ensuring that Return to Work interviews are carried out for absences;
- Monitoring absences and analysing the appropriate information in order to identify any problems that may develop regarding employees' absences.

If a member of the Senior Leadership Team believes an employee's health represents a risk to the employee, colleagues or pupils and decides to send the employee home from work, the day will be considered as an authorised absence and not count as the first day of absence.

#### **5 Return to Work Interviews**

- a) For an absence of 1-7 days inclusive (including weekends) the absentee should meet with their Line Manager. The absentee should complete Section A of the Return to Work Form (Self-Certification) given to them by their Line Manager (Appendix 1). The Line Manager should complete Section B of the form at a Return to Work Meeting to discuss the absence. A copy of the form should be passed to the HR Manager and employee.
- b) For an absence of 8 days and over (including weekends), or where more regular monitoring of absence is required, the absentee should have a Return to Work meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The member of the Senior Leadership Team will discuss their absence and complete Section B of the Return to Work Form. A copy of the Return to Work Form should be passed to the HR Manager and employee. A medical fit for work note from the employees GP should be attached.

The purpose of Return to Work Interviews is:

- To re-affirm the school's interest in the welfare of the member of staff;
- To confirm the member of staff is fit to return to work;
- To consider any medical information available that may affect their return to work.
- To provide an opportunity for discussion on the general attendance record of the member of staff and to inform the member of staff where they are within the absence procedure;
- To reinforce the aim of high attendance levels and, where appropriate, to highlight the difficulties caused by the absence;
- To identify any areas where the school can assist the member of staff make a sustained return to work, e.g. any reasonable adjustments, with work-related/personal problems, provide advice and support where possible and to encourage staff to have a positive attitude towards their own health and welfare;
- To update the member of staff on any changes across the school.

Where appropriate the information obtained will form the basis of any future actions.

#### **6 Review of absence records and further action**

The management of sickness absence can be categorised into 2 sections; the management of short term and long-term sickness absences.

## 7 Short term sickness absence cases

There are 4 phases in the management of short-term absences as follows:

### Stage 1 – Return to Work Interviews (See Section 5 above)

### Stage 2 – First absence Review Meeting

Where the employee reaches the sickness absence trigger point (4 separate occasions of absence or 12 working days in a 12-month period on a rolling programme) a member of the Senior Leadership Team will inform the employee during the Return to Work interview that they have reached/exceeded the absence trigger point and that they are required to have an Absence Review meeting.

The member of Senior Leadership Team should emphasise the supportive nature of the meeting and remind them they may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague if they so wish.

The First Absence Review will cover the following areas:

- Any medical advice available at the time from the employee's GP/Consultant or the school occupational health provider;
- The frequency and duration of absences;
- The reasons for absence and/or any underlying medical conditions that may be the reason for the absence;
- Any reasonable adjustments the school make to help the employee make a sustained return to work;
- If it is beneficial to refer the employee to occupational health;
- Set targets for future attendance (where appropriate);
- Offer advice, guidance and support;
- Advise the employee where they are within the policy;
- The effects of the absences on students and colleagues;
- The outcomes of any previous reviews and any previous action taken.

The member of staff will be set a written target **of 2 separate occasions of absence or 6 working days over a 6-month period** starting on the day of the Absence Review Meeting. All days referred to (not the number of absences) will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for part time employees. Should the target be exceeded within the term, then there may be a referral to the Occupational health provider.

If there are underlying medical reasons for the absence, a referral to the Occupational Health provider will be made.

The pro forma (Appendix 2) should be used to record the Absence Review meeting and a copy given to the employee.

### Stage 3 – Second Absence Review Meeting

Where the member of staff has failed to achieve the targets set in Stage 2, a second absence review meeting will take place.

The member of Senior Leadership Team should emphasise the supportive nature of the meeting and remind them they may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague if they so wish.

The Second Absence Review will cover the following areas:

- The employee's attendance during the first period of formal monitoring;
- Any medical advice available at the time from the employee's GP/Consultant or the school occupational health provider;
- The frequency and duration of absences;

- The reasons for absence and/or any underlying medical conditions that may be the reason for the absence;
- Any reasonable adjustments the school make to help the employee make a sustained return to work;
- If it is beneficial to refer the employee to occupational health;
- Set targets for future attendance (where appropriate);
- Offer advice, guidance and support;
- Advise the employee where they are within the policy;
- The effects of the absences on students and colleagues;
- Consideration for Ill Health Retirement Application (Where appropriate);
- Possible effect on their pay and future employment if their absence continues;

The member of staff will be set a written target **of 2 separate occasions of absence or 6 working days over a 6-month period** starting on the day of the Absence Review Meeting. All days referred to (not the number of absences) will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for part time employees. Should the target be exceeded within the term, then there will be a referral to the Occupational health provider.

The pro forma (Appendix 2) should be used to record the Absence Review meeting and a copy given to the employee.

#### **Stage 4 – Third Absence Review Meeting**

Where the member of staff has failed to achieve the targets set in stage 3, a third absence review meeting will take place.

The member of Senior Leadership Team should emphasise the supportive nature of the meeting and remind them they may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague if they so wish.

The Third Absence Review will cover the following areas:

- Employees attendance during the second period of formal monitoring.
- Any medical advice available at the time from the employee's GP/Consultant or the school occupational health provider;
- The frequency and duration of absences;
- The reasons for absence and/or any underlying medical conditions that may be the reason for the absence;
- Any reasonable adjustments the school make to help the employee make a sustained return to work;
- Set targets for future attendance (where appropriate);
- Offer advice, guidance and support;
- Advise the employee where they are within the policy;
- The effects of the absences on students and colleagues;
- Consideration for Ill Health Retirement Application (Where appropriate);
- Possible effect on their pay and future employment if their absence continues;
- Confirm the outcome of the third absence review meeting will be confirmed in writing to the employee.

If no improvement in the attendance of the employee has occurred to an acceptable and/or sustained level and cannot be guaranteed to occur in the foreseeable future. Consideration should be given to dismiss the employee.

If a decision is made to dismiss the employee the employee has the right to appeal against their dismissal to the Governing Body. If the employee wishes to appeal they must do so in writing to be received by the Clerk to the Governing Body within 10 working days of the date on which the decision

is confirmed in writing.

The pro forma (Appendix 2) should be used to record the Absence Review meeting and a copy given to the employee.

During all stages of this process, if the employee remains off work due to their ill health, consideration should be given to move to the long-term absence procedure.

### **Referral to Occupational Health**

At any stage of the Absence Management process a referral to the occupational health provider can take place.

## **8 Long-term sickness absence cases**

For the purposes of this policy, long-term absence cases will be defined as those where an employee has been absent for a period of 20 working days continuously or 10 working weeks (in total over a 12-month period) or where it is known that he/she is likely to be absent for such a period. This, however, does not preclude the school from referring an individual to the occupational health provider earlier if the school believes that circumstances warrant such action.

Where an employee is absent on long-term sickness it is important that contact with the school is maintained. The school will be sensitive to the reasons for any absence and seek to agree a suitable method and timing of communicating with employees to support their continued improvement in health. The Headteacher (or nominated member of the Senior Leadership Team) will make formal contact at the earliest opportunity and continue to make contact with the employee on a mutually agreed time scale.

When it is clear that an employee has been or is likely to be on long-term sickness advice should be sought from the school's occupational health provider who may recommend a formal meeting with the employee, to:

- Discuss the nature of the problem;
- Ascertain the likely prognosis;
- Explain the medical review procedure to the employee and seek their consent for access to their medical records.

The school's occupational health provider will advise the school on the health of the employee and their fitness for work and may suggest a phased return eg: reduced hours, lighter duties, different duties etc, in order to facilitate their return to work. A formal meeting will be held with the employee and Headteacher (or nominated member of the Senior Leadership Team) to discuss the occupational health report.

Where an individual is looking to return to work following a long-term absence, the school will refer the case to the school's occupational health provider before a return is agreed. If sickness absences reaches 120 working days (6 calendar months) or in cases where it becomes clear that an employee is permanently incapable of undertaking their duties on medical grounds, the next step will be for the employee to meet with the Headteacher to discuss their situation. The purpose of this meeting will be to review the case and to decide on the next step.

A recommendation in respect of permanent ill health will require a recommendation from the school's occupational health provider and will be subject to the conditions of the relevant pension provider.

It may be that the employee does not wish to retire on the grounds of ill health but wishes to seek redeployment. If the employee is medically suitable for, and expresses an interest in, redeployment this will be explored.

If the employee is not seeking redeployment, or where possibilities for redeployment within the school have been unsuccessful, consideration should be given to dismiss the employee.

If a decision is made to dismiss the employee the employee has the right to appeal against their dismissal to the Governing Body. If the employee wishes to appeal they must do so in writing to be received by the Clerk to the Governing Body within 10 working days of the date on which the decision is confirmed in writing.

The pro forma (Appendix 2) should be used to record the Absence Review meeting and a copy given to the employee.

## **9 Appeal to Governing Body**

If an appeal is lodged by the employee to the clerk to the Governing Body. The employee will be informed in writing of the date, time and place of the Appeal Hearing and be given at least 10 days' notice of the Hearing. The employee will be provided with a written statement of the case to be presented, together with any documents to be presented at the Hearing;

The employee will have the right to be represented at the Hearing either by a trade union representative or work colleague.

The Panel conducting the Hearing will consist of three governors who are not staff Governors and will be advised by an HR Adviser.

The Panel will consider their decision and confirm the decision in writing to the employee within three working days.

## **10 Notice Period**

An employee who is dismissed on the grounds of ill health is entitled to receive notice. The notice period is stated in the employees' contract of employment.

## **11 Suspension of staff on medical grounds**

The Headteacher may take emergency action when they consider a member of staff may have become medically incapable of performing their duties. This is usually in cases where the health, safety or welfare of pupils is put at risk. The Headteacher may therefore suspend staff from duty where necessary and should take advice from HR beforehand.

Several medical conditions may lead to a suspension, but advice must always be sought from the school's occupational health provider either prior to, or immediately after, the suspension.

Where an individual is suspended from duty he/she will receive full pay or occupational/statutory sick pay as appropriate. Full pay will be paid where the individual's absence is not covered by a doctor's certificate.

## **12 Headteacher**

If it is the Headteacher who is managed under this procedure the Chair of Governors will assume the role of Headteacher throughout the process.



**Return to Work Meeting Form**

Name of member of SLT/Line Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

*To be completed by HR Manager before the meeting*

<b>First date of absence:</b>		<b>Date of Return to Work:</b>		<b>GP Sick Note attached (if 8 days and over)</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
<b>Is the employee approaching the maximum level of sickness absence? (4 separate absences or 12 working days in a 12 month period)</b>			<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Number of Separate Absences</b>	<b>Number of Working Days Absent</b>

**Section A: Self Certification**

*Line Managers should ask the employee to complete Section A for absences of 1-7 days (inclusive of weekends).*

**Reason for absence**

**Section B: Return to Work Interview**

*Line Managers should complete Section B with the employee for absences of 1-7 days (inclusive of weekends). A member of SLT should complete Section B if the employee has 8 days or more absence (including weekends) or 4 separate occasions of absence or 12 working days absence in a 12 month period (rolling programme). **A copy of the form should be returned to the HR Support Officer and given to the employee.***

<b>Checklist</b>	<b>✓ or N/A</b>	<b>Comment if appropriate</b>
Welcome the employee back to work and confirm that they are fit to return.		
Check whether the employee has any concerns about their work or home life that you could advise on/help with.		
If appropriate, advise the employee that they are approaching the maximum level of absence (above) or will have a sickness absence review meeting scheduled if this target is reached.		
If appropriate, inform the employee of the availability of support e.g. the confidential Staff Welfare & Counselling Service and Occupational Health.		
Inform the employee of any changes across the school whilst they were absent e.g. policies and procedures.		
Introduce the employee to any relevant colleagues.		
If appropriate, check that reasonable adjustments are in place and are satisfactory.		

**Additional comments/Agreed actions**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Employee: (print) \_\_\_\_\_  
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Manager: (print) \_\_\_\_\_



**Absence Review Meeting Form**

(to be completed by a member of SLT where 4 separate absences or 12 working days in a 12 month period has occurred. A copy should be passed to the HR Support Officer and employee).

Name of member of SLT \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

*To be completed by HR Manager before the meeting*

<b>1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Absence Review:</b>		<b>Reason for meeting:</b>		<b>GP Sick Note attached (if 8 days and over)</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
<b>Number of Separate Absences</b>		<b>Number of Working Days Absent</b>		<b>Target set at previous meeting (if appropriate)</b>	<b>Return to Work Form Attached</b>
					<b>Yes/No</b>

*To be completed by member of SLT during the meeting*

<b>Checklist</b>	<b>✓ or N/A</b>	<b>Comment if appropriate</b>
Discuss the frequency and duration of sickness absence.		
Remind the employee of the maximum level of sickness absence permitted.		
Ascertain the reason for the absence from the employee. Discuss any medical evidence available from employee's GP/Consultant or the occupational health provider.		
Where appropriate, discuss the outcomes of any previous reviews or action taken.		
Offer advice, support and guidance. Where appropriate, advise the employee to seek advice from GP, refer to the occupational health.		
Where recommended, check that reasonable adjustments are to be made or are in place and satisfactory.		
Where appropriate, set targets for future attendance (2 separate occasions of absence or 6 working days in a 6 month period) and explain next steps if these targets are not met.		

**Additional comments/Agreed actions/New targets set**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Employee: (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ SLT Member: (print) \_\_\_\_\_



