



WILLIAM FARR

C of E Comprehensive School

Sickness Absence Policy

September 2025

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Vision and Values

At William Farr Church of England Comprehensive School, our vision is to enable every member of our community to experience "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10) through exceptional education, encouragement, and effort. We are committed to excellence, ensuring all students and staff are known, valued, and supported to achieve their potential.

Our core values guide everything we do:

Compassion | Friendship | Perseverance | Respect | Responsibility | Wisdom

Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to all staff within the school, ensuring a fair, supportive, and consistent approach to managing sickness absence. It aims to uphold staff well-being while minimising the impact of absences on the school community, educational standards, and operational management.

Objectives

The policy aims to:

- Ensure staff are treated with fairness, compassion, and confidentiality
 - Promote consistent management practices across all cases
 - Maintain high standards in health, safety, and welfare
 - Support full attendance while addressing the needs of both employees and the school
-

Standards of Attendance

Absence trigger points for managing short-term sickness:

- 4 separate instances of absence **or** 12 working days in a rolling 12-month period (pro-rata for part-time staff)
- Absences in a short period warranting immediate action, e.g. Three episodes in six months or nine working days in six months
- A pattern of absence which is causing concern such as a particular day of the week or fortnight

In certain circumstances, such as those involving disability or pregnancy, special considerations may apply. For further details, please refer to Appendix B.

Reporting and Monitoring Absence

HR Responsibilities:

- Ensure staff awareness of reporting procedures and policy guidelines
- Accurately record and monitor the duration and reasons for absences

- Assist Line Managers in conducting Return-to-Work (RTW) meetings to facilitate effective staff reintegration

If a staff member’s health poses a risk, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) may authorise an immediate absence. The absence will be recorded as authorised leave but will not count as the first day of absence.

Absence Reporting

Employees are required to report sickness absence to their line manager or designated contact, as well as via the absence reporting phonenumber, as soon as possible on the **first day of absence** and no later than 8am.

Employees are expected to make direct contact by telephone to report sickness absence. Text messages, emails, or other forms of messaging are not considered acceptable methods of communication, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g., hospital admission).

Employees must provide the reason for their sickness absence, anticipated length of absence and anything urgent that needs addressing during the absence. If they are unwilling to disclose details over the phone, they are required to report the reason directly to a HR delegate as an additional step.

If the employee fails to contact their line manager or other nominated person, they must have a justifiable reason for doing so. If not, this will be classified as absent without leave and they may be subject to the disciplinary policy.

Unless a medical certificate (fit note) has been provided by a GP, employees are expected to maintain daily contact with their line manager/HR to provide updates on their absence and anticipated return to work.

Appendix A, titled Absence Reporting Flowchart, is provided to ensure all employees understand and follow the correct procedures expected at William Farr.

Keeping in Touch

William Farr has a duty of care to maintain appropriate contact during an employee’s absence. Depending on the duration and nature of the absence, the employee will be contacted by their Line Manager or HR delegate to discuss their general wellbeing and the anticipated length of absence.

Length of Absence	Action
Up to 7 days of absence	Employee should make contact daily with their manager/HR to update on their health
8 – 19 days of absence	The Line Manager or HR delegate will conduct at least one welfare call to the employee to check in on their general wellbeing and gather information regarding the expected duration of their absence
20 days of absence or more	Line manager or HR delegate will arrange a home visit with the employee

During periods of absence, staff are encouraged to refrain from engaging in work-related activities-aside from 'keeping in touch' communication-in order to support rest, recovery, and a successful return to work. Prioritising well-being during this time is essential for a timely and sustainable recovery.

Return to Work (RTW) Process

- **Absences of 1-7 days (inclusive of non-working days):** The staff member must complete a self-certification form and submit to HR. The staff member must complete a RTW meeting with their line manager (*see appendix H*).
- **Absences over 7 days (inclusive of non-working days):** A GP fit note must be provided by the staff member. On return, a RTW meeting with a HR delegate is required.

A Return-to-Work meeting should be conducted for every employee following any period of absence.

RTW meetings aim to:

- Support the staff member's welfare and confirm fitness to return
- Discuss any underlying causes of absence and provide support
- Discuss attendance history and reasonable adjustments
- Update staff on relevant changes and encourage positive health practices
- Encourage an improvement to attendance levels and ensure employees understand the sickness absence procedure

Where possible, the RTW meeting will take place on the day of return. Employees will also be informed if they have or are close to reaching a trigger point for the absence management procedure.

Short-Term Sickness Management

Informal Process

The Line Manager, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) may request an informal meeting to discuss the employee's wellbeing and offer support on an ad hoc basis, where appropriate. These meetings form part of routine welfare checks under the school's duty of care.

Formal Process

For staff meeting and/or exceeding trigger points three escalating stages apply. The employee has a right to be accompanied to any **formal** meeting by a trade union representative or a colleague. Details of such should be provided to HR before the meeting. Further details of each stage can be found in *Appendix C*.

Stage 1.

This will be held with the employee, Line Manager and/or HR delegate. This is the first formal meeting to discuss causes of absence and ways in which attendance can be supported and maintained. Managers and employees will discuss medical advice, set attendance targets, and offer any further support.

Stage 2.

This will be held with the employee, HR delegate and a member of Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This is the second formal meeting held if there are still concerns about the level of absence. The meeting will review progress, consider further adjustments, referrals to occupational health if not already done so and discuss implications if targets remain unmet.

Stage 3.

This will be held with the employee, HR delegate and Headteacher. This is the third formal meeting, which **could potentially result in dismissal** if attendance has not improved sustainably and targets have not been met.

Referral to Occupational Health (OH)

This may take place at any stage to provide expert recommendations to William Farr and offer guidance on how best to support the employee in managing their attendance.

Long-Term Sickness Management

The trigger point for action is an absence from work for 20 continuous working days or 10 weeks within 12 months and/or where there is no prospect of a return to work in the near future.

Where employees know in advance that they are going to be absent from work (e.g. a planned operation) the absence management procedures may be viewed as not required. The employee and their line manager should however, maintain reasonable contact.

William Farr is committed to helping employees return to work from a long-term sickness absence, as part of the sickness absence process, the support could look like the below:

- Maintain regular, sensitive communication with staff.
 - Seek OH advice for prognosis, potential adjustments, and phased returns.
 - Making reasonable adjustments
 - Consider options like redeployment or ill-health retirement for unresolved cases.
-

Phased Return

Following a long-term absence, a phased return to work may be implemented as part of the reintegration process. This will be subject to the relevant terms and conditions (STPCD, Burgundy Book, or Green Book) and pay will be applied on a pro rata basis during the phased return period.

Right to be accompanied

The employee has a right to be accompanied to any **formal** meeting by a trade union representative or a colleague. Details of such should be provided to HR before the meeting.

At its discretion, William Farr may permit a family member to accompany the employee to a meeting where this would help overcome challenges related to a disability or limited proficiency in English. However, this should **not** be regarded as an automatic entitlement.

A companion may make representations, ask questions, sum up the employees' position but will not be allowed to answer questions on the employee's behalf. The employee may confer with their companion at any time throughout the meeting.

Appeal Process

Employees may appeal dismissal decisions within 10 (school) working days. Appeals will be heard by a panel of three trustees (excluding staff members), advised by HR, and resolved within three (school) working days of the hearing. Please see further information on the appeals process in *Appendix E*.

Notice Period

Dismissals on ill-health grounds include the contractual notice period as outlined in employment agreements.

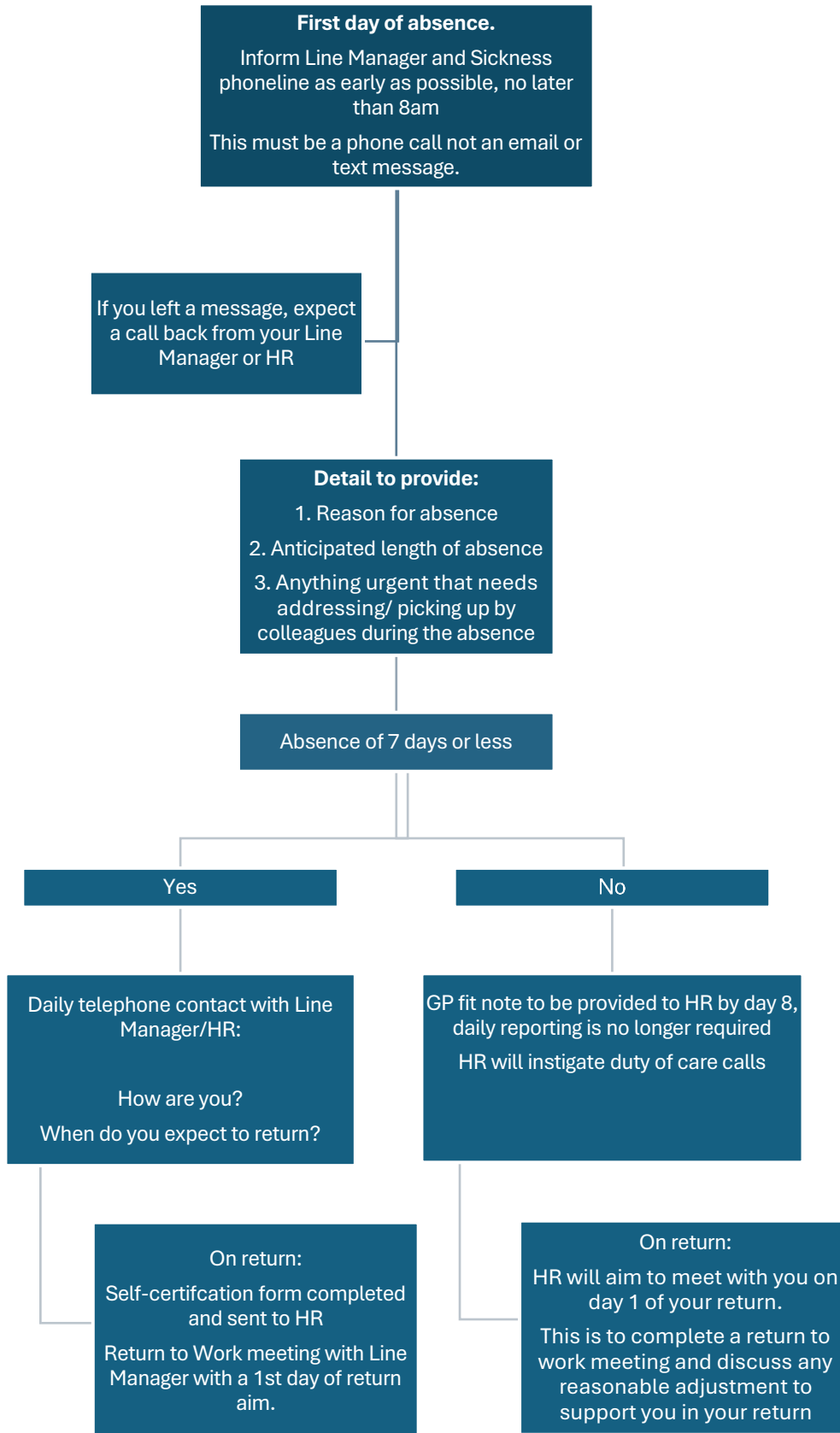
Suspension on Medical Grounds

The Headteacher may take emergency action when they consider a member of staff may have become medically incapable of performing their duties, subject to advice from HR and OH. Where an individual is suspended from duty, they will receive full pay or occupational/statutory sick pay as appropriate

Headteacher Absence

Any absence incurred by the Headteacher/Accounting Officer will be managed by the Chair of Trustees following this procedure.

Appendix A - Absence Reporting Flowchart



Appendix B – Special Considerations

William Farr has an obligation, under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for staff with a protected characteristic (such as disability, pregnancy and gender reassignment). All absences that fall within this category will be recorded and treated as per the sickness absence management policy however, William Farr will:

- Take advice and provide support to help you to manage any periods of absence
- Make reasonable adjustments, including adjusting the trigger points where appropriate
- At each stage of the absence management process particular considerations will be given to whether there are any further reasonable adjustments that could be made.

If an employee is affected by a disability or medical condition, they should inform HR so they can be supported.

Where employees need time off work to attend medical appointments related to their disability or condition (treatment, check-ups etc), William Farr will normally allow up to 10 appointments a year (pro-rotas for part time staff) as a reasonable adjustment. However, this is not guaranteed and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mental Health/Stress related absence

William Farr will support and discuss options with staff who need time off due to experiencing significant stress at work, or in their personal life, which is impacting their wellbeing and mental health. Options may include:

- Arranging external support such as counselling or an occupational health referral.
- Completing a stress risk assessment
- Reassess the employee's workload and decide what to prioritise
- Encouraging an open dialogue between the line manager, employee and HR to understand triggers and prevent further stress on the employee

Menopause support

Further information regarding menopause and the support provided by William Farr can be found in our Menopause Support Document.

Terminal Illness

If an employee is off sick with a terminal illness, it is important to find out the employee's needs during this difficult time. HR and the Line Manager can:

- Provide guidance on external financial support services
- Ensure workplace adjustments are made to support the employee with any potential health conditions
- Consider alternative roles if the impact of health and safety, performance and attendance in the employees' current role is too demanding

Appendix C – Absence Management Process; Short Term Absence

The following procedure should be followed in cases of repeated short-term absence which have met the trigger points. In all **formal** meetings, the employee has a right to be accompanied (please refer to previous section regarding this). If the employee fails to engage in the process, the meetings will still go ahead without the employee in attendance.

Informal meeting with HR/Line Manager or SLT member

Following the RTW meeting, if the employee has hit one (or more) of the trigger points, HR will invite them to an informal meeting to discuss their absence. HR will aim to give the staff member 5 (school) working days' notice. At the meeting:

- The employee's absence record will be confirmed and an opportunity for the employee to discuss their health and wellbeing will be given.
- Any medical information or medical advice will be discussed
- Whether the absence is work-related and a temporary change to workload would improve attendance
- Whether there are any underlying health conditions that need to be discussed and if this can be managed with reasonable adjustments.
- How the employee's absence levels are affecting the pupils, colleagues and school.
- Discuss any further support the employee believes may help or the school can provide.

If a staff members absence levels continue to cause concerns, the formal stages of the procedure will commence.

Formal Stage 1 Meeting with HR and/or the Line Manager

HR will give employees 5 (school) working days' notice and all documentation relevant to the employees' case will be provided at this time:

- Absence record
- Letters/Correspondence
- Return to work forms
- Any medical evidence

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Discuss reasons for absence
- Determine the likelihood of further absences
- Consider medical evidence
- Consider any work-related issues that could be impacting attendance
- Consider any reasonable adjustments that may improve their attendance (temporary contract changes, amendment to duties etc)
- How the employee's absence is impacting pupils, colleagues and the school
- Consider any other ways William Farr could support the employee in their attendance.

HR and/or Line Manager will set a review period (of no longer than 6 months or if the absence triggers are met). The expectations of absence will be explained to the employee at this point (e.g. no more than one period of absence in this time).

At the end of the review period HR and/or the Line Manager and employee will meet to discuss the next steps:

- No further action as the employee's absence levels have improved significantly.
- A further review period of no longer than 8 (school) working weeks to be set.
- Progress to a Formal Stage 2 meeting as the employees absence levels have not improved to a satisfactory level.

Formal Stage 2 Meeting with HR and SLT member

HR will give employees 5 (school) working days' notice and all documentation relevant to the employees' case will be provided at this time:

- Absence record
- Letters/Correspondence
- Return to work forms
- Any medical evidence

The purpose of the meeting is to further understand the employee's sickness absence and the reasons behind it. If it has not yet been completed, an occupational health referral must be completed at this stage.

The SLT member will set a review period (of no longer than 6 months or if the absence triggers are met). The expectations of absence will be explained to the employee at this point (e.g. no more than one period of absence in this time). A warning will be given to the employee that if the process progresses to the next stage the employee is at risk of dismissal.

At the end of the review period HR, the SLT member and employee will meet to discuss the next steps:

- No further action as the employee's absence levels have improved significantly.
- A further review period of no longer than 8 (school) working weeks to be set.
- Progress to a Formal Stage 3 meeting as the employee's absence levels have not improved to a satisfactory level.

Formal Stage 3 Meeting with HR and Headteacher and authority to dismiss

HR will give employees 5 (school) working days' notice and all documentation relevant to the employees' case will be provided at this time:

- Absence record
- Letters/Correspondence
- Return to work forms
- Any medical evidence

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Review all the documentation and matters previously discussed with the employee.
- Raise any further matters
- Consider ill-health retirement
- Consider the likelihood of the employee returning to work or achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time

Possible outcomes of this meeting:

- Further supportive action will be taken within an agreed timescale to address the problem.
- A permanent change to the employees' contract with the understanding this will improve their attendance
- Employment is terminated with full notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Monitoring Period

If the employee's absence has improved to the required level at any stage, the employee will enter a 12-month live monitoring period where absence is encouraged to be kept at an acceptable level.

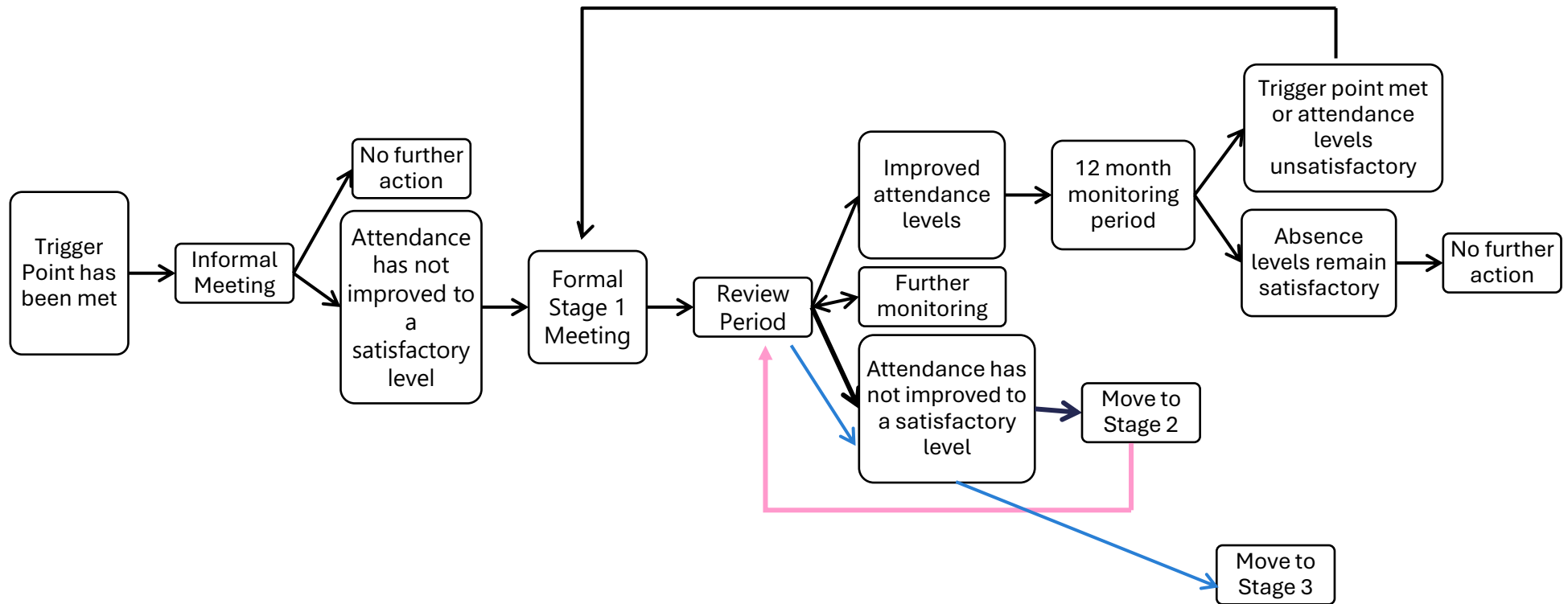
HR will review the employee's absence record if:

- They have further absences in 12 months
- They hit the trigger points

If this happens, the employee will either:

- Re-join procedure at the stage where it was ceased
- Have a further review period

Appendix C - Absence Management Process Flowchart



Appendix D – Absence Management Process; Long Term Absence

William Farr is committed to dealing fairly and sympathetically with employees who are absent from work for long periods. In all **formal** meetings, the employee has a right to be accompanied (please refer to previous section regarding this). If the employee fails to engage in the process, the meetings will still go ahead without the employee in attendance.

A welfare visit will be arranged by HR and the Line Manager in the first instance. HR will give 5 (school) working days' notice. The meeting will cover:

- Medical prognosis and expected timescale for the employee to return to work.
- What support the employee needs to enable them to successfully return to work.
- Whether the employee has a disability under the Equality Act and if any reasonable adjustments need to be made.
- What impact the employee's absence is having on pupils, colleagues and the school.
- A return-to-work plan
- Whether to seek further medical advice.

If the employee recovers and returns to work in the agreed timescale set at the informal meeting, it will be decided if further meetings need to be held.

If the employee's absence continues then the absence management process will be triggered.

Appendix E – Appeals

The employee may appeal against any decision made within the process and against a dismissal decision taken as part of the absence management process.

The employee should set out their appeal, in writing, stating the full grounds of their appeal and sent to the Chair of Governors within 10 (school) working days of the decision.

The appeal panel will consist of no less than 3 members of the Local Governing Body who will not have previously been involved in the case. The appeal will be dealt with impartially.

The employee and the panel may invite appropriate persons to be present at the appeal hearing to provide evidence.

The appeal panel may uphold the original decision, revoke the decision, or replace the decision with a different decision.

The decision will be communicated to the employee within 7 (school) days of the decision being made.

The decision of the panel is final and represents the end of the internal process.

Appendix F – Sick Pay Entitlement

The scheme for teachers, under the Burgundy Book, uses a fixed reference period from April to March.

During the first year of service	25 working days full pay, after completing 4 calendar months service, 50 working days half pay
During the second year of service	50 working days full pay and 50 working days half pay
During the third year of service	75 working days full pay and 75 working days half pay
During the fourth and successive years of service	100 working days full pay and 100 working days half pay

Further information for **teaching staff** can be obtained via the [\[link\]](#)

The Green Book, for support staff, uses a rolling 12 months to assess an absent employee's entitlement to pay. Teaching assistants' sick pay falls under the Green Book and differs from teachers.

During the first year of service	1 month full pay and, after completing 4 calendar months service, 2 months half pay
During the second year of service	2 months full pay and 2 months half pay
During the third year of service	4 months full pay and 4 months half pay
During the fourth and fifth years of service	5 months full pay and 5 months half pay
After five years' service	6 months full pay and 6 months half pay

Further information for **support staff** can be obtained via the [\[link\]](#)

Appendix G - Self-Certification template

Please complete this form when you return to work following an unplanned absence of 1-7 calendar days (including weekends and any period of school closure).

For an unplanned absence of 8 days or more, please include your fit-for-work note (sick note).

Please email your completed form to HR: hr@williamfarr.lincs.sch.uk within 2 days of returning to work.

Employee Information

Name	Click or tap here to enter text.		
Department	Click or tap here to enter text.		
Line Manager	Click or tap here to enter text.		
Teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support	<input type="checkbox"/>
First Date of Absence	Click or tap here to enter text.		
Date of Return to Work	Click or tap here to enter text.		
Number of Working Days Absent	Click or tap here to enter text.		

Reason for Absence

Reason	Tick to Select	Further Information
Cough/Cold	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Flu/COVID	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Mental Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Ear/Throat Infection	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Migraine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Musculoskeletal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Sickness/Diarrhoea	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Other – please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.

Signature of Member of Staff	Click or tap here to enter text.
Date	Click or tap to enter a date.

HR will be in touch within 2 days of the return of this form to arrange a Return-to-Work Meeting. These are to be attended promptly.

Appendix H -Return to Work template

Employee	Click or tap here to enter text.
Department	Click or tap here to enter text.
Teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Meeting	Click or tap here to enter text.
Interviewing Manager	Click or tap here to enter text.

Details of Sickness Absence		
<i>HR to complete before the meeting</i>		
Period of Absence	Click or tap here to enter text.	
Number of Days Absent	Click or tap here to enter text.	
Reason for Absence	Click or tap here to enter text.	
<i>Previous Absences:</i>		
<i>Date of Absence</i>	<i>Reason</i>	<i>Number of Days</i>
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
<p>Is absence related to a known or possible disability under the Equality Act? Has there been consideration of whether the 'trigger point' relating to days absence should be extended, or if the sickness absence policy should otherwise be modified?</p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes – details of medical evidence must be attached</i></p>		

Welcome back discussion <i>(please include: how are they, how have they been, why have they been absent, what can we do to support you back in work)</i>
Click or tap here to enter text.
Did you speak to your GP or a pharmacist during your absence? <i>(if yes, please note the date)</i>
Click or tap here to enter text.
Have you been taking any medication and are there any side effects to be aware of? <i>(if yes, what medication, length of course, and dosage)</i>
Click or tap here to enter text.

Is this an ongoing or recurring condition?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Has anything work-related contributed to your absence? (If yes, what?)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Are there any reasonable adjustments you feel we need to undertake to support with your attendance? *The objective is that attendance will be satisfactory to the employer. Is there anything we can do to improve your attendance, e.g. OH referral, counselling, a review of risk assessment, temporary or permanent reasonable adjustments to the workplace, working practices or working hours or training?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

Fit note required for any period of absence during the period?

Yes No

Follow up action proposed by manager

Click or tap here to enter text.

Absence Management Process

Will Farr operates the following trigger points:

- 4 separate instances of absence in a rolling 12-month period (pro-rata for part-time staff)
- 12 working days in a rolling 12-month period (pro-rata for part-time staff).
- Absences in a short period warranting immediate action, e.g. Three episodes in six months or nine working days in six months.
- A pattern of absence which is causing concern such as a particular day of the week or fortnight

The employee has triggered on the below point:

Click or tap here to enter text.

A Stage 1 meeting will be arranged with the Headteacher and HR. They will be informed of this date in due course.

Signature of Member of Staff

Click or tap here to enter text.

Dae

Click or tap to enter a date.

Appendix J - Absence Review Meeting template

Employee	Click or tap here to enter text.	
Department	Click or tap here to enter text.	
Teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Meeting	Click or tap here to enter text.	
In Attendance	Click or tap here to enter text.	

Details of Sickness Absence		
<i>HR to complete before the meeting</i>		
Absence Review	1 st <input type="checkbox"/>	2 nd <input type="checkbox"/>
Number of Days Absent	Click or tap here to enter text.	
Number of Separate Absences	Click or tap here to enter text.	

Return to Work Form(s) Attached?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Comments:</i>	Click or tap here to enter text.
GP Note Attached?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Comments:</i>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Previous Review Notes Attached?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Comments:</i>	Click or tap here to enter text.

Reason for meeting:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Targets set at previous meeting (if appropriate)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Meeting Notes	
Checklist	Comments
Discuss sickness absence. Reasons, frequency, why employee has triggered etc	Click or tap here to enter text.
Discuss the outcomes of any previous reviews or action taken.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Offer advice, support and guidance. PAM Assist, OH, GP, Crisis contacts	Click or tap here to enter text.
Discuss reasonable adjustments, temporary change of contract etc	Click or tap here to enter text.

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.	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Additional comments
Click or tap here to enter text.

Signed Employee:	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Signed Manager:	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date:	Click or tap here to enter text.

Staff members should always seek further clarification if unsure of any processes within the policy.