

**Attendance management
Policy and procedures for
school based employees**

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1. Introduction

The school recognises that if absence is not managed properly problems such as classroom cover, lesson delivery, pupil performance and staff morale can be adversely affected.

The school will offer support to all employees who experience difficulty in maintaining acceptable levels of attendance. If attendance becomes a concern then the school will apply these procedures and support the employee in improving their attendance and bringing it back to acceptable levels

2. Policy key principles

Headteachers recognise their duty of care to all staff and will arrange to support the employee throughout the process, keeping a note of the contact(s).

Attendance is monitored and managed proactively within the school, including timely and appropriate referrals to Employee Healthcare.

Short term/intermittent sickness cases are pro-actively managed by utilising the three stage attendance management procedures.

Sickness cases; which go beyond 4 weeks are subject to timely and appropriate reviews. (Requires appropriate advice from HR).

If, despite this continuing support, the employee is unable to maintain acceptable levels of attendance, dismissal for unsatisfactory attendance or ill health dismissal will be given serious consideration.

3. Available Support

3.1. HR Service

HR provides training, advice and support on the Attendance Management Policy and Procedures and good practice. Headteachers can also access additional HR guidelines and fact sheets on good practice to facilitate the proactive and preventative management of attendance. HR is not the decision maker but will advise Headteachers in determining what their options are and highlight any legal implications/requirements.

3.2. *Employee Healthcare*

Employee Healthcare offer Headteachers advice on supporting an employee either back into the workplace or in improving attendance levels. Employee Healthcare provides the Headteacher with occupational health advice and offer pension case reviews when requested. They also provide counselling and other wellbeing initiatives such as physiotherapy, Health MOT's, lifestyle advice

3.3. *Care first*

Care first is an independent provider of confidential workplace support programmes. Care first offers a professional 24 hour telephone counselling, information and advice service. Care first can help with a range of problems from practical everyday matters to sensitive, traumatic or emotional issues. The telephone number for Care first is: 0800 174319.

Care first can also provide advice over the phone for Headteachers managing difficult situations, and Headteachers can also access support via the Headteacher's Support Service.

3.4. *Headteacher*

The Headteacher will support the employee throughout the process, keeping in regular contact with them when on long term sickness and through attendance management meetings where necessary. They will also make the employee aware of the support available to them. Where an employee is absent due to work related issues, the Headteacher should contact HR for advice regarding appropriate contact/support.

3.5. *Stress Risk Assessment*

If the absence is stress related then it is good practice to complete a stress risk assessment with the employee, working with them to address the potential stressors in the workplace and to support the employee's wellbeing.

3.6. Trade Union or Professional Association

Employees can access support from their trade union or professional association throughout this process.

4. Employee responsibilities

The Headteacher will ensure that all employees are aware of their responsibilities when absent due to sickness, and ensure this is relayed to new employees via induction processes.

All employees should refer to and follow their schools absence notification process; a return to work date will be discussed and/or a date for the next point of contact.

Where employees are absent due to sickness for over 7 continuous days (including weekends) they must provide a 'Fit Note' from their GP.

Employees are expected to co-operate with referrals to Employee Healthcare and to help support their attendance by following the advice of medical experts and through discussions with the Headteacher

5. Procedures

5.1. Recording Sickness Absence

The school must report sickness absence using the SAP Portal

5.2. Sickness Absence Triggers

The school has set a sickness absence trigger of 6 days in 6 months or 3 occasions in 6 months or a pattern; this is pro rata for part time employees. A sickness absence trigger is a level of sickness absence which, once reached, causes concern to the school and cannot be sustained by the school. The Headteacher will monitor the absence of their employees and will identify when someone is approaching a trigger and any triggers reached.

5.3. FIT Notes

A fit note is issued after the seventh calendar day of sickness. The note may make recommendations for the school to consider when supporting the employee back into the workplace. The note is not an instruction and if any suggested adjustments cannot reasonably be accommodated then the Headteacher will need to consider whether the employee should remain absent, although every effort will be made to support an employee's return with reasonable medical recommendations.

5.4. Referrals to Employee Healthcare

Where it is anticipated that an absence will last for 4 weeks or more, or where there is a concern regarding an employee's intermittent absences, the Headteacher will in most cases complete the medical referral using SAP. The form once completed will automatically be sent to the HR Team who will offer advice and support with the referral. Prior to making the referral, the Headteacher must ensure the employee has a copy and is fully aware of the contents. The Headteacher will receive a written report from Employee Healthcare usually advising on the likelihood of a return to work, timescales for a return to work, future predicted levels of attendance, Ill Health Retirement, Reasonable Adjustments etc. The Headteacher will consider any recommendations including any suggested adjustments and decide whether the school can accommodate them

5.5. Informal Management of sickness absence

- **Keeping in touch** - The Headteacher and employee have a responsibility to keep in touch in all cases, this could be via e-mail, telephone, letters and/or meetings. Headteachers should ensure that employees are aware of the attendance policy and procedures, and arrange keeping in touch, supportive meetings to consider ways in which to support an employee's return.
- **Return to Work Discussion** - This is an informal meeting carried out by the Headteacher or another member of SLT on the employee's return to work. The focus of the meeting is to welcome the employee back, ensure they are well enough to be back, discuss previous levels of sickness absence (if

appropriate), cover areas of work they have missed and bring them up to date.

- When an employee has reached a trigger, whether due to long term absence or short term/intermittent absence, this will be discussed with them as part of a return to work discussion and will become a First stage informal attendance meeting. At this meeting the Headteacher will decide whether it is appropriate to set an improvement target and review period, and, if so, a referral to Healthcare is recommended. The outcome of the meeting should be confirmed in writing.

5.6. Formal management of sickness absence

- Short Term / intermittent sickness absence formal meeting - held if the employee has failed to meet their informal improvement target and this becomes the second stage of the process. The purpose of the formal meeting is to assess whether the employee and/or the Headteacher can do anything to improve attendance levels, to agree a way forward and set a formal improvement target and formal review period. The employee will receive a letter inviting them to attend a meeting, usually with the Headteacher with HR support, and the employee will be advised of their right to arrange to be accompanied by a TU representative or work colleague. The possible outcomes of not making the required improvements will be clearly communicated both verbally and in writing and the meeting outcome confirmed in writing. Headteachers may extend the informal review period or set an adjusted formal target based on the individual circumstances of the case, for example disability related sickness or extenuating circumstances.
- **Long Term sickness absence formal meeting** – will follow the format of the above, and tend to be held after the employee has been absent for over 4 weeks and a return to work needs to be established. Possible outcomes of absence continuing should be clearly communicated verbally and in writing. A summary of the meeting should be put in writing to the employee.

Sustaining good attendance

If your employee has met their improvement target in the first or second review period then you must write to them to let them know that you are pleased that they have met their target and that the review period has ended. In the letter you must also let them know that if they hit another sickness trigger point in the next 2 years (from the end of their last review period) you may decide, depending upon the circumstances, that they will move to the next stage of the procedure and not start at the beginning.

5.7. Factors to consider prior to any progression to Governors Staffing Dismissal Committee

- The appropriateness/possibility of suitable alternative employment/deployment or ill health retirement
- **Is the absence disability related?** - As part of making a reasonable adjustment the Headteacher should consider making allowances for sickness absence related to a disability
- **Is the absence maternity related? – This would not normally lead to any formal attendance management processes/action**, although support will be necessary, including a pregnancy risk assessment
- **Reasonable Adjustments – Have all reasonable adjustments been considered?** These are adjustments the Headteacher may consider to help the employee return to work and/or maintain acceptable levels of attendance. For example:
 - A change to hours of work
 - A change to job role and duties/deployment
 - A Work Place Assessment
 - Adaptations to workplace
 - Temporary working arrangements
 - Employee Healthcare advice and recommendations- are these reasonable and practicable for the school
 - A return to work / phased return to work
 - Phased Return or Supported return * see info below:

***What is a Phased return to work?**

In some long term sickness absence cases, it may be considered beneficial for an employee to ease themselves back into work on a gradual basis.

This would need to be agreed with either an Occupational Health Professional at Employee Healthcare or by the employees GP. It should also be agreed by the Headteacher. A phased return is usually for up to a maximum of 4 weeks, gradually building up to the employees contractual hours.

The Headteacher will plan the return to work with the employee and agree the working patterns and the employees key work objectives. The working pattern will need to meet the operational needs of the school.

Throughout the phased return the employee will receive normal pay for the hours worked and sick pay (at the rate of sick pay the employee was on upon their return i.e. either full, half or no pay) for the hours not at work.

***What is a Supported return to work? (Teachers only)**

In some long term sickness absence cases, usually, though not exclusively, where a teacher has been absent due to a psychological illness, it may be considered beneficial for an employee to have a 2 week supported return rather than a phased return to work.

This would need to be agreed with either an Occupational Health Professional at Employee Healthcare or by the employees GP and should also be agreed by the Headteacher.

The employee returns the first week familiarising themselves with the school and their teaching role whilst the Supply Teacher continues to lead

the class. The second week the employee takes responsibility for leading the class with support from the Supply Teacher.

During the first week of a supported return to work, the employees contractual hours worked are offset against their sickness entitlement, supported by a 'Fit Note' from their GP. The second week the employee receives their normal pay for the contractual hours worked.

5.8. Final Formal meeting – Consideration

Where an employee has failed again to meet their improvement target and sustain acceptable levels of attendance or has been unable to return to work and the school can no longer sustain the absence, after consideration of all the factors in 5.7 above then, the Headteacher will decide whether to refer the case to the Governors Staffing Dismissal's Committee for them to consider either:

- Dismissal for unsatisfactory attendance - Short Term/ Intermittent sickness absence (third stage)
- Dismissal due to incapability to attend work due to ill health - Long Term sickness absence

In most cases the Headteacher will prepare, with support from HR, a case to present to the Governors Staffing Dismissals Committee. The case must include a chronology, details of absence, up to date medical advice, all the support and adjustments put into place and considered by the school, medical reports and meeting outcome letters. The employee, with the support of their union or work colleague, will put their case forward. All sides will have an opportunity to ask questions. The hearing will adjourn and Governors will decide whether all reasonable options have been considered, including whether or not to dismiss.

Where the employee is a Trade Union Representative, with the employee's consent, discussions will be held with the appropriate Trade Union Officer prior to a Final Formal meeting.

6. Appeal

An employee has the right to appeal against dismissal and appeals should be referred to the Governing Body's Appeals panel within 15 working days of the employee receiving the written decision.

The appeal must be in writing and specify:

- Their job title, place of work in which employed.
- The decision being appealed against and the grounds for the appeal.

Notice Periods for Formal attendance meetings:

Meeting	Minimum Working Days' Notice
Formal Attendance Management Meeting	5 Days
Dismissals Hearing	10 Days
Appeal Hearing	20 Days
Appeal Hearing Paperwork Exchange	10 Days

7. Managing Headteacher Absence

The Chair of Governors is responsible for monitoring attendance of the Headteacher.

If the Headteacher is subject to the sickness absence procedures; the Chair of Governors should manage the absence, including offering support throughout the process, maintaining regular contact and arranging attendance management meetings. HR will offer the appropriate advice and support.

The Chair of Governors is also responsible for undertaking return to work discussions.

In maintained schools, the Local Authority also has a duty of care for Headteacher wellbeing. Therefore, where there are attendance concerns, or a Headteacher's absence is likely to exceed 4 weeks, the Chair of Governors should contact their Kirklees Learning Partner (KLP) to notify

them of the absence, and to discuss any support requirements. The KLP can then ensure they have an appropriate level of involvement. This will include assisting with the referral to Employee Healthcare, considering any cover requirements and could include attending related management meetings.

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils or staff with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.