

Managing Attendance Policy

E03.0



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
Sickness Absence Reporting.....	3
Managing Attendance.....	4
Management of Short-term Persistent Absence	4
Triggers to begin Formal Procedures	4
Managing long-term absence	5
Formal Procedure for Managing Short and Long Term Absences	6
First Sickness Absence Review Meeting	6
Second Sickness Absence Review Meeting.....	7
Third Sickness Absence Review Meeting.....	8
Return to Work Meetings	9
Phased return to work	9
Sick Pay Allowance	10
Support Staff	10
Teaching Staff.....	10
APPENDIX 1 - Managing attendance.....	11

Introduction

A high level of absence from colleagues (whether planned/unplanned/short term/long term) increases the workload and stress of staff in general. This has a consequent effect on staff motivation and goodwill. If staff absence is low, students benefit from continuity in learning, teaching and support.

An attendance procedure provides a framework in which to explore the reasons for staff absence and to determine strategies to prevent absence through continuing to support staff, providing clear guidance and minimising the effects of absence on the continuity of students' education.

The Headteacher's role is to manage the attendance of all staff, within their school, help to ensure that staff receive appropriate support and are fully aware of sickness notification procedures. The Headteacher will also arrange for sickness records to be maintained, monitored and managed. Sickness absence records will include absence due to sickness, industrial injury, part or whole day absences and absence for medical and other appointments.

The attendance procedure provides a consistent, fair and supportive framework in which staff absence can be managed.

This policy aims to comprehensively relate to any situation where a colleague may not be at work fulfilling their contractual duties.

All teachers are required to be on the premises at least five minutes before and after the start of the school day (earlier on Briefing and Duty days). This is regardless of where their non-contacts or PPAs fall. This does not apply to time off in lieu of twilight teaching arrangements as detailed on individual timetables

All support staff are expected to be on the premises during the hours of their employment.

If a member of staff does have permission to leave the site before the end of the school day it is important to follow the signing out process in the school reception. This is to save time being wasted in looking for someone on the large campus especially in emergency situations,

****All the entitlement figures refer to Full-time staff. These will be pro-rated for part-time staff. ****

Sickness Absence Reporting

Staff unable to attend work must give as much notice as possible in order for cover to be arranged and reduce the impact on provision of service.

A named contact within the school, must receive the call **NO LATER THAN 7.30am** on each day of absence unless covered by a 'fit note' previously notified to the Headteacher.

The following details need to be given:

- reason for absence (specify the type of illness)
- date the illness commenced
- expected length of absence
- whether the illness/injury is due to an accident at work

Text messages, e-mail or messages left on the school voice mail are **not acceptable** as they will not be received in time to make appropriate alternative staffing arrangements.

In addition all staff should also contact their **line manager** and give an indication of the planned work for the day.

On **returning to work**, if the absence has been:

- Less than 7 calendar days – complete a return to work interview with your line manager.
- More than 7 calendar days – If a ‘fit note’ has been issued a return to work interview will be conducted by either your line manager, a member of the senior leadership team in your school or a member of the HR Team.

It is the Trust’s policy to attempt to maintain contact with the employee who is absent from work due to ill health. This may be by telephone, letter or a home visit.

The school will confidentially record and hold records of sickness absence of all staff. Individual records will be updated after each absence and reviewed on a regular basis. The trends, not names, are reported to the Directors/Governors each term.

Any member of staff who consistently fails to follow the absence reporting procedure or does not report absence at all, will be dealt with in line with the disciplinary policy as a conduct issue.

Managing Attendance

Sickness absence usually falls into the following categories: long term; short term; frequent; Persistent or a combination of these. See Appendix 1 for further information.

Management of Short-term Persistent Absence

Short term frequent or persistent absence can be defined as a situation where an employee has regular periods of absence, usually on health grounds, interspersed by periods at work or where an employee has odd days off, reported as sickness but uncertified by a doctor. Usually the absences are attributable to minor ailments and in many cases are unconnected.

It is acknowledged that the majority of these cases will be genuine. If an employee declares that they are absent through ill-health, whether that absence is certified or not, the Headteacher should treat the illness as genuine and therefore the matter being considered is the capability of the employee to undertake the job for which they are employed due to ill health. The Headteacher may need to take into consideration whether the persistent absences are beginning to have an operational impact on the school. If there are also concerns regarding the conduct of the individual the two issues should be regarded as separate for the purposes of absence management.

Triggers to begin Formal Procedures

Teachers and support staff who have had three separate absences or a total of 11 days during a twelve month period (including current absence) or where any other unacceptable trend is identified (e.g. repeated absences linked to a weekend or other breaks) will ‘trigger’ a formal meeting within the managing absence procedure.

The school will consider, on an individual basis, what appropriate action should be taken after considering any of the following relevant points:

- Return to work discussions/meetings
- A discussion with the employee may provide an insight into any underlying medical or personal problems. If there appears to be an underlying medical problem ask whether the employee has discussed this with their GP recently. If there are personal problems it may be suitable to look at short or long-term solutions such as a change of work pattern, hours, etc.
- If there are capability issues these should be addressed under the capability procedure and further advice should be sought from the HR Department.
- A referral to the Occupational Health team to obtain medical advice and explore ways in which the Department and line manager can provide support and assistance to the employee. The Trust will advise the employee of the referral and discuss consent for the Occupational Health Physician to contact the employee's GP for more comprehensive advice (if required).
- Maintaining regular contact with the employee is vital during their absence; this can be achieved in a letter, telephone, e-mail, home visits etc.

Should the employee's absence levels not improve then the line manager/Headteacher will need to consider what further action should be taken such as:

- instigating formal hearings

Managing long-term absence

Long term sickness absence is an instance of 4 consecutive weeks or more. The procedure commences after four weeks or when an employee who in the next month will exhaust entitlement to full or half pay in accordance with their entitlements detailed in their conditions of service.

In the event of a long term absence the school will consider on an individual basis what appropriate action should be taken after considering any of the following relevant points:

- Return to work discussions/meetings
- Referral to the Occupational Health team to obtain medical advice and explore ways in which the Department and line manager can provide support and assistance to the employee. The Headteacher must advise the employee of the referral and secure consent for the Occupational Health Physician to contact the employee's GP/Consultant for more comprehensive advice.
- Regular contact with the employee is vital during their absence; this can be by letter, telephone, e-mail or home visits etc.
- The employee should be encouraged to contact their trade union, if they are a member, for support and advice in how best to deal with this.
- A period of phased return may need to be considered for a return to work e.g. reduced hours or undertaking restricted duties.
- OHU may, in some circumstances, recommend ill health retirement.
- Where there is no prospect of a return to work in the foreseeable future the line manager/Headteacher may decide to consider entering into formal hearings.

Formal Procedure for Managing Short and Long Term Absences

First Sickness Absence Review Meeting

An employee who:

- remains absent from their job or
- who has not shown sufficient improvement in attendance following previous discussions in 'return to work' meetings or
- whose attendance has deteriorated again following some initial improvement

will be invited to attend a **formal meeting (First Sickness Absence Review)** with their line manager.

Before the meeting, consideration will be given to a referral for specialist advice from the Occupational Health Unit in consultation with the school/Trust's HR Team. This may help in determining whether there is an underlying medical condition and whether or not the attendance record is likely to improve if the employee continues in their present job.

Notification of the meeting will be in writing giving at least 10 working days prior notice and stating the date, time and place of the meeting. The letter will contain the reason for the meeting and a reminder of the employee's rights to be accompanied by a trade union representative or another person of their own choosing. A Statement of case will be produced by a HR caseworker and that along with any papers to be considered at the meeting will also be circulated with this letter unless otherwise stated.

The statement of case will be presented by the HR caseworker and the purpose of the meeting will be to:

- explore the reasons for the unsatisfactory level of absence
- explain the reasons why the absence level is unsatisfactory and its impact on the school/pupils etc.
- offer any further help or guidance to facilitate a return to work or improved attendance
- where appropriate, seek a commitment by the employee to improve their attendance

This meeting will also be minuted by an appropriate person.

If, at this meeting, the employees line manager feels that the employee's absence level is still unsatisfactory, they will issue the employee with a Written Warning and inform them that, unless there is a significant improvement, their continued employment at the school may be at risk.

The date of the Second Sickness Absence Review Meeting will be scheduled. This may be in the region of 4 – 6 weeks but will be determined appropriate to the case, with particular reference to any medical information that may become available.

The employee will be informed of their right of appeal against this warning which would be heard by a senior leader within the school and they will receive written confirmation of the outcome along with a copy of meeting minutes.

The Trust may also need further specialist medical advice for the Second Sickness Absence Review Meeting which will be discussed with the employee.

Second Sickness Absence Review Meeting

The procedure for this meeting should mirror that for the First Sickness Absence Review Meeting.

The purpose of the meeting will, initially, be to formally review the employee's attendance and any factors relating to it since the First Sickness Absence Review Meeting;

There are two likely outcomes of this Second Sickness Absence Review Meeting:

1. If the employee's record **has improved satisfactorily and been sustained** since the First Sickness Absence Review, The line manager will stop the formal procedure at this meeting. The employee will be informed, however, of the expectation that the improvement should be maintained and that attendance will continue to be monitored as with all other staff in school and that if the improvement is not sustained, formal monitoring of absence may again take place. This will be confirmed in writing to the employee.
2. If attendance has **not improved** the review meeting should continue and cover the following areas:
 - Explore why the absence level continues to be unsatisfactory and the reasons for it.
 - Explain the continued concern about the level of absence.
 - Seek a final commitment to improve attendance by the employee
 - and/or explore measures to achieve improvement or a satisfactory return to work as appropriate.

The HR Caseworker should reconfirm the points raised at the First Sickness Absence Review Meeting i.e. the level of absence remains unsatisfactory and that a significant level of improvement is required. Absence will continue to be monitored and a further review will take place at the end of the agreed timescale (see First Sickness Absence Review Meeting).

The employees line manager will issue a **Final Written Warning** informing the employee that a failure to make a significant improvement by the next review meeting could result in the termination of their contract of employment.

The date of the Third Sickness Absence Review Meeting will be scheduled. This may be in the region of 4 – 6 weeks but will be determined appropriate to the case, with particular reference to any medical information that may become available.

The employee will be informed of their right of appeal against this warning which would be heard a member of the schools senior leadership team and they will receive written confirmation of the outcome along with a copy of meeting minutes.

Specialist medical advice from the Occupational Health Unit may be required at this stage and will, therefore, be obtained in time for it to be considered at the Third Sickness Absence Review meeting.

The timing of the Third Sickness Absence Meeting may need to change taking account of the need for any medical advice required.

Third Sickness Absence Review Meeting

The arrangements for this meeting will depend on the circumstances of the case since the Second Sickness Absence Review meeting as shown below:

1. If, during the Second Review Period, the employee's absence record has **improved satisfactorily and has been sustained**, the Third Sickness Absence Review Meeting should take place with the employees line manager. The employee will be notified in this meeting that the formal procedures will end. The employee should also be informed that the improvement should be maintained and that their attendance will continue to be monitored, as for other staff in school. They should be advised of the expectation that, if the improvement is not sustained, formal monitoring of their absence may recommence. This decision should be confirmed in writing to the employee.

or

2. If the employee's absence record has not improved satisfactorily, since the last Sickness Absence Review Meeting, the meeting should be held with a panel of 3 governors which may also include the Headteacher If they have not been involved in managing the case.

Written confirmation of the **Third Sickness Absence Review Meeting** will be sent giving 10 working days' notice stating the date, time and place of the meeting, the reason for the meeting and a reminder of the employee's rights of representation. Again, a Statement of Case will be produced by a HR caseworker and that along with any paperwork to be referred to at the meeting will be circulated with this letter unless otherwise stated.

The statement of case will be presented by the HR caseworker and the purpose of the **Third Sickness Absence Review Meeting (panel of 3 governors)** will be to:

- formally review the employee's attendance since the Second Sickness Absence Review Meeting.
- inform the employee of his/her attendance record and demonstrate that it shows insufficient improvement.
- explain the impact on the school of the continuing absence(s)
- explore the reasons for lack of improvement.

During the meeting a full exploration and discussion of the situation will be held to determine whether there has been any progress or improvement in the attendance.

There are likely to be two possible outcomes of this meeting:

1. There has been some improvement in attendance but it is considered insufficient. The employee must, therefore, be advised that their attendance should be improved over an agreed period, this may be in the region of 4-6 weeks but will be determined appropriate to the case, with particular reference to any medical information that may become available and will continue to be monitored

or

2. There is **no sustained improvement or acceptable return to work** at this point, or in the foreseeable future. The employee will be informed that due to their attendance levels remaining unsatisfactory their employment will be terminated subject to appropriate notice on the grounds of lack of capability due to ill-health.

If the decision is to terminate employment, the employee will be advised of their right to appeal against the decision to an appeal panel of 3 governors not party to the decision to dismiss. The right of appeal should be exercised within 14 days of the date of written confirmation of the decision.

Return to Work Meetings

All employees must see their line manager for a Return to Work meeting when they return after each absence. The employee will be provided with a copy if they require it for their records and this will be held on the employees personnel file.

The purpose of the discussion is to ask about the employee's wellbeing and to recognise that after an employee has been off work they may need to inform The Trust of any treatment they are receiving, to request reasonable adjustments to be considered to enable them to remain in work, offer employees support, encouragement and any guidance they may need in relation to attendance. This may be particularly important for someone who has been absent for some time.

If the employee is returning to work after a long-term absence there may be a need for this meeting to happen before their planned return date. At this meeting the employee may wish to be accompanied, this could be by a trade union representative or friend/Colleague.

In these cases it may be appropriate to make notes of the discussion in addition to the Return to Work Interview paperwork.

The aim of the meeting is to discuss with the employee the level of sickness absence and so might include:

- An explanation of whether there is some underlying reason(s) causing the high level of absence. Clearly the employee has a right not to disclose the nature of any medical condition at this stage. In those circumstances The Trust may seek advice through a referral to the Occupational Health Physician or suggest that the individual consult their GP.
- An offer of support which might include counselling, referral to Occupational Health etc.
- An opportunity for the employee to comment on the situation.
- An opportunity to determine a way forward and if any further support is needed.

Phased return to work

In cases of serious illness or injury, medical practitioners often recommend that a phased return to work, as a reasonable adjustment, would facilitate an employee's recovery.

Where this would assist the recovery of a member of staff, the Trust will encourage this in appropriate circumstances.

Such a return, may take a variety of forms, including:

- working on certain days of the week
- working a reduced number of hours
- undertaking restricted duties for an agreed period of time

Reasonable adjustments will be discussed and a timescale of the phased return will be discussed with the employee and their line manager/Headteacher along with a member of the HR team, if appropriate. This may be following advice from an Occupational Health Report or information provided on a 'Fit Note' from the employees GP.

Medical certificates maybe required indicating that the employee is capable of fulfilling the arrangements for a phased return to work if they have not already been provided.

Payment of salary during a phased return would normally be on full pay for an initially agreed reasonable period of time.

Sick Pay Allowance

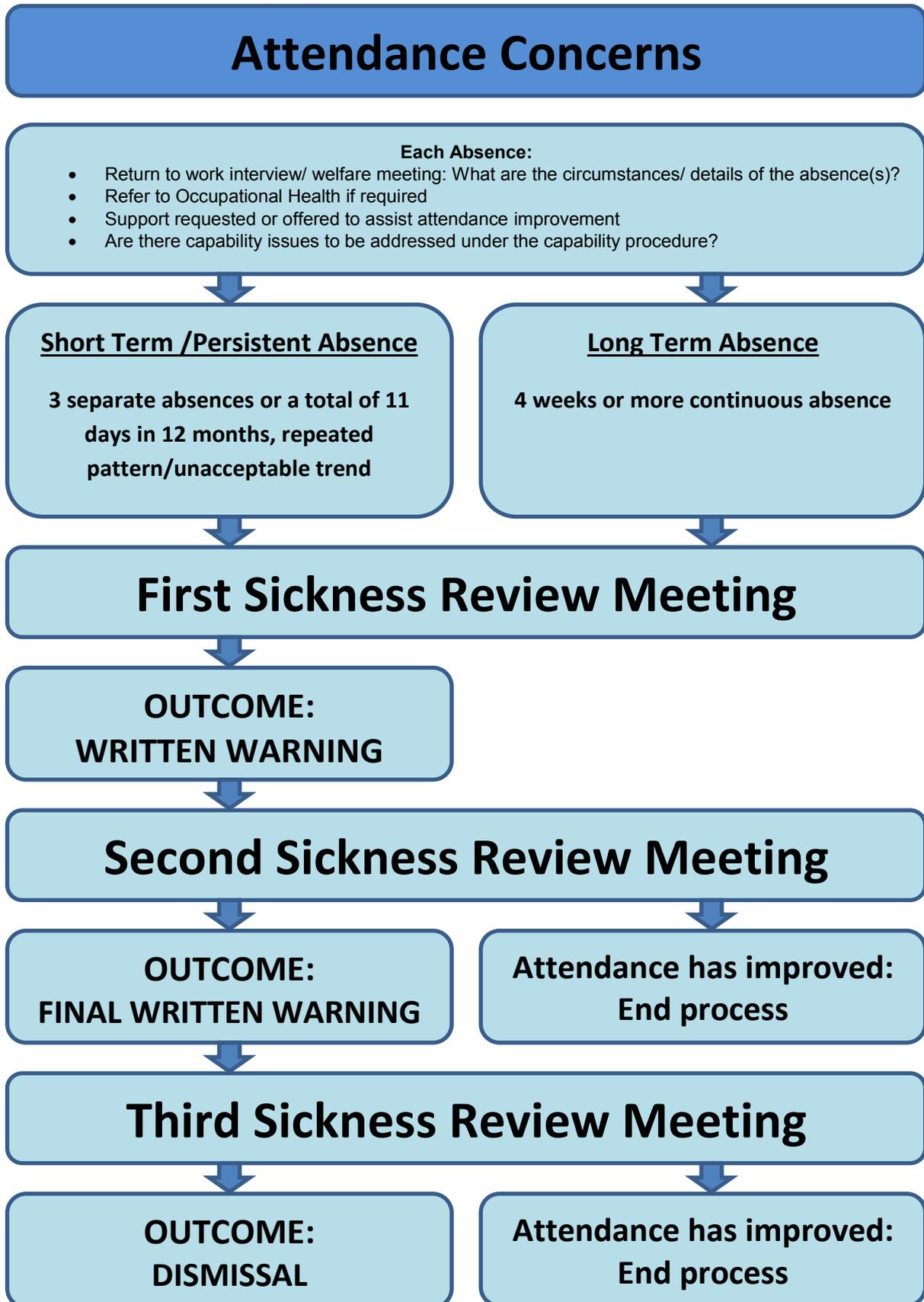
Support Staff

During the 1 st year of service	1 month's full pay and after completing 4 months service 2 months half pay
During 2 nd year of service	2 months full pay and 2 months half pay
During 3 rd year of service	4 months full pay and 4 months half pay
During 4 th and 5 th year of service	5 months full pay and 5 months half pay
After 5 years' service	6 months full pay and 6 months half pay

Teaching Staff

During the 1 st year of service	full pay for 25 working days and after completing 4 calendar months service, half pay for 50 working days
During the 2 nd year of service	full pay for 50 working days and half pay for 50 working days
During the 3 rd year of service	full pay for 75 working days and half pay for 75 working days
During the 4 th and subsequent years days	full pay for 100 working days and half pay for 100 working days

APPENDIX 1 - Managing attendance



If you have any further queries please contact the HR Officer.