



## Absence Policy

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### 1. Introduction

Most staff will have some absence due to ill health and this is to be expected in any organisation. The majority of sickness absence is unpredictable and though it may cause operational problems has to be dealt with on a day to day basis. The Model School Absence Policy details the school's approach to this. However, when there is persistent or long-term sickness appropriate action will be taken to ensure the effective provision of education at the school.

The fundamental principle of this policy is that the needs of the school are balanced with the interests and circumstances of each individual employee. Staff will be treated fairly and with dignity and the principle aim is, where possible, to seek an effective return to work.

### 2. Sickness Absence

#### 2.1 Reporting Procedure – Teaching Staff

1. A member of staff taking sickness absence should report the absence to the “cover” answerphone 023 8024 6541 as early as possible but in any case, before 7.30 am on the day of their absence. Staff should indicate how long they will be absent, if known, or phone the “cover” answerphone daily until their return.

In a real emergency or personal difficulty, you can phone a line manager or any member of the Senior Leadership Team.

2. The absence, unless physically impossible, should be reported in person and not through a third party.
3. The reporting procedures should apply for each day, unless it has been stated at the outset that the sickness will last for a considerable time.
4. Work must be set during your absence (if at all possible) either through your Head of Department or other nominated member of the Department. Each department will be responsible for managing the work of absent colleagues.

#### 2.2 Reporting Procedure – Support Staff

1. Staff should phone the Business Manager on 023 8024 6542 by 8.00am on the day of absence and also contact their Line Manager. Staff should indicate how long they will be absent, if known, or leave a message daily until their return.

In a real emergency or personal difficulty, you can phone the Business Manager or any member of the Senior Leadership Team.

2. The absence, unless physically impossible, should be reported in person and not through a third party.
3. The reporting procedures should apply for each day, unless it has been stated at the outset that the sickness will last for a considerable time

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### 2.3 Certification Procedures

1. An absence of less than 7 days including non-working days does not require any form of certification.
2. For absences of longer than seven days a medical certificate ('fit note') is required (note: nonworking days are included in calculation of continued sickness absence).
3. The school may, in exceptional circumstances, require a medical certificate for any absence.

### 3. Time off for Medical Appointments

It is expected that non-urgent appointments for doctors, dentist etc., should be arranged in an employee's own time. If this is really not possible then non-contact time should be used. (We are aware that hospital appointments are often non-negotiable.)

Time off will normally be granted provided adequate notice has been given. If there are a large number of appointments over a period of time consideration may need to be given for time to be made up. Appointment cards may be requested.

Time off for antenatal classes will be given, again, an appointment card may be requested.

### 4. Return to Work

Staff are expected to keep the school informed as to the progress of any sickness absence and should inform the school, prior to return, of the date of the return.

On return to work, the member of staff should check with their line manager in order to be kept up to date with developments at work and have a longer meeting if necessary.

Any member of staff who has more than six periods of absence in an academic year may be asked to meet with their line manager to discuss absences.

The school may ask a member of staff to agree to contact with Occupational Health. Any such requirement will be subject to appropriate protocols.

### 5. Medical advice

#### 5.1 Occupational health referrals

At various stages of managing the employee's sickness absence, a manager may want to obtain advice on the employee's fitness for work from occupational health advisers.

Examples of when a line manager might refer to occupational health include to:

- Seek a medical report on the employee;
- Establish when the employee might be able to return to work;
- Ask for guidance on the employee's condition, for example if there is a possibility that the employee is disabled or ambiguity as to the exact nature of the condition; and

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- Discuss any adjustments that could be made to accommodate the employee's disability, if the employee is disabled.

### 6. Entitlement

Leave of absence will be granted in accordance with national or local conditions of service in the following circumstances:

#### 6.1 Entitlement: With Pay

- **Examiners and Moderators for Examining Bodies**  
Chief Examiner or Chief Moderator up to 10 school days' leave per academic year; examiners and assistant moderators up to 5 days. (We would expect any request to become examiners and moderators would firstly be discussed with their line manager.)
- **Jury Service and other Public Service**
  - A maximum of 18 days paid leave in any 12-month period.
  - Witness Summons paid leave for such time as is necessary to discharge their duty as witness.
- **Public Offices – such as Union Representative; J P; LA Governor**  
The Headteacher/Deputy may authorise paid leave subject to Hampshire “Leave for Miscellaneous purposes” policy.
- **Job Interviews**  
Paid leave for one day, any longer is at the discretion of the Headteacher/Deputy.
- **Transfer Visits**  
One day paid leave, any longer is at the discretion of Head/Deputy.
- **Leave for Emergencies/Special Leave**  
This may be approved in certain circumstances; the following is a list of examples, but each case will be considered on an individual basis. A combination of paid/unpaid leave may be appropriate in some instances.
  - Death of a close family member, friend or partner – up to 5 days with pay.
  - Funeral of other family – up to 1 day with pay.
  - Serious terminal illness of spouse; parent; child – paid leave by arrangement.
  - Sudden illness of child – 1 day paid leave to organise alternative care arrangements.
  - Moving to a new house – 1 day with pay.
  - Weddings for close relative – 1 day with pay.
  - Inability to get to work due to transport difficulties – 1 day paid if the Head or Deputy is satisfied that reasonable attempts have been made to attend. Leave of absence longer than this will be unpaid.

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- Miscellaneous reasons – This may be authorised as paid or unpaid leave to enable a member of staff to be absent for a maximum of one day per academic year per employee.
- **Exceptional Circumstances**  
There will always be exceptional circumstances and in this instance, staff should discuss these with the Headteacher/Deputy and as a school we will always try to be flexible, sensitive and compassionate on an individual needs basis.

### 6.2 Procedure for applying for leave of absence

Special leave shall only be taken with the prior approval of the Headteacher/ Deputy. In normal circumstances, applications for approval should be made at the earliest possible date.

Any decision regarding leave of absence under these procedures must be communicated to the member of staff making the application as soon as a decision has been taken. If the Head and the member of staff are unable to agree on the action that is appropriate in respect of any particular application, the matter may be referred to the Governors' Staffing Committee.

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### Appendix A

#### Procedures for Managing Excessive or Persistent Absence

**1. Each case will be different but the following points among others may be considered when determining any appropriate action:**

- The need for medical opinion
- The nature of the illness
- The likelihood of recurring or other similar problems arising
- The length of sickness absence or the pattern of absence
- The impact of absence on other staff and effective curriculum delivery
- Any steps already taken to address the issue
- Consistency of approach
- The relevant provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

If there is evidence that the reasons for absence are not genuine then the matter will be fully investigated and depending on the outcome dealt with as misconduct under the school's disciplinary procedure.

Note: Where the member of staff is the Headteacher, meetings should be conducted by the Chair of Governors or another designated Governor.

#### **2. Informal Stage**

A member of staff who has been identified as having a level of, or frequency of, absence which gives cause for concern should be invited to an interview with the Headteacher (or another Senior Leader).

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Explain concern at the current absence level
- Explore the reasons for it
- Agree strategies to resolve any problems which might improve attendance and identify areas of support and assistance

At this stage the interview is as informal as possible with the emphasis on support. A member of staff can be accompanied by a friend or trade union representative. In this instance the Headteacher (or Senior Leader) may also be accompanied.

At the conclusion of the interview the interviewer should summarise the main points discussed including:

- Concern about the level of absence
- The action points that have been agreed including assistance and support
- That the situation will be reviewed

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A record of the meeting and the agreed outcome will be kept indicating the employee's responses. A copy should be given to the employee.

If a member of staff has had a long period of absence (two months) subsequent to the commencement, or during consideration of, formal competency or during procedures the case will go straight to Stage 2 of these procedures.

If during absence due to illness a member of staff declines to attend this interview without due course or participate at any further stage during this process, it may be necessary to proceed straight to Stage 3 of these procedures. This may also apply if, when asked, an employee declines to give permission to access medical reports.

### 3. First Stage

A member of staff who has failed to show a reasonable improvement in attendance, or whose attendance has deteriorated following some initial improvement, will be required to attend a formal interview. The Headteacher/Senior Leader will seek appropriate advice at this stage if necessary.

Notification of the meeting should be in writing giving the date, time, place and reason for the meeting. The purpose will be to:

- Explore why the absence level continues to cause concern and the reasons for it.
- Offer any further help or guidance
- Establish a review period
- Seek permission to access medical reports/engage with Occupational Health.

If, after medical advice, in consultation with the member of staff, it is apparent that a medical condition may be chronic and will continue to effect attendance, then consideration may need to be given to move to Stage 3. In such instances a supportive approach should be agreed, and consideration given to alternative work or any reasonable adjustment in the workplace.

A record of the interview will be kept including the employee's response and any agreed areas of support and assistance.

The Headteacher/Senior Leader will again stress the points made at the previous stage and the need for continuous monitoring. This period will vary according to circumstances and will be agreed at a review meeting. In addition, the Head/Senior Leader may issue a warning as part of this procedure that unless there is an ongoing significant improvement in attendance at work their job could be at risk subject to employment protection rights.

A letter confirming the above warning and a record of the meeting should be sent to the employee.

If the employee's record is significantly improved at this stage the Headteacher will write to the member of staff to recognise this and that the improvements should be maintained.

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### 4. Second Stage

An employee who has not shown sufficient improvement following the Stage 1 interview or a member of staff who is absent due to formal competency procedures may be required to attend a formal hearing with the Headteacher.

Notification of the meeting will be in writing giving the time, date and place of the meeting, the reason and status of the meeting and a reminder of the employee's rights of representation. At least seven days' notice will be provided. The purpose of the hearing will be to:

- Explore why the absence level continues to be of concern
- Explain continued concern at that absence level and the impact on the school
- Explore other options such as ill health retirement, redeployment, stepping down etc

If referral to Occupational Health has not already taken place this will now be actioned. Dependent on any reports, a member of staff may be required to attend an appointment.

Dependent on the outcome of the hearing the Headteacher may formally warn the employee that the absence level is unsatisfactory and that a failure to improve may result in termination of employment. A member of staff may appeal against this warning to a first panel of Governors and should log their intention to do this with the Headteacher within ten days of receipt of the written issue of the warning.

A letter confirming this will be sent to the employee with a record of the hearing. If an employee's attendance improves a letter should be sent to confirm this as in Stage 1 above.

### 5. Third Stage

An employee who has not shown sufficient improvement following Stage 2 will be required to attend a formal hearing before a panel of three members of the Staff Dismissal Committee (this is the full title of the panel and does not necessarily mean dismissal will result).

Prior to this stage being reached, it is expected that other options will have been discussed with the member of staff and/or their representative to resolve the matter.

The employee will be informed in writing of the date, time and place of the hearing, the reason for the meeting and the right to have representation. At least seven days' notice will be provided.

The hearing will consider evidence of the absence level, action previously taken, personal circumstances, medical advice and prognosis and any implications of the Disability Discrimination Act and Human Rights Act.

The Headteacher will present the case and the employee and/or their representative will be able to present their case.

The procedure for the conduct of the hearing will be the same as that for a disciplinary hearing.

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Should a dismissal result it will be due to ill health or some other substantial reason not for a disciplinary reason.

If after considering the evidence and all the circumstances surrounding the case the Panel of Governors determine that termination of employment is in the school's best interest, then the employee will be informed of this (and any rights of notice if appropriate). The employee will also be advised of their right to appeal to a second Panel of Governors against this determination. Any such appeal must be logged within ten days of receiving written notice of the outcome of the hearing.

The employee will also receive a written record of the hearing. If the appeal is unsuccessful, or there is no appeal, then a letter of termination will be issued. An employee will still have the right to take their case to an Employment Tribunal. If the panel decides, after considering the evidence, not to terminate employment at this stage, the situation will continue to be appropriately reviewed over a reasonable time period. At the end of this period a panel will be reconvened to reconsider the whole case.