

All Saints Schools Trust



Staff Sickness Absence Policy 2023-27

	Date	Signed
Agreed by Trust Board:	July 2023	Chair of Board James Hargrave
Lead:	HR Committee	
Review date:	July 2027	

Staff Sickness Absence Policy

Rationale:

All Saints Schools Trust recognises the importance of health and well-being for all employees; however there are times, when employees are not well enough to attend work.

All employees have a contractual duty to attend work unless they are unable to do so through sickness or injury, or other statutory entitlement to time off. The Staff Sickness Absence policy has been designed to ensure that the impact of absence at work is minimised, whilst ensuring that employees are treated fairly and consistently.

Everyone in the Trust feels the impact of ill-health and absence. It can significantly affect how the schools perform and affects the service we provide to pupils. In this context we have procedures for managing absence and attendance, as detailed in this policy.

Aims:

All Saints Schools Trust is committed to proactively managing attendance, and believes that it is the responsibility of the Trust, schools, trade union representatives and employees to work together to promote the management of absence and ill-health and to promote well-being. It should not be forgotten, however, that employees must be treated with respect and dignity at all times, within an environment which demonstrates a person-centred approach; balanced with the needs of the schools and their pupils.

The Trust and Governing Bodies aim to:

- Maintain high levels of attendance.
- Minimise disruption to the education of pupils.
- Treat employees' absence in a consistent, fair and sensitive manner.
- Provide a reasonable and safe working environment, appropriate welfare support, and advice on general health issues.
- Enhance employee relations.
- Recognise where relevant training is necessary.
- Create a positive culture which supports the health, safety and wellbeing of staff.

Principles:

The Trust's principles are:

- Good attendance is recognised and valued.

- All absences on account of sickness are treated as genuine, unless there is reason to doubt this.
- The sickness absence procedure is designed to be proactive and supportive rather than punitive.
- Management of absence will be dealt with in a non-discriminatory way.
- Individuals will be treated with respect and their information will be treated in confidence, in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and the Access to Medical Reports Act.
- Open communication between managers and employees is encouraged.

Scope:

This policy statement applies to all staff of the Trust who come under the control of the Trust Board, except during any probationary period, when probation procedures will apply.

Definition:

The use of the term 'manager' throughout this procedure refers to the person who has the responsibility for managing attendance of an employee or group of employees.

Roles and Responsibilities:

a) The Trust and Governing Bodies:

The Trust and governing bodies are responsible for minimising the disruption to schools due to the absence of their employees. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- The Trust exercises its duty of care and has proper regard to the health, safety and welfare of its employees;
- The Trust and governing bodies responsibility to promote a healthy workforce is acknowledged;
- All members of staff understand that repeated or long term absence has a demotivating impact on other colleagues and impacts on the learning and achievement of pupils;
- All members of staff understand that absence always has a cost; whether direct or indirect.

The Trust will monitor and review this policy from time to time and delegate to the Head Teachers and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) the necessary discretion to operate sickness management procedures and arrangements, and ensure that fair and consistent standards are applied to the management of absence. The Chair of Governors of the relevant school will authorise any requests for absence from their Head Teacher.

The Trust will make available to employees appropriate counselling, welfare and well being arrangements to promote and maintain the health of employees.

b) Head Teachers:

The Head Teacher (with the assistance of senior staff) is responsible for the day-to-day management of sickness absence. They will also ensure that all employees who carry out a management function have appropriate training/coaching on this policy and its guidelines to ensure consistency of application.

The Head Teacher is also responsible for ensuring that all employees have a return to work meeting on their first day back from every absence, or as soon as reasonably practicable, regardless of its duration, and that the relevant forms are completed and then passed to the HR Officer in a timely manner for recording and monitoring absence.

c) HR Officer

The HR Officer will ensure that the school has suitable arrangements for enabling employees to notify absence, for communicating information about absence in a timely manner for payroll and other necessary purposes, and for following up absence in appropriate circumstances. Where any queries arise, they will consult with the Trust's HR team/caseworker.

d) Employees

Employees have a duty to attend for work unless they are unable to do so through sickness or injury, or unless their absence has been otherwise approved. They have a responsibility to report their own absence through sickness or other emergency using the Trust's procedures, and to produce medical evidence as required.

Employees are also expected to participate fully in any occupational health or other appropriate medical review process/provision offered by the Trust, or other agencies, in support of their health and attendance at work. Failure to do so may limit the support or information that the Trust is able to consider when making decisions under this procedure.

Disability:

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for the Trust to unjustifiably treat a person with a 'protected characteristic', such as a disability, less favourably than a person who does not have a disability for any reason related to the person's disability. Disability should not be equated with poor health.

The Act also requires employers to consider all reasonable adjustments in the schools which would enable an employee with a disability to continue to work. Therefore, the Trust will ensure that all reasonable adjustments are considered and, where possible, provided, in discussion with the employee.

The definition of disability, according to the Equality Act 2010 is "a physical or medical impairment which has a substantial and long-term negative effect on his or her ability to carry out normal daily activities". Long-term in this definition is taken to mean more than 12 months (i.e. where from the diagnosis, the illness is likely to last more than 12 months). This definition also includes long-term illness such as cancer; HIV; and mental health problems such as clinical depression.

Pregnancy-Related Absence:

It is recognised that a pregnancy may result in various medical absences at different stages and the Trust will treat these supportively. No action under the provisions of this procedure will be taken against a female employee who is absent from work due to a pregnancy related illness. However, absence levels will continue to be monitored and where the Trust has concern about the reasons or lengths of absence, it reserves the right to formally investigate the nature and cause of the absences. Absences in the four weeks leading up to the expected week of childbirth may result in maternity leave starting early at the request of the employer. For further information, see separate Maternity guidance.

Absence Due to Alcohol or Substance Misuse:

Where poor attendance is related to alcohol or drug use, the CEO/Head Teacher/line manager will refer to the provisions of the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy and seek advice from the Trust HR team/caseworker.

Occupational Health:

a) Referral to Occupational Health:

Early occupational health advice can be a significant part of supporting an employee to improve their attendance; recover their health; or achieve a successful and sustained return to work. The Trust will consider accessing appropriate professional occupational health advice and support as necessary.

The Head Teacher or CEO will normally make any referral, although this responsibility can be delegated to another senior member of staff.

The employee will be advised that a referral is going to be made and, be encouraged to seek the support of the Trust's wellbeing programme and the support of their professional association if they have not already done so. In some circumstances, it may be necessary to inform the employee in writing.

An employee will not be compelled to attend a meeting with occupational health, but will need to be made aware that the Trust may have to make a decision about his/her continued employment without the help of a medical opinion, which may be to the employee's disadvantage, if they choose not to participate in any review offered. Failure to engage with occupational health support may also affect the entitlement to occupational sick pay.

The support of occupational health can be sought at any stage and need not wait until the employee is absent due to ill health. Normally however, the Head Teacher/CEO (or other nominated senior manager) will refer an employee when a return to work interview or a 'trigger point' (see section 13) suggests it may be appropriate, or where the employee continues to be absent after ten working days. In some circumstances, referral may not be necessary, for example, where the nature of the medical condition is clear, the prospect of return to work well-defined (e.g. a broken limb or routine surgery) and advice regarding appropriate support and/or adjustments in the workplace is readily available, for example, from the employee's GP or a consultant.

Where it is known at the outset of the absence that an employee will be absent for an extended period, particularly in the case of stress-related absence, an earlier referral will be actively considered.

There is no self-referral process for employees, although an employee may request to be referred by the Trust.

b) Factors to be Considered by Occupational Health:

Depending on the questions asked by the Trust as part of the referral, the occupational health service is likely to consider the following:

- Whether or not the employee is likely to attend work regularly and resume the full duties of the post in the foreseeable future

- Whether there is a disability; how any disability affects the employee; and whether any adjustments are required
- Any recommendations on convenient and effective ways in which duties or circumstances could be re-arranged, on either a temporary or permanent basis, taking in account the fitness and ability of the employee and recognising the individual circumstances of the school and its over-riding need to provide a high quality education for its students
- If not, whether there are other kinds of work which would suit his/her abilities, or which, with further training, could be considered
- Whether ill-health retirement is an option
- Whether there is any other support the Trust, school, or other agencies, could reasonably consider offering.

Following an employee being assessed by Occupational Health, a report will be sent to the Head Teacher or CEO, or to the senior manager who has made the referral. In the case of a Head Teacher, this will be sent to HR who will liaise with the CEO and the Chair of Governors of the relevant school.

Where Occupational Health advice is that the employee is fit for normal duties, they should return to work upon expiry of the current medical certificate. The report may recommend a phased return to work and/or light or limited duties for a limited period.

In situations where Occupational Health recommends a therapeutic or a phased return to work, every reasonable assistance will be provided to the employee to facilitate this. All returns to work should be agreed within a specific timescale and the employee's progress reviewed by the line manager at regular intervals throughout the period.

c) Possible Outcomes of Occupational Health Assessment:

- **Fit for work with no adjustments:** The employee is fit to return to work with no adjustments to his/her working pattern. It is vital that the Head Teacher or nominated person arranges a Return to Work Meeting to discuss the employee's return to work.
- **Continue to Monitor:** It may be that no immediate action is necessary other than to continue to monitor the situation and to organise temporary cover. This approach will be appropriate where a full recovery is likely within a timescale that will not cause unacceptable operational difficulties.

- **Reasonable Adjustments:** Occupational Health may suggest reasonable adjustments to the employee's working environment or role in order to facilitate his/her return to work. It is for the school to decide what adjustments are reasonable having considered the suggestions made in the report.
- **Therapeutic visits or Phased Return to Work:** There may be certain cases where following a long term illness, occupational health recommends that it would be beneficial for an employee to return to work on a reduced hours basis, until his/her health has fully recovered. It is expected that a phased return to work should last no more than 4 to 6 weeks. The Trust will be required to pay the employee his or her normal full salary during the duration of the phased return but for no longer than 4 to 6 weeks. Where a therapeutic return is recommended, it will usually consist of a series of short visits to the school without the expectation that the employee will perform their normal contractual duties and will normally precede a phased return. During such therapeutic visits, the employee is still absent due to ill health and in receipt of appropriate sick pay benefits.
- **Change of Role:** Occupational health may suggest that the employee would benefit from a change in role or change of duties sufficient for it to be considered a new role. In some cases, it may not be possible to accommodate this suggestion in the same school. In these circumstances, the Trust will seek advice on any options for supporting the employee to find suitable alternative employment.

Sickness Absence Reporting and Certification Procedures:

a) Reporting:

On the **first day of absence** the employee must personally notify the school of his/her absence due to ill health as early as possible in the circumstances, ideally the day before the absence or at 7:00am on the morning of the first day of absence, but at a minimum by no later than his/her normal start time. The reason for the absence and an indication of its likely duration should also be given. Unless otherwise agreed, the employee should contact the school on each subsequent day of absence.

Unless the employee is seriously ill or incapacitated, the employee should contact the school, rather than asking a friend or relative call on their behalf. Only in the most serious of cases, will it be acceptable for a text message or e-mail to be sent instead of making personal contact.

The person receiving the call should:

- Find out the general reason for the absence.

- Find out if at all possible how long the absence is likely to last.
- Arrange for the employee to confirm when they will be returning to work or, if that is not possible, to update the school on their progress.
- Ensure the person responsible for arranging temporary cover is informed.

If the employee has been unable to speak to the line manager / another member of staff, at the time of reporting the absence, they may expect further contact from the school to clarify the nature of the absence, its likely duration, any immediate work commitments that will need to be covered or re-arranged, and to discuss any support the school may offer, as necessary.

Teaching staff are also required in all cases of absence, if the employee is fit enough, to discuss any activities that need to be picked up in their absence/work set or lesson plans with the Head Teacher at the earliest opportunity, particularly for long-term absence.

If the absence is due to an accident or injury sustained during the course of work duties, this information and the name of the person to whom the incident was reported must be made known. This is to ensure that the school's management has properly recorded the incident and, where necessary, taken appropriate remedial action.

Failure to follow reporting arrangements could result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

b) Certification:

All employees must complete a self-certification form on their return to work for all absences up to and including seven consecutive calendar days. For all absences of eight consecutive calendar days or longer, the employee must provide a doctor's certificate ("Fit Note"). The requirement for sickness absence to be certificated includes school closure periods.

The employee must keep the school informed of progress. For longer term absence, the school will seek to agree a regular pattern of contact, usually weekly, with the absent employee. Head Teachers/line managers should keep a record of their contact with the employee. Other than in the most exceptional circumstances, it is not acceptable for there to be no contact between the school and its employee.

Failure to comply with the reporting and certification procedures may result in loss of sick pay persistent failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.

Sick Pay:

Employees have an entitlement to receive sickness pay during any period of sickness. This consists of Statutory Sickness Pay and an Occupational Sickness Pay entitlement.

In the Trust, in exceptional circumstances, a school may consider using its discretion to extend an employee's entitlement to occupational sick pay, in the knowledge that any costs of doing so will fall to the school's budget. In the case of teachers absent due to accident, injury or assault attested by an approved medical practitioner to have arisen out of and in the course of the teacher's employment, the period of full sickness pay is automatically extended up to the date of recovery, but not exceeding six calendar months.

Monitoring Absence:

To ensure that any action taken against an employee for unacceptable levels and/or pattern of absence is appropriate, it is important that an accurate and consistent method of monitoring has taken place.

Effective monitoring of absence is dependent on effective recording of absence. As part of induction, new employees will be made aware of the Trust's absence reporting arrangements and the expectations that the Trust/schools have of good attendance. All employees will be made aware that the Trust/schools will address concerns about absence levels.

It is the responsibility of the relevant Head Teacher, or the CEO if an employee is deployed across a number of schools or employed by the Trust, to determine whether formal action is taken. The decision will be based on the cause, amount and frequency of the absence.

Absence levels will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Trust HR Committee.

It should be noted that none of the definitions set out as part of this procedure prevents earlier intervention if appropriate, nor is it necessary to wait until sick pay has expired before further action is taken.

Unauthorised Absence:

It is the employee's responsibility to adhere to the absence reporting procedures as set out above. However, if an employee fails to report to work, without informing their line manager, it is important that the situation is investigated and the employee given an opportunity to explain. If, after all reasonable efforts have been made to contact the employee, they remain absent without leave, it may be treated as an unauthorised absence without

pay and may warrant an investigation under the Trust's Disciplinary procedures.

Trigger Points:

To enable managers to monitor absence levels, trigger points have been agreed. Each School's Senior Leadership Team will continuously monitor these levels, and will investigate with the employee any levels or patterns of absence which cause concern and decide whether any action (informal or otherwise) is required.

In any event, absence that reaches any of the following trigger points will be investigated in every instance:

- **Three occasions, or ten working days or more, absence in a rolling three months' period;**
- **All long term absences (10 or more working days)**
- **Unacceptable patterns of absence (e.g. regular Friday and/or Monday absences or school closure periods)**

Due regard must be taken of the Equality Act in relation to disability and pregnancy so as to ensure employees are not placed at a disadvantage as a result of these protected characteristics. Therefore absence relating to rehabilitation, assessment and treatment of a disability. and pregnancy related absence should normally be excluded from the triggers (see the relevant sections above). Due support and regard should also be given to an employee who may be experiencing the effects of, for example, drug or alcohol misuse or domestic abuse.

It should be noted that the above trigger points do not prevent earlier intervention if appropriate. Any employee, who the school or Trust finds to be abusing the Trust's sickness absence management arrangements, will be subject to disciplinary procedures, which may lead to dismissal.

Short-Term and Long-Term Absence Definitions:

For the purpose of this procedure, short-term absence has been defined as including any of the following scenarios:

- Occasional short-term absence, or
- Recurrent short-term absence where the causes differ and appear to be unrelated, or

- Recurrent short-term absence with an underlying medical condition, or
- Unacceptable patterns of absence (.g. regular absences either side of weekends or school closure periods)

For the purposes of this procedure, long-term absence is defined as follows:

- Continuous absence for a period exceeding 10 or more working days, or
- Where the actual and anticipated future health of the employee makes a return to their current role very unlikely, at least in the immediate future, or
- Recurrent long-term absence with an underlying medical cause.

The Trust recognises that an employee facing a substantial period of absence from work due to ill health may feel anxious and vulnerable. School managers will be sensitive to these feelings and provide support and reassurance wherever possible.

It is important to maintain contact during the absence; the nature and frequency of which is best defined as early as possible between the manager and the employee. On occasion it may be appropriate to meet at a neutral venue, or to make a home visit (although this should only occur with the express permission of the employee).

Employees should also be asked if they would like to receive news, information or briefings available to other colleagues. If an employee requests that there should be no contact at all during sickness, the reason for this should be explored with him/her (or a nominated representative) – the assistance of the HR Caseworker should be sought if necessary.

As with short-term absence, there is a need to follow a consistent procedure.

At all stages, the CEO/Head Teacher/manager should advise the employee of their rights.

Informal Stages: Return-to-Work Meeting/Informal Meeting:

Wherever possible, the employee should inform the school no later than the day before the anticipated date of return.

The school will conduct return-to-work meetings for all absences of three days or more unless a trigger point (see above) has been reached in which case all

absences will be investigated. The meeting should take place on the first day of the employee's return to work wherever possible. The aim of the meeting is to:

- Ensure the employee is fit to return to work
- Ensure, as appropriate, the employee has taken / is taking all reasonable steps to manage their health and attendance, including accessing medical support as necessary
- Help to identify the cause(s) of the absence and any underlying problems that the employee may be experiencing
- Ensure the employee feels valued and knows that their absence was noticed and that they were missed
- Update the employee on anything that they need to know and, as necessary, assist with re-prioritising their workload following their absence
- Signal to the employee that attendance (and therefore absence) is a high priority for the school
- Ensure that the absence is recorded and the relevant documentation completed
- Make the employee aware if s/he is approaching a trigger point (see the above section on trigger points), discuss what other support / action might be needed to reduce the employee's level of absence and advise the employee that unless attendance improves, the Trust and school will be left with little choice but to adopt a formal approach (see section on formal stages below).

A record of the return-to-work meeting will be made, a copy given to the employee and kept on the employee's personal file.

The employee should be informed in writing and invited to a meeting to discuss the evidence in more detail before action is taken under the formal stages of this procedure.

In many circumstances, significant evidence will have already have been gathered as part of the return-to-work process, which the school will simply collate and summarise as evidence.

Formal procedures: Ill Health Capability Review Procedure:

Once the level of absence has been identified as a concern, and having taken into consideration the points in earlier sections of this procedure, the CEO/Head Teacher should consider taking action as outlined in this ill health capability review procedure.

The Head Teacher/CEO should decide whether he/she or another senior colleague should conduct the meetings at each stage. If the Head Teacher is the subject of concern it is normally the Chair of Governors and CEO who would be responsible for such a case.

The First and Final Health Review Meetings of this procedure are designed to deal with persistent short-term ill-health cases.

When long-term ill-health, in the opinion of the Occupational Health Physician, makes it impossible for the individual employee to discharge efficiently the duties of the post then consideration of early retirement on grounds of illhealth may be considered, where the employee is a member of the pension scheme. If retirement is not considered an option but there is little likelihood of the person returning to work within a reasonable period, it is quite possible to start the procedure at the Ill-Health Capability Hearing stage.

Return to work meetings will continue to be conducted for absences that arise between any formal meetings.

a) First Health Review Meeting:

If an employee's sickness absence levels have not improved despite being addressed in their Return to Work Meetings, and the employee has reached any of the trigger points (see section on trigger points above), the Head Teacher/CEO ** will invite the employee to a First Health Review Meeting.

The invitation will be in writing, giving the employee at least 5 working days' notice and setting out the date and place of the meeting, the reason for the meeting, and stating that they may be accompanied by a trades union/professional association representative or work colleague. As necessary, the Trust's HR Caseworker and a note-taker may also be present at the request of the Trust.

The Head Teacher/CEO ** will prepare for the meeting by ensuring that they have clearly identified the employee's sickness absence levels and the support that has been provided.

At the First Health Review Meeting the Head Teacher/CEO ** will:

- Explain the concern about the absence level and reasons for that concern, such as operational difficulties caused

- Listen to reasons and respond appropriately
- Consider whether to refer the employee to Occupational Health, if not already done
- State that sustained improvement in attendance is expected and set an appropriate monitoring period and targets for improvement, and the next meeting date
- Identify any support required
- If appropriate, give the employee a first written warning and explain that continued failure to improve attendance to the specified level may lead to further action under the Trust's sickness absence management procedure, which could lead to his/her employment being put at risk

Following the meeting, the Head Teacher/CEO ** will write to the employee confirming all the details of this meeting, including a response to any specific points raised by the employee/the representative, any conclusions reached/attendance targets for the monitoring period/points of disagreement and the date of the next (final) review (see section b below).

If there is a further, significant deterioration in attendance, the Head Teacher/CEO may bring forward the date of the next meeting, provided that 5 days' written notice is given.

** or the senior manager leading the case, where it is not being led by the Head Teacher/CEO.

b) Final Health Review Meeting:

At the end of the agreed monitoring period, the employee's attendance will be reviewed at a final health review meeting, at which the employee will have the right to be accompanied by a trades union/professional association representative or work colleague.

At the Final Health Review Meeting the Head Teacher/CEO ** will advise the employee of one of the following outcomes:

1. The required standard of attendance has been met and sustained and therefore:

- The employee's attendance will be managed under normal absence management arrangements and the written warning will

remain active for six months from the date of the Final Health Review Meeting.

2. The required standard of attendance has not been met or significant progress has not been made towards meeting the required attendance level, in which case the Head Teacher/CEO will:**

- Explain the concern about the continued absence level and reasons for that concern, such as operational difficulties caused
- Listen to reasons and respond appropriately
- Consider whether any (further) occupational health advice should be sought
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- State that sustained improvement in attendance is expected and set an appropriate monitoring period and targets for improvement, and the next meeting date
- Identify any support required
- If appropriate, give the employee a final written warning and explain that continued failure to improve attendance to the specified level will lead to an Ill-Health Capability Hearing (see section c below) which could result in dismissal

Following the meeting, the Head Teacher/CEO ** will write to the employee confirming all the details of this meeting, including a response to any specific points raised by the employee/the representative, any conclusions reached/ targets set for the final monitoring period/points of disagreement and the date of review.

** or the senior manager leading the case, where it is not being led by the Head Teacher/CEO

c) Ill Health Capability Review Hearing:

Where the long-term absence of an employee continues due to the nature of the illness, or, for short-term absence cases, where there has been no, or insufficient, improvement in attendance, or where any improvement has not been sustained, the case will be presented for full review. This may be to the Head Teacher or CEO, if he/she has not been the decision-maker at earlier stages of the procedure and has the delegated authority to consider dismissal, or to a panel of trustees or governors as determined by the Trust's HR Committee.

The meeting will be set at the earliest possible date, but normally by no later than fifteen working days following the decision to move to an ill health capability review hearing. For cases relating to long-term absence, it is anticipated that the School/Trust will have maintained appropriate, regular contact with the employee.

The employee will be advised in writing that a possible outcome of the meeting could be that the Head Teacher or panel has determined that they should be dismissed.

Details of the case and notification of any witnesses to be called will be circulated to all parties at least ten days before the hearing. The employee will be invited to submit documentation and details of all witnesses, as appropriate. This must be provided at least five days before the hearing.

At the hearing, the manager presenting the case will detail the level of absence, and its impact, that has given cause for concern and refer to any documentation that has been circulated prior to the meeting, including any medical reports.

The employee (or representative) will have the opportunity to present evidence explaining why their level of absence is at its current level (a level of formal concern) and what action they have taken / will take to reduce it to an acceptable level.

In deciding what type of action to take, the Head Teacher/panel will review:

- The record and pattern of absence
- The support provided to the employee to date
- Whether there is an underlying illness or any other issues raised by the Occupational Health Service
- The likelihood of an improvement in attendance
- The attitude and response of the employee in recognising and addressing the impact of their absence
- The problems caused by the employee's absence
- Whether all appropriate options, for example, Ill Health Retirement procedures, have been properly explored
- The needs of the School/Trust and the best interests of the employee concerned

Possible Outcomes of the Ill Health Capability Review Hearing:

The Head Teacher/panel, as appropriate, will confirm one of the following outcomes:

1) The required standard of attendance has been met and sustained

- The employee's attendance will be managed under normal absence management arrangements and the final written warning will remain active for twelve months from the date of the Ill Health Capability Review Meeting;

2) The required standard of attendance has not been met and / or has not been sustained

- The employee will be dismissed with appropriate notice. If the decision is dismissal, wherever practicable, the employee will be informed immediately and advised of the right of appeal. The decision of the Head Teacher/panel, the reasons for it and the appeal arrangements will be confirmed in writing to the employee normally within five working days.

Appeals:

All employees have the right to appeal against any formal actions, i.e. warnings or dismissal, taken against them under the Trust's Sickness Absence Management Policy.

a) Warnings: any appeal arising as result of a warning, must be made in writing within fourteen calendar days of the receipt of the decision and include full details of the grounds for appeal and any relevant supporting information. If the warning is given by a line manager, the appeal will be to the Head Teacher. If the warning was given by the Head Teacher/CEO, the appeal is to the Chair of Governors/Chair of the Trust Board. If the Head Teacher is the subject of the formal action, the appeal will be to an appropriately constituted panel.

b) Dismissal: Any appeal arising as a result of a dismissal must be made in writing within fourteen calendar days of the receipt of the decision. The appeal will be to a panel of governors or trustees, as appropriate. This panel must not include any governors/trustees who have been previously involved in the case, have prior knowledge or are related to the employee.

At any appeal any sanction or penalty imposed will be reviewed, but cannot be increased.

The employee has the right to be accompanied by a trades union/professional association representative or work colleague. The Head Teacher is likely to present the school's case at the appeal hearing. If the Head Teacher is the subject of formal action, the Chair of Governors/CEO will assume this role.

Where appropriate a designated representative member of the Trusts' HR Team will be invited to attend.

If the recommendation for dismissal is not upheld, the Appeals Panel may decide to issue a further warning or, in appropriate cases, to demote the employee rather than dismiss. Demotion involves a change in the employee's contract that requires his/her consent to the new arrangement.

Wherever possible, the employee will be informed immediately at the conclusion of the appeal hearing and in any case, in writing normally within five working days, giving the reason for the decision.

There will be no further right of appeal for the employee following the decision of the Appeals' Panel of the Governing Body/Trust. The employee will not be able to re-open matter that have been considered by looking to invoke a different procedure, such as the Grievance Procedure.

Medical Redeployment or Retirement:

Any employee who is deemed to be permanently unfit for work, will leave the Trust's service in a managed and supported way, with any pension benefits to which they are entitled.

In managing medical redeployment or retirement, all staff will be treated equally and consistently. Medical redeployment and retirement will not be applied as a punitive or disciplinary measure.

The Trust and relevant schools will always endeavour to:

- Monitor and support staff on long-term sickness absence.
- Promote and liaise with the Occupational Health Service, keeping staff advised of the process.
- Make reasonable adjustments to existing jobs and workplaces to achieve a return to work wherever possible.

Period of Review:

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years or sooner if guidance should change.

Appendix A

Procedure for a Hearing:

Hearings will be held in as informal a manner as possible and the employee will be afforded every reasonable assistance to put his/her case. The conduct of the hearing is at the discretion of the CEO, Head Teacher, Chair of the committee or manager hearing the case, but s/he will allow the parties every reasonable opportunity to present their case.

In the case of an appeal the order of presentation set out below would normally be reversed, with the employee as appellant presenting his/her case first. However, by prior agreement or where the appeal constitutes a re-hearing of the full case, the case against the employee may be presented first as at the initial hearing. Chairs of appeal committees or managers hearing appeals should ensure that all parties have a common understanding and agreement on the order of presentation.

1. Introduction

The CEO, Head Teacher, Chair of the appropriate committee, or Manager hearing the case will ensure that those present are introduced to each other and that they are aware of the procedure to be followed.

2. Presentation of the Case

The person presenting the case against the employee may make an opening statement outlining the case. The person or committee hearing the case, and the employee responding to it, may ask questions.

S/he will then call any witnesses and ask them to give their evidence. The employee or his/her representative may then ask questions of each witness. The person or committee hearing the case may also ask questions of any witness. The person presenting the case may then re-examine the witness.

Where evidence is presented in the form of documents, the person presenting the case or an appropriate witness will explain the nature and significance of the documents.

3. The Employee's Case

The employee or his/her representative may make an opening statement. The person or committee hearing the case and the person presenting the case against the employee may ask questions.

S/he may call any further witnesses and invite them to give their evidence. The person presenting the case against the employee may ask questions of each witness after s/he has given his/her evidence. The person or committee hearing the case may then ask questions. The employee or his/her representative may re-examine the witness.

Where there is any documentary evidence, the employee or any witness on his/her behalf will explain its significance.

4. Re-examination

Both parties will be asked if they wish to re-examine any evidence. The person or committee hearing the case may also do so at its discretion.

5. Final Statement

The person presenting the case against the employee may make a final statement. The employee or his/her representative may then also make a final statement.

6. Adjournment

Either party may ask for an adjournment at any stage. The decision to adjourn is at the discretion of the Chair, who will consider a request in the light of the reason given for it.

7. Consideration of the Case

All parties will withdraw. The CEO, Head Teacher or the committee will deliberate. Where relevant, a legal advisor may be present at these deliberations to advise on legal and procedural matters.

If it is necessary to recall either party or any witnesses, to resolve a point of uncertainty, both parties will be invited to be present, whether or not the point of doubt concerns one party or both.

8. Decision

If possible, the decision will be communicated orally to the employee after the hearing. The decision will be confirmed in writing to the parties involved usually within five working days or as soon as possible after the hearing.

Document History

Version	Date	Comments
Issue 1	June 2018	Prepared in line with the SCC model policy.
Issue 2	April 2019	Amended to vary the time frame for Return to Work interviews.
Issue 3	July 2023	Roles and Responsibilities section c) the CFO was replaced with HR Officer.