



Sickness Absence Management Policy

Introduction

This document sets out the way that Beacon Hill School proposes to manage the sickness absence of staff. A draft procedures document was provided by the Human Resources manager and formed the basis for this document. Following consultation with all staff it is proposed that the latest date for implementation will be March 2008.

As part of Beacon Hill School's aim to raise standards of education for all our pupils, it is essential that minimum levels of absence be supported and maintained.

As employers, Governors and the head teacher have a duty of care to our employees. We are, therefore, responsible for the monitoring of absence levels, the identification of areas of high levels of absence and the development of systems of work, which help to minimise absences. These will include good health and safety standards, induction and training for members of staff, effective communication with members of staff, the provision of a reasonable working environment and a fair sickness absence procedure.

Part of this duty of care is to provide every possible support to all members of our staff who are unable to attend the workplace because of illness or injury. To achieve this it is imperative that we provide a confidential, meaningful sickness management system to demonstrate our commitment to being a good and fair employer.

Each member of staff has a responsibility to attend work unless they are prevented from doing so due to illness or other circumstances whereby they need to take special leave (e.g. bereavement). For any form of special leave, staff should refer to the Leave of Absence policy.

Scope

Sickness absence management at Beacon Hill School will apply to all staff in the school. It will be applied fairly, reasonably, sensitively, promptly and consistently.

It will normally be the head teacher, or in her absence, deputy head teacher who will have overall day-to-day responsibility for the management and application of the sickness absence procedures.

All staff will be made aware of the procedures by being given a personal copy of the procedures. Coverage of the procedures will be included in the induction of new staff. The procedures will be used in all cases of sickness absence.

Defining Sickness Absence

At Beacon Hill School, sickness absence procedures will apply in all situations where a member of staff is absent due to personal illness, injury or medical condition.

Absence falling into the categories of time off to care for dependants, time off for domestic emergencies, time off for routine medical appointments etc, will not be classed as sickness absence, this would be covered under the Leave of Absence policy.

Where a member of staff fails to follow notification procedures, their absence may be deemed as unauthorised which does not constitute sickness absence. Where this occurs an informal counselling interview with the member of staff may be held, or, in more serious cases, disciplinary action may be taken.

Notification of Absence

- Staff should notify ill health absence as soon as they know that it is going to happen.
- Staff should leave a text message for the Deputy in their department (Head of Department for 6th Form) and should contact school before 8.30am. If there is no member of staff available a message should be left on the voice mail.

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, e.g. hospitalisation, it is the responsibility of the member of staff themselves to notify school of their absence, in most cases, it will not be appropriate for a relative or friend to call, nor should a message be left or given via a colleague. During this call, please say:

1. The reason for absence
 2. If school can do anything to help
 3. How long you think you'll be off, if known
 4. The expected date of return, if known
 5. Whether you will need to visit the Doctor
 6. Whether the absence is work related
- Following LEA procedures, a confidential record of the conversation will be kept. The reason for absence will not be shared and will remain confidential.
 - If the head teacher or deputy head teacher do not receive the notification, they will follow up with a call to establish the wellbeing of the member of staff.
 - Daily contact should be made with school by 3pm if the length of absence is **not** known. This will update school on the situation and allow cover arrangements to be put in place. If the call concerns medical information, the head teacher or deputy head teacher should be spoken to, if the call is to notify return to work or continuing absence, this information can be given to the school administrative officer.

- It is the responsibility of the member of staff to keep school fully informed of the situation.
- Members of staff absent on sick leave should be available for contact during a period of absence and they should not unreasonably resist or refuse attempts at communication.
- If a member of staff is aware that they are going to be absent for planned surgery or medical treatment, it is vital that they let the head teacher know as soon as possible that this is the case, even if the waiting time seems long. Dates, when known should be shared as soon as possible, this allows for planning for the effective running of school to take place. AIS (the company insuring school for medical absence) will cover planned absences that are notified to them at the beginning of the financial year, allowing school to plan more effectively.

Certification

Absence for 7 calendar days or less will be self-certified. A return to work interview and the documentation accompanying this will act as the self-certification. There is more information about return to work interviews later in this document.

In the event of a member of staff being absent for 7 days or more they should obtain a medical certificate (doctor's note) and forward this to school as soon as possible. The school's administrative officer may send out some paperwork for signature at this time, this is in order to meet the requirements of the sickness absence insurance scheme. Any further medical certificates should be sent to school as soon as possible.

In this situation, it is important that the member of staff maintains contact with school and they should ring in to school:

- a. to confirm return to school
- b. continued absence

If the relevant documentation is not provided then the absence may be construed as unauthorised and this could affect the provision (payment) of sick pay entitlements. For example, where medical certificates are missing for long periods, the governing body might feel it is appropriate to withhold such entitlements.

A member of staff who wishes to return to work whilst still under medical certification can only do so if their GP provides a certificate confirming they are fit to return (often referred to as a 'signing off note').

Sickness Entitlements

Statutory Sick Pay will be paid where appropriate in accordance with the legislation in existence at the time of the sickness absence.

Occupational Sick Pay is the contractual entitlement to paid sickness absence and runs in parallel with Statutory Sick Pay.

Where a member of staff does not comply with the terms of the sickness notification procedure, in more serious circumstances, Governors may request that occupational sick pay is withheld. In withholding sick pay, particular care would be taken in making decisions where mental health problems are involved.

Governors might feel it necessary to consider suspending occupational sick pay in some situations. For example, these situations may be when an member of staff is absent as a result of sickness due or attributable to:

- deliberate conduct prejudicial to recovery
- the member of staff's own misconduct or neglect
- injury while working in the member of staff's own time on their own account for private gain or for another employer
- partaking in sports activities or dangerous pursuits.

Sick Pay for Teaching Staff:

Entitlements to Occupational Sick Pay are as follows:

During the first year of service	Full pay for 25 working days and after completing four calendar months' service, half pay for 50 working days
During the second year of service	Full pay for 50 working days and then half pay for 50 working days
During the third year of service	Full pay for 75 working days and half pay for 75 working days
During fourth and subsequent years	Full pay for 100 working days and half pay for 100 working days

For the purpose of the sick pay scheme, "service" includes continuous Teaching service with one or more local education authorities and "working days" Means teaching and non-teaching days within "directed time" as specified in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document.

Note that teaching staff has a total of 195 working days annually.

Sick Leave Year for Teaching Staff:

When calculating a teacher's entitlement, a year is deemed to run from 1st April to 31st March.

Where a teacher starts service after 1st April in any year the full entitlement for that year will be applicable. For example, if a teacher starts on 1st September, they will still be entitled to full pay for 25 working days and after 4 months service, half pay for 50 working days.

Where a teacher is on sick leave on 31st March in any year, no new entitlements shall begin until the teacher has resumed duty. From 1st April until the return to work, entitlement will still be as per the preceding year. For example, if a teacher is off work until the 5th May, their new annual sickness entitlement will not begin until this date.

Where a teacher moves to another employer, any sick pay paid during the current year by the previous employer will be carried forward in calculating the amount and duration of sick pay payable by the new employer.

Sick Pay for Support Staff:

During the first year of service	1 months full pay and after completing 4 months service, 2 months half pay
During the second year of service	2 months full pay and 2 months half pay
During the third year of service	4 months full pay and 4 months half pay
During fourth and fifth 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

Sick Leave Year for Support Staff:

The sick leave year for support staff is operated on a 12-month rolling basis, and so any occupational sick pay entitlement takes into account periods of paid absence during the twelve months immediately preceding the first day of absence. For example, if an member of staff in their second year of service has already received 2 months full pay and 2 months half pay within the last 12 months, if they are absent due to sickness again, no occupational sick pay will be payable.

Absences Arising from Accidents, Injury or Assault at Work:

If a member of staff's absence falls into this category, they should attract full pay, treated as sick pay. We will ensure that the member of staff fills out the correct documentation in relation to these absences for insurance purposes e.g. violent incident form.

Termination of Employment During a Period of Sick Leave:

When a member of staff has been given notice of termination of their contract due to permanent incapacity or another reason related to their sickness absence, assuming they do not return to work, they will be paid their full salary (subject to normal deductions) for their entire notice period. This is regardless of whether or not they have exhausted their sick pay entitlement.

Return to Work

After every sickness absence, regardless of the length of absence, a return to work interview will be held with the member of staff.

On return to school, the member of staff should report to the head teacher for none class based staff or the deputy head teacher linked to their department before returning to the classroom. This will enable a return to work interview to be completed. If the head teacher or deputy head teacher are not available at this time, the interview will take place within the first day. At this stage, the interview will be informal and probably short.

The purpose of the return to work interview will be primarily to discuss the reasons for the absence. However it may also be used in order to identify any underlying causes for absence and in turn, to offer any additional support to the individual as necessary. This may include additional training, amending their hours of work, duties etc.

Return to work interviews at Beacon Hill will also help to identify whether or not there are any patterns or trends in a member of staff's absence record, which may be of concern. At this stage any further action may not be necessary, however depending on the outcomes of the meeting, it may be felt appropriate to invoke more formal action.

After the interview a written record will be made of the meeting and both parties will sign and retain a copy.

See appendix 1 for a sample of the return to work interview form that will be used at Beacon Hill .

Monitoring

A key element of managing sickness absence effectively is accurate measuring and monitoring. Through measurement we can assess if there is a problem with absence in our school, the extent of the absence and the best way to tackle it.

There are several ways of measuring absence. The way that we will measure absence at Beacon Hill will be:

- Via instances, with a trigger point for action of three instances or 7 days in a rolling twelve-month period.
- No return after a four-week absence.

As we want to take a very proactive approach to managing sickness, it is important to set a level at which absence becomes a cause for concern, this is known as the "trigger point" (see above).

Trigger points will be used as a point for further investigation into a member of staff's absence record.

If at any point the head teacher sees a pattern or trend developing in a member of staff's absence record, she may choose to address this prior to a trigger point being reached. A pattern may be absences on certain days of the week, before or after annual leave etc.

Action taken at different times could be:

Stage 1

A counselling interview

This is to inform a member of staff that there are concerns about their absence and to identify any underlying reasons, support that can be offered etc

Stage 2

The setting of a review period

To give the member of staff an opportunity to improve

Stage 3

Disciplinary action

In more serious cases where one or more of the above have been unsuccessful

At any stage, a referral to Occupational Health could be made, (this would be to help ascertain whether or not there is an underlying cause for the absence and if so, can any reasonable adjustments be made to support the member of staff)

During the course of the school year 2008-2009, absence will be monitored, after which we will consider also using the:

Bradford factor: This calculation results in each member of staff having a 'score' relating to his or her sickness absence. The key advantage of using this method is that it distinguishes between more

serious longer-term illness and sporadic short-term absences. The calculation is as follows:

Spells x Spells x Days Lost

The trigger point for action would be when a member of staff had reached a certain 'score' e.g. a fixed score or a percentage over the average for the entire workforce. Discussion will take place with staff before this 'score' is implemented.

Managing Short-Term Sickness

These are absences, which are normally sporadic, attributable to minor ailments and in many cases are unconnected. Where a pattern is evident or where there is an unreasonable number of days' absence - i.e. a trigger point has been reached, the following action will be taken:

1. A counselling interview with the member of staff.

The purpose of this interview will be to discuss absences and any problems or underlying issues there may be. It should determine whether the causes of absence are work related, whether medical advice has been sought and to share that, and to consider if it is necessary to refer to the Occupational Health Unit. The interview is intended to be helpful and supportive and to identify ways of reducing the absence record. At this stage it may be decided that no further action is necessary beyond the monitoring of absence. The interview will also be used in order to ascertain whether or not any additional management support is appropriate. Although some of these issues may have been covered in a return to work interview, this stage will be more in depth.

2. An action plan will be set with the member of staff.

This may be covered in the counselling interview. The circumstances of each individual case will be taken into account and the head teacher will work with the member of staff to set achievable measures for improvement.

3. If the objectives and improvements set out in any action plan are not met then more formal action may be necessary. A further review meeting or even disciplinary proceedings in more serious cases may be held. When an underlying medical reason is identified it is more appropriate to progress the case using the stages recommended for long-term sickness absence.

If needed, a referral to the Occupational Health Unit can be made by the headteacher. In such cases, the member of staff will be told that this is going to happen, their consent will be required for the release of the report or to request further information from a GP or consultant. The member of staff has a statutory right to see any report about them.

A referral might be made very early in an absence where it is recommended by occupational health e.g. immediately in the case of muscular-skeletal problems. (Information is provided in Appendix 2).

Managing Long-Term Sickness Absence

A period of consecutive sickness absence of 4 weeks or more will be deemed as long-term sickness absence.

If the absence becomes long term, contact will be weekly for the first four weeks and then a minimum of once every two weeks or within the last week / three days before the sick note expires

In such cases:

- Contact will be made with the member of staff, to provide an update of what is happening in school and a protocol will be agreed for keeping in touch. This may be by telephone, e-mail, letter or a face-to-face meeting either on or off site, at the member of staff's home (if they agree to this) or at an alternative location as appropriate.
- If there has not already been a referral to Occupational Health then there will be a referral at this stage.
- After medical consultation, we will explore the possibility of making reasonable adjustments to the role, working environment or hours of work in an attempt to aid the return to work and to ensure it runs as smoothly as possible.
- When all potential for a return to work into the previous post has been exhausted, it will be necessary to look at the possibility of redeployment to another post.
- In the event of it appearing unlikely that the member of staff will be able to return to work in any capacity for the foreseeable future and there is no practical alternative, ill health early retirement or ill health dismissal will become a possible option. This is not a disciplinary issue, but a termination of employment on the grounds of capability due to ill health. Usually these options will be explored only as a last resort. Such cases are subject to a full review including revisiting all medical evidence.
- If there is no evidence to confirm that that the member of staff is permanently unfit for work, or unfit for the foreseeable future, then Governors will complete a thorough assessment regarding the impact of the member of staff's continuing absence and how much longer it can be accommodated in school. To do this they will need to consider the following factors:

- The nature, length and effect of the illness or disability
- The member of staff's past and likely future service
- The feasibility of employing temporary replacements
- The effect of the continued absence on other member of staffs
- The unsettling effect, if any, of the absence on pupils caused by uncertainty or problems in engaging a suitable temporary replacement
- The general effect on service delivery and costs
- Whether the member of staff is protected by the DDA

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone who has a disability as defined under the Act. This means that it is a legal requirement that the school will make any reasonable adjustments it can practicably be expected to do under the regulations of the Act.

The new Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 (amended the DDA 1995) amends the definition of disability, removing the requirement that a mental illness should be 'clinically well-recognised'. People with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis will be covered by the DDA effectively from the point of diagnosis, rather than from the point when the condition has some adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Reasonable adjustments Governors would need to think about may include making changes to an member of staff's existing role, making adaptations to the working environment, changing their hours of work or redeployment into an alternative suitable role.



RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW FORM
North Tyneside Council
Education and Cultural Services
Beacon Hill School

SECTION 1

Member of staff Name :

Job Title / Dept :

First day of Absence :

Last day of Absence :

Total days Absent :

Is absence due to an injury at work?

If yes, has an accident form been completed?

SECTION 2

Has the correct reporting procedure been followed? YES/NO

If no, please give details:

.....
.....

Have any patterns or trends in absence been identified? YES/NO

If yes, please give details:

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.....

Has a trigger point been reached?

YES/NO

If yes, please give details:

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.....

SECTION 3

Reason given for absence:

.....

Details of any medical advice sought including any treatment or medication:

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.....

Is the member of staff to be referred to Occupational Health?

YES/NO

SECTION 4

Additional details discussed:

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.....

Details of any support offered:

.....
.....

Actions including timescales:

.....
.....

SECTION 5

Interviewer's declaration:

I confirm that this completed form is a true and accurate representation of the issues discussed:

Name:

Job Title / Dept:

Signature:

Date:

Interviewee's declaration:

I confirm that I have given true and accurate information and agree with any action points raised:

Signature : **Date :**