



Absence and Cover Policy

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Date of next review:	2025	Written by:	Rebecca Garratt
Type of policy:	Non-statutory	Committee:	Staffing, Finance & Premises
Signature:			

1. POLICY CREATION

This Policy was drafted drawing largely from the Local Authority (LA) Managing Sickness Absence in Schools - Management Guidelines.

All staff are made aware of this policy.

2. AIMS

- i) To provide an outline of staff responsibility and entitlement.
- ii) To establish procedures for the equal treatment of staff in the context of prudent management of the staffing budget.
- iii) To minimise disruption to learning.
- iv) To safeguard the health and welfare of pupils and staff.

3. SICKNESS ABSENCE

- 3.1 Salary will continue to be paid to staff in accordance with their statutory and contractual and employment rights in cases of absence for sickness leave.

3.2 Day 1 of Absence

Reporting Absence – absence must be reported in **person by telephone** between 7.45am and 8.15am on the day of absence (if you have left a message previously on the answer phone, you must ring in and speak to the Admin Team. Messages must not be relayed via colleagues. Keep school informed on next day absences before the end of the school day (3.00pm).

Absence other than sickness – if ringing in for any other reason other than sickness you will need to speak to the Headteacher or, in her absence, a member of SLT. There is no entitlement to paid or unpaid leave of absence from work. The Governing Body understands some personal circumstances may make absence unavoidable, however, staff must ensure that all nonattendance is authorised by a senior member of staff. Discretionary approval may be granted based on details of personal circumstances and attendance record. Equally there is no automatic entitlement to be away from work to support the care of sick relatives, authorisation should be sort in each instance.

Routine Medical Appointment – should be arranged outside of school hours. If a request is made in school time it must be accompanied by the appointment letter.

3.3 Day 8 of Absence

If the member of staff returns to work before the eighth consecutive day of absence, including weekends, they will need to complete a self-certification form. If the member of staff is absent on the eighth day they must send the school a doctor's medical certificate, to cover all periods of absence thereafter.

3.4 On Return to Work

Staff must ensure that the Headteacher is aware that they have returned to work.

- 3.4.1 In line with LA recommendations employees will complete a Worcestershire Absence/Sickness Record Form (Appendix A) following each absence, or supply a doctor's sick note.

- 3.4.2 Return to Work Meeting** – will be conducted by the Line Manager after every absence of more than 3 consecutive days, whether it be sickness or personal absence or an injury at work. A Return to Work Form (Appendix A (i)) must be completed for absences of more than 3 days. The Line Manager should normally conduct a Return to Work Meeting on the employee's first day back at work or as soon as possible.

3.5 Absence Record Forms

Absence Record Forms will be used to monitor the level of incidental sickness absence. The Absence Record Form will be issued by the Office Manager indicating the length of absence and the cumulative total of days of absence on a rolling year. The employee will need to complete the reason for absence and return the signed copy to the Office Manager.

- 3.5.1 Review of Absence** – Review of absence will take place with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher if the employee's absence exceeds the following thresholds: 3 absences in 1 term or 5 absences in a year or if any of the procedures are not adhered to, this will automatically trigger a return to work interview with the Headteacher.

- 3.5.2 The outcome of this meeting may be:

- ii) No action is required.
- iii) A referral to the LA's Occupational Health Consultant.
- iv) A commitment to monitor subsequent absences more closely.
- v) A requirement for the employee to improve their future attendance rate.
- vi) A judgement that absences are unwarranted and that the matter should be dealt with as a conduct issue.

- 3.5.3 The SLT will monitor the completion of Absence Record Forms each week and the pattern of absence each half-term.

- 3.5.4 The Staffing Committee will monitor absence data and the administration of absence on a termly basis.

4. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- 4.1 Paid leave of absence is available for adoption, paternity and maternity leave according to the guidance established by the LA.

- 4.2 Leave of absence falls into two categories: paid and unpaid leave. Either category may be granted by the Headteacher in respect of school staff as part of the Governors' delegated responsibility. Decisions in respect of the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will be referred to the Governing Body.

- 4.3 There are a range of civic and social duties, professional activities and personal circumstances, as listed in Table 1, which may be granted at the Headteacher's

discretion, considering what is "reasonable in all circumstances". The following list represents a guide to what is "reasonable" leave within any one financial year.

TABLE 1 Social Duties and Professional Activities

Member of County, District or Parish Council
Magistrate
Juror
Witness or other summoned to court
Member of a Governing Body of an Educational Establishment other than their own school
Member of a statutory tribunal
Member of a Regional/Area Health Authority
Member of a Water Authority
Candidate at District, County, Parliamentary or European Election
Prison Visitors
Member of a county or national sports team
Members of official advisory groups
Representative of County Education Officer
Member of Union/Professional Organisation
Employees under redundancy notice – time off to look for alternative work or to arrange retraining
Screening for breast or cervical cancer

4.4 Staff Training

Replacement costs for staff training are met from school budget except where those costs have been designated for central funding. Decisions regarding the allocation of staff training will be made in accordance with the school's professional development policy.

4.5 Discretionary Leave

Requests for leave of absence not covered by the above criteria will need to be considered on a case by case basis. Discretionary leave of absence will be an exceptional rather than a routine measure. The guidance outlined below is provided to inform the fair interpretation of the policy by school leadership. It should not be regarded as an entitlement charter. School leadership should remember that their first priority is to ensure that the needs of learners are met at all times.

Staff are requested, where circumstances allow, **to apply for leave of absence well in advance in order that the necessary arrangements can be made.** Decisions will be delegated to the Headteacher, operating within the following guidance, by the Governing Body. The Headteacher will at all times aim for equality of treatment between all staff.

Guidance for Discretionary Leave of Absence

- Death of a close relative – up to 5 days paid leave of absence.
- Death of other relative – 1 day paid leave of absence.
- Illness followed by death of near relative – 7 days paid leave of absence.
- Family/Domestic Crisis – 7 days paid leave of absence.
- Other funeral – up to 1 day unpaid leave of absence.
- Serious illness of close relative – up to 3 days paid leave of absence

- **The expectation is that routine appointments with the dentist and doctor should be arranged out of school hours.**
- Leave of absence for emergency treatment may be granted at the Headteacher's discretion as paid leave of absence where no fault to the employee may be ascribed.
- Paid leave of absence will be granted for hospital appointments. It is expected that confirmation of the appointment will be supplied with as much notice as possible.
- The Governing Body understands the difficulty in arranging short term care for dependants who are ill or in crisis. Up to three days paid leave of absence per annum may be granted depending on the circumstances.
- It is expected that business appointments are made outside school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible leave may be granted at the discretion of the Headteacher.
- House removal – 1 day paid and up to 2 days unpaid leave of absence.
- Visit to a potential employer – up to 1 day unpaid leave of absence.
- Attendance at interview – paid leave of absence.
- **Any requests for leave of absence outside of the above schedule should be made in a written request to the Chair of Governors.**

4.6 General Principles for Granting Discretionary Leave

The member of staff and the Headteacher should consider:

- that an early request has been made;
- the prevailing constraints of the budget;
- what is reasonable in all the circumstances;
- that leave is often required at short notice and attempt to respond promptly;
- the element of choice in taking leave;
- the amount of discretionary leave previously granted to an individual;
- the effects of leave on pupils and other colleagues;
- the closeness of relevant relations;
- the ability of others in the family to take leave;
- could the purpose be achieved at another time;
- if granting leave of absence sets an undesirable precedent.

4.7 Appeals Procedure

An appeal against a decision may be made to the Staffing Committee (via Grievance Procedures) of the Governing Body and should be submitted in writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body.

5. COVER

- 5.1 Class groups have a baseline staffing complement necessary to deliver the curriculum and to safeguard health and welfare. The Governors aim to maintain these staff/pupil ratios as the appropriate level of supervision.
- 5.2 Where cover is provided, continuity of provision, in terms of cover staff's pupil knowledge and their prospective availability, will be a prime consideration.

5.3 Teacher Absence – Short Term

- (i) In order to ensure continuity of provision delivered by familiar and competent adults, lead teaching assistants may be invited to cover' for short-term teacher absences under the following circumstances:
 - For a planned teacher absence;
 - For PPA cover;
 - For an unplanned short-term teacher absence;
 - When the teaching routines and schemes of work are already planned and prepared for teaching assistants to deliver.
- (ii) The 'Lead TA' will be under the direct line management of either their neighbouring teacher or the head or deputy to provide a point of contact and support.
- (iii) In exceptional circumstances the Headteacher may invite a Grade 2 Teaching Assistant (TA) to provide short-term cover as Lead Teaching Assistant (LTA). The TA may decline the offer without prejudice.
- (iv) An additional supply teaching assistant may be engaged to ensure that existing pupil/staff ratios in the class are maintained.

5.4 Supply Staff Evaluation Form

Supply staff will be paid at their contractual point on their salary scale. They will not be paid travelling expenses and will be informed of this before undertaking the supply work.

- 5.5 Long term replacement teachers will be offered temporary or fixed term contracts (maternity cover, absence cover) when it becomes apparent that the period of absence will exceed 20 working days. This contract may be backdated. Where supply staff on contract need to be retained over a holiday period then 'reasonable' recognition of this will be agreed.

6. MONITORING

The staffing committee will monitor the provision outlined within this policy paying particular attention to the following items each term:

- The well-being and attendance of staff.
- The administration of return to work procedures.
- The administration of discretionary leave of absence.

APPENDIX A



CONFIDENTIAL

To be completed by an employee on their first day back to work following an episode of sickness absence and forwarded to their Headteacher/Line Manager.

Please use **BLOCK LETTERS**

1. Full Name: _____ Job Title: _____
Location: _____ Department: _____
2. The day¹ and date you became unfit:
The day and date you were first absent from work: _____
3. The day and date you were fit:
The day and date of your return to work: _____
4. Was this episode of absence linked to an injury sustained at work?
Yes ☐ No ☐
(Note: If answered yes, then you must inform your Headteacher/Line Manager in order to complete the Accident Book and a RIDDOR.)
5. Was this episode of absence linked to an injury sustained outside of work in circumstances where you may have a claim for damages against someone else?
Yes ☐ No ☐
(Note: If answered yes, then you must inform your Headteacher/Line Manager as you will need to claim for Loss of Earnings.)
6. Details of Sickness/Injury. Please say briefly why you were unfit for work – give details of your sickness – words like 'unwell' or 'illness' are not enough.

I declare the information I have provided above is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and that I have submitted, as appropriate, all Medical Certificates to my Headteacher/Line Manager.

APPENDIX A (i)
RETURN TO WORK FORM
(To be completed for absences of three or more days)

All sections to be completed by the Headteacher/Line Manager and then signed by both the employee and Headteacher/Line Manager. Return to Work meetings should normally take place on the employee's first day back or as soon as possible.

Employee's Name: Job Title:

Date of Meeting: Others Present at Meeting:

Period of Absence From: To: Total Calendar Days Absent:

Total Incidences of Absence:

Appropriate Reporting of Absence: Yes ☐ NO ☐
Give details if NO

Has Absence Policy Threshold been Exceeded: Yes ☐ NO ☐
Give details if YES

Reason(s) given by Employee for Absence:

Is the employee well enough to return to work in Headteacher/Line Manager's view? Yes ☐ No ☐

Has the employee submitted the necessary certification? Yes ☐ No ☐

Was the reason for absence linked to an injury at work? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, has the employee completed the accident book and a RIDDOR? Yes ☐ No ☐

Details of issues discussed:
(see guidance* overleaf)

Details of support offered to employee:
(see guidance** overleaf)

Actions agreed (including timescales):
(see guidance*** overleaf)

Signed: Date:
(Employee)

Signed: Date:
(Headteacher/Line Manager)

Guidance and Other Notes

A copy of this form should be given to the employee and a copy retained in the employee's personal file. The purpose of the record will be to monitor the effectiveness of the School's/Council's Managing Sickness Absence Policy and to enable managers to monitor individual absence levels. All records are kept confidentially. An employee may view their individual absence records by request.

*** Issues to discuss should include:**

- welcoming the employee back
- updating on the work situation
- the reason for the employee's absence
- establishing, as far as possible, that employee is fit to resume duties
- completion/receipt of necessary documents: self-certificates, medical certificates, RIDDOR, etc.

*** Other issues which may be discussed, as appropriate:**

- employee's management of own health (e.g. diet, nutrition, rest breaks, etc.)
- agreeing how return to work is treated by others – should team members know reason for absence or ask how they are
- general discussion on attendance record, any patterns of absence and future monitoring
- any underlying causes (e.g. domestic circumstances, work related problems, pregnancy, stress, etc.) and develop strategies.

**** Support offered could include:**

- Occupational Health referral
- training or development relating to any changes which have occurred during absence
- awareness of other leave policies, i.e. special/annual leave
- advice/support from Senior Management/Human Resources or Trade Union
- consideration of any preventative measures (e.g. flexible working, workplace adjustments, etc.).

***** Action could include:**

- targets/timescales for improving attendance
- Occupational Health referral
- investigation if reason for absence was work related
- a review of the risk assessment.

All return to work meetings should be conducted confidentially and sensitively. Further advice should be sought from Human Resources throughout this process as appropriate, but definitely prior to embarking on any formal action.