



The Westminster Specialist College

Management of Absence Policy 2022/2023

Approved by Board of Governors on:	15/12/2022
Signed by Chair of Governors:	P Coldicott
Head of College:	O Flowers
Lead Personnel:	O Flowers
Date of Review:	15/12/2023

1.0 Introduction

1.1 All employees are required to maintain regular and consistent attendance at work but the College also recognises that a certain level of absence due to sickness is unavoidable. The management of absence requires positive, pro-active and supportive management. However, regular or a high level of sickness absence affects the quality of educational provision for children so effective absence management is essential.

1.2 The purpose of this Policy is to detail the steps that the College will take to monitor and manage sickness absence. The management of sickness absence is vital for the College for a number of reasons. Through the application of this Policy, the College aims to:

1.2.1 reduce the level of sickness absence through early intervention and support.

1.2.2 support staff through periods of ill health with the aim of securing their sustained return to work or other resolution as appropriate.

1.2.3 limit the impact on colleagues and the College's activities when such absence does occur.

1.2.4 ensure a fair and consistent approach to the management of sickness absence without discrimination.

1.2.5 minimise the likelihood of sickness absence by identifying causes of absence and recommending, where practical and appropriate, changes necessary in working practices or environment.

1.3 Copies of this Policy should be made available to all employees to whom it applies and an employee subject to this process should also on request be provided with a copy of the College's Management of Absence Policy Guidance.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This Policy applies to all College based employees.

2.2 In cases where a Head of College is subject to this Policy, the contact point for notification of sickness absence and the return to work contact will be a nominated Governor (usually the Chair of Governors). References to the Head of College in this Policy should therefore be adjusted accordingly.

3.0 Exceptions

3.1 For purposes of clarity there are no exceptions; once adopted by the Board of Governors, this Policy applies to all levels of staff at the College.

4.0 Definitions

(a) **Designated Person(s):** The Designated Person is the Head of College. However, unless otherwise stated, the Head of College may delegate certain responsibilities to an appropriate Line Manager/Senior Manager within the College to deal with sickness issues at Formal Stage 1 and 2 and the Head of College will be responsible for progressing sickness issues to Formal Stage 3. Managers with delegated responsibility will be familiar with the process and be reminded by the Head of College of the need to use sensitivity and maintain confidentiality at all times when dealing with affected employees.

- (b) If the sickness concerns a Head of College then the Designated Person will be the Chair of Governors.
- (c) **Representative:** an employee is entitled to be accompanied at each Formal Stage by a recognised trade union representative or work colleague if they so wish.
- (d) **The Committee:** means the Committee appointed by the Board of Governors with delegated powers to undertake the functions prescribed for a Committee in this Policy and consists of a minimum of 3 members.
- (e) **Appeals Committee:** means the Committee consisting of a minimum of 3, or equivalent to the number on the Committee. Members of the Appeals Committee should have had no prior involvement in the case.
- (f) **Personal File:** means that file maintained by The College relating to the specific individual concerned.

5.0 General Principles

5.1 The Policy does not form part of the terms of an employee's contract the College which are provided separately.

5.2 The College strongly recommends that this Policy should be read in conjunction with the Colleges' Model Management of Absence Policy Guidance and those affected should on request also be provided with a copy of this Guidance.

5.3 This Policy takes into account current employment legislation, good practice and the appropriate provisions of ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service).

5.4 The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 have been fully incorporated into the Policy.

5.5 At any stage in the process, following further enquiries, the Designated Person may invoke an alternative Policy.

5.6 When an employee is off sick there is a mutual responsibility for the employee and the Designated Person to maintain regular and appropriate contact. If a sick employee fails to contact the College in accordance with its local arrangements; it is reasonable for the Designated Person to initiate communication as part of his or her duty of care.

5.7 Employees should demonstrate their commitment to manage their own health appropriately and this should be taken into account in the sickness absence management discussions.

5.8 Employees must be informed of their right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative at each Formal Stage.

5.9 All parties will deal with issues promptly and not unreasonably delay meetings/hearings, decisions or confirmation of those decisions.

5.10 Where a meeting needs to be rescheduled, it can normally only be rescheduled once. A new date must be agreed within five working days of the original date. The actual meeting/hearing date need not be within those five days but should be as soon as possible.

5.11 All matters will remain confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, except in circumstances where there is a legal obligation to disclose such information.

5.12 The employee has a right of appeal against a decision made during each Formal Stage.

5.13 The decision at the final appeal hearing (Formal Stage 3) exhausts the internal process.

5.14 The Designated Person will inform employees who fail to follow the normal sickness absence notification process and/or fail to provide the timely submission of medical certificates that they may have salary payments withheld and that there could be disciplinary consequences. If there is evidence of a repeated failure to comply with the above or occasions(s) of unauthorised absence or potential concerns relating to the abuse of the Sick Pay Scheme, then such breaches should be managed in accordance with the College's Model Disciplinary Policy following guidance from the College's HR provider.

5.15 If a period of redeployment or other action fails, or if an employee returns to work under any Formal Stage and then goes off sick again within a 26-week period, the Designated Person may reactivate the process at the Formal Stage previously reached.

5.16 If an employee lodges a grievance against the Designated Person at any stage of the Policy, then this will be dealt with through the appeals process within this Policy. However, if the grievance is about an unrelated matter, this may be progressed concurrently.

5.17 All notes of meetings at all stages, formal records and copies of correspondence will be retained on the employee's personal file for future reference.

6.0 Sickness Absence Process

6.1 Sickness Absence Notification

6.1.1 The College will have local arrangements in place for the reporting of sickness absence which employees are required to follow and this will normally include the reason for the absence, how long they expect the absence to last and the expected date of return if this is known. The College would expect to be notified as soon as possible on the first day of absence and, before the employee's normal start time in accordance with local practice, to enable the necessary cover arrangements to be made. Failure to comply with this will result in loss of pay unless there are acceptable mitigating circumstances.

6.2 Recording and Monitoring Sickness Absence

6.2.1 On receipt of sickness notification, the Designated Person will record all absences in accordance with local arrangements.

6.2.2 Employees will be required to complete relevant forms for all occasions of absence. After 7 days consecutive sickness absence i.e. on Day 8, employees will be required obtain a doctor's medical certificate (fit note) and forward it to their normal contact point. Notwithstanding the requirement to keep the College informed of their continued absence, further medical certificates will need to be submitted by the employee to cover the full period of absence.

6.2.3 Where there is cause for concern the Designated Person may request that medical certificates are provided in respect of all future absences of less than 7 days. This request must be confirmed in writing to the employee and the employee informed that the College will reimburse the cost of any medical certificates provided on this basis. Where a cost is incurred by the employee then on production of the certified receipt they must be reimbursed without unnecessary delay.

6.3 Return to work

6.3.1 The return to work contact is an essential and compulsory element in the management of sickness absence and will be carried out on each occasion of absence. Contact should take place on the day of return, or as soon as reasonably practicable and will be recorded by the Designated Person on the final form completed by the employee.

6.3.2 The nature of the return to work contact will vary in accordance with the reasons for the absence and any previous absences but the basic purpose is to recognise the employee has been absent and to offer support and encouragement on their return to work.

6.4 Absence due to Work-Related Illness or Injury

6.4.1 If an employee has an accident at work which is followed by an absence then doctor's medical certificates will be required from the first day of absence. The College will reimburse the costs incurred. Where a cost is incurred by the employee then on production of the certified receipt they must be reimbursed without unnecessary delay.

6.4.2 An Incident Report Form must be completed, preferably by the employee involved, if this is not possible then by the Designated Person. If applicable, the Designated Person must telephone and inform the Local Authority Health and Safety Officer of the incident/absence to enable the Health and Safety Executive to be notified as appropriate.

6.5 Medical Suspension

6.5.1 The College reserves the right to send an employee home if they do not believe the employee is well enough to perform their duties and their continued presence is placing at risk the health, education and welfare of pupils.

6.5.2 The employee must be informed in these circumstances that although this will be an informal meeting, they may be accompanied so long as this does not unreasonably delay

the convening of the meeting. The Designated Person should discuss with the employee the reasons why they are being sent home. The employee should be informed that suspension from work is on health grounds, is not conduct related and during this period they will receive normal pay.

6.5.3 If an employee requests to return to work, they may be asked to produce a medical certificate (fit note) confirming that they are well enough to work and/or attend an appointment with Occupational Health before they return to work.

6.6 There are support mechanisms and processes which will be followed as appropriate to manage the absence, and whilst further details of these are contained within the Colleges' Model Management of Absence Policy Guidance, they are summarised below:

6.6.1 Referrals to Occupational Health

A referral to Occupational Health can be made where appropriate at any period in the absence or to prevent and/or minimise an absence. An employee must be notified that a referral is to be made.

6.6.2 Disability Related Absence

The Equality Act 2010 is a statutory framework which provides legal protection from discrimination on the grounds of disability and places a duty on employers to consider and accommodate reasonable adjustments.

6.6.3 Pregnancy Related Absence

Pregnancy related absence would not normally be considered under this Policy. However, it will still be necessary to meet with the employee to discuss the reasons for their absence and to ensure their well-being as part of the return to work process.

6.6.4 Chronic or Terminal Illness

If an employee has a chronic or terminal illness appropriate support will be provided. It is primarily the Head of College's responsibility to maintain contact as this is part of the College's duty of care. However, the individual's wishes will be of paramount importance and such cases will be dealt with sensitively and confidentially.

7.0 Sickness Absence Triggers and Policy Stages

7.1 Informal Welfare Contact

7.1.2 Informal welfare contact either by telephone or in person should be made within a period of 4 calendar weeks continued absence. The purpose of the welfare contact is to:

- ascertain the employee's health position and offer any assistance or support

- inform the employee that the process is informal but that formal stages will commence when the employee has been absent for a continued period of 6 calendar weeks

7.2 Sickness Absence Triggers

7.2.1 This procedure will be triggered:

- following 3 or more absences in the previous 6 months or
- more than 6 days absence in the previous 6 months

These triggers apply to part time employees on a pro-rata basis.

7.3 Initial Review of Absence Record

7.3.1 When an employee has activated a trigger, an assessment should be made to decide whether to proceed to Formal Stage 1.

7.3.2 Where the Designated Person has decided not to proceed to Formal Stage 1, they will record the reason/s for their decision as part of the return to work contact on the HR70.

7.3.3 However, proceeding to Formal Stage 1 may allow the Designated Person to support the employee with their medical condition and/or to set acceptable attendance targets.

Factors to consider include:

- previous attendance record
- absence patterns
- employee's own health management
- pregnancy/disability related absence
- other causes for concern

7.4 Formal Stage 1 Meeting

7.4.1 The Designated Person should consider whether the employee proceeds to Stage 1:

- following 3 or more absences in the previous 6 months or
- more than 6 days absence in the previous 6 months or
- if they have been absent for a continued period of 6 weeks

7.4.2 The employee shall receive written notice of not less than 5 working days' notice before the date of the meeting and must be informed of his/her right to be represented by an accredited trade union representative or fellow work colleague.

7.4.3 The purpose of a Stage 1 meeting is for the Designated Person to discuss the employee's sickness, to set targets (where appropriate) and provide relevant support. The outcome and any recommendations made will also be confirmed in writing to the employee within 5 working days.

7.4.4 The Designated Person should progress to the Formal Stage 2 meeting if:

- they have received a report from Occupational Health
- and/or the employee's absence has continued for a further period of 4 weeks
- the employee has failed to reach the attendance targets set – the Designated Person does not need to wait until the end of the review period

7.5 Formal Stage 2 Meeting

7.5.1 The employee shall receive written notice of not less than 5 working days' notice before the date of the meeting and must be informed of his/her right to be represented by an accredited trade union representative or fellow work colleague.

7.5.2 The purpose of a Stage 2 meeting is for the Designated Person to discuss the employee's sickness, to set targets (where appropriate) and provide relevant support. The outcome and any recommendations made will also be confirmed in writing to the employee within 5 working days.

7.5.3 The Head of College having carefully reviewed the case should progress to the Stage 3 (Staffing Committee) hearing if:

- they have received a report from Occupational Health
- and/or the employee's absence has continued for a further period of 8 weeks
- the employee has failed to reach the attendance targets set – the Head of College does not need to wait until the end of the review period

7.6 Formal Stage 3 Hearing (Staffing Committee)

7.6.1 The employee shall receive written notice of not less than 5 working days' notice before the date of the hearing and must be informed of his/her right to be represented by an accredited trade union representative or fellow work colleague.

7.6.2 The purpose of a Stage 3 hearing is for the Staffing Committee to consider a report received from the Head of College outlining the facts of the case including:

- the employee's future employment based on medical evidence
- the impact their level of sickness absence is having on the College
- what alternative courses of action exist
- the terms of the employee's contract of employment and that if a decision is taken to dismiss, then employment may be terminated in line with the employee's Statement of Written Particulars

7.6.3 This report will form the basis of the hearing at which the employee and/or their representative will be present.

7.6.4 As a result of the hearing, the Committee may determine that the employee should be dismissed with notice in line with their Statement of Written Particulars (or Committee may

decide depending on the circumstances that a payment in lieu of notice be paid to the employee) or decide on an alternative course of action.

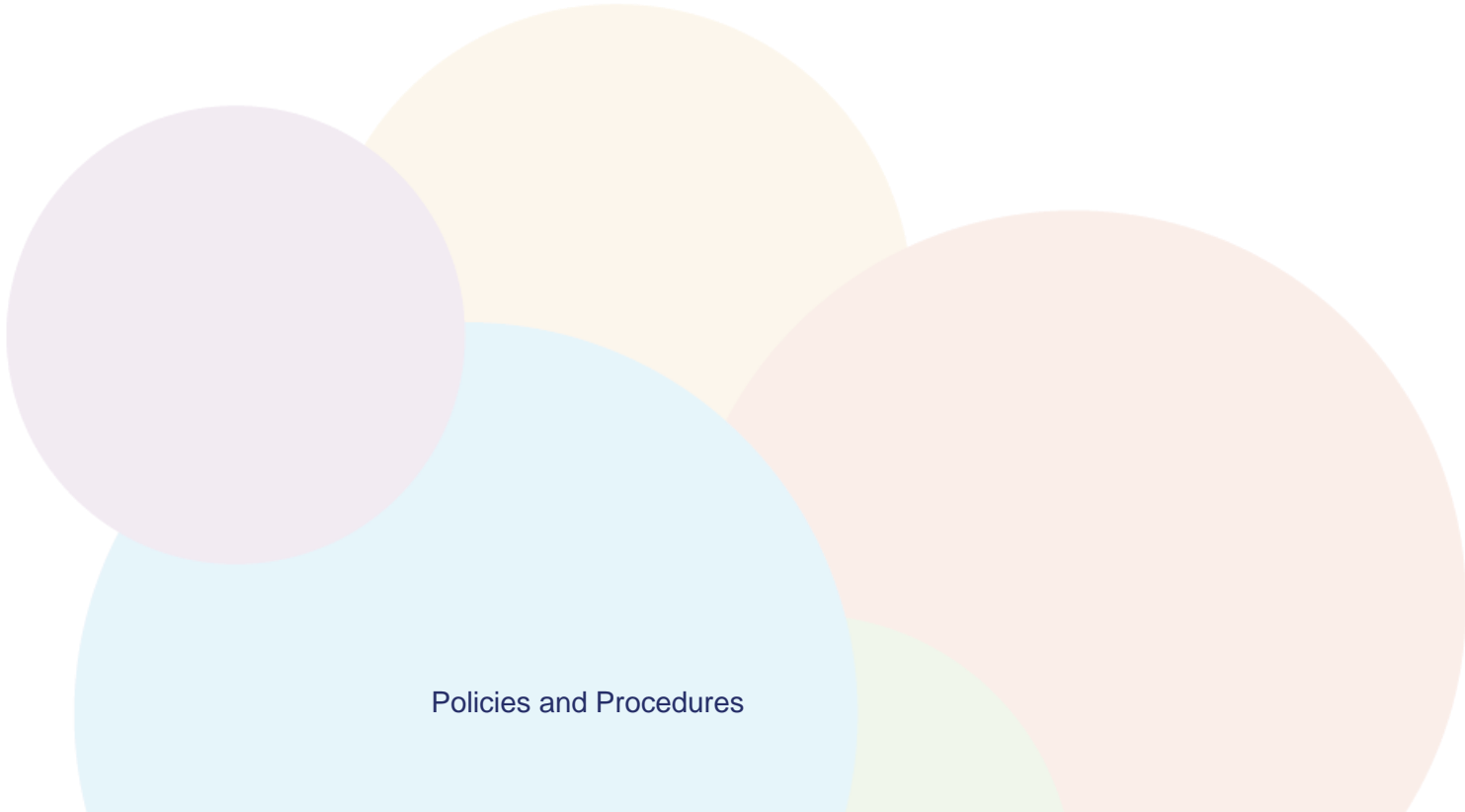
7.6.5 The Local Authority, through a representative of the Director of Children's Services, has an entitlement to attend for the purposes of giving advice where dismissal may be a possibility. Should dismissal be decided by the Committee then the notice shall be effective from the date upon which the decision is communicated to him/her by the Director of Children's Services.

7.6.6 The decision of the Committee will be notified to the employee within 5 days of the hearing.

8.0 Appeals

8.1 An employee may appeal against any action determined at any Formal Stage and this will be considered by the Appeals Committee of the Board of Governors. The appeal must be made in writing within 10 working days of the decision, giving full reasons for the appeal.

8.2 The decision of the Appeals Committee is final and the internal process is exhausted following the appeal outcome at Formal Stage 3.



Policies and Procedures