

VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

SCHOOLS' SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. PURPOSE

As a school we aim to provide a high quality range of services to all pupils. In order to deliver the standard, to which we strive to achieve we require a healthy and well- motivated team of employees.

The correct management of sickness absence, encourages good health, a culture of high attendance and ensures that sickness absence is dealt with in a fair, consistent and sympathetic manner, enabling employees to fully recover and return to work.

Management of absence is a key factor to achieving improved performance.

2. SCOPE

This policy covers all employees of the school. Direct services such as catering, cleaning, ground maintenance and building contractors are outside the scope of the policy.

This policy provides a framework for Governing Bodies and Headteachers to provide consistent support and guidance to their employees.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

The health and well being of employees is important to the Vale of Glamorgan Council and its Governing Bodies. Where possible employees will be assisted to return to work through the proactive measures of management. The support of Human Resources and Occupational Health is also available . The actions of all managers and Occupational Health will take into account the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

4. DEFINITIONS

In the case of a Headteacher being absent, the line manager refers to the chair of the Governing Body. For all other employees the line manager refers to the headteacher or nominated representative.

5. PRINCIPLES

The following principles will underpin this policy and inform of action taken under it:-

- It is recognised that employees will on occasion, be absent due to maternity or long term sickness.
 - The school will aim to ensure the welfare of its employees. All employees are entitled to expect fair and consistent treatment and that their absence will be dealt with in a confidential manner.
 - The day to day management of absence is the responsibility of the line manager.
 - The school will monitor and accurately record absence, in order to support employees who are experiencing problems and to ensure a consistent approach is taken.
 - The responsibility for notifying and updating the line manager rests with the individual, although the line manager will remain in contact to be aware of ongoing activities within the school.
 - The individual is required to attend meetings and appointments made with Occupational Health, in the event of an unreasonable refusal by the employee to attend, the line manager will make a decision on the information that is available.
 - In cases where it is suspected that an unwarranted absence has been taken and ascribed to ill health, the matter may be more appropriately addressed through the disciplinary procedure. Advice is available from Human Resources and Equalities for those schools participating in the SLA.
 - The process for long and short-term sickness is detailed below, although all absences will be considered on an individual basis and based on the needs of the school.
 - Employees who have been absent, will be required to participate in a 'Return to Work interview' where they should highlight any problems or difficulties at work.
 - Where an employee is suffering from stress, anxiety or similar condition, a referral to Occupational Health may be made, even when the employee has returned to work.
 - To establish a proactive and preventive approach to sickness absence, in order to prevent recurrence. To address any welfare problems and ensure that appropriate medical assistance is being provided.
 - All employees have a right to be represented at all stages of the procedure, by a Trade Union representative or colleague. Should any formal action be taken due to unacceptable level of absence, employees have the right to appeal and must be made aware of this right.
 - This policy will be reviewed on regular basis to ensure maximum effectiveness.
- Where a third party claim is made, the Council reserves the right to reclaim any sick pay and other benefits, during the absence.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY

NOTIFICATION

The employee who is sick:

Day 1

The employee must notify the line manager or their nominee on the first day of sickness, of the reason for absence and the likely duration of the absence. This should be done as early as possible in order to allow time for the school to find a replacement but at latest 9.00am. This is also the case if an employee is sick and leaves during the day and is unable to attend the following day. Every effort should be made by the individual and not a third party to report the sickness, although it is acknowledged that it may, in exceptional circumstances be necessary.

Day 4

If still absent on the fourth day, the employee is required to telephone again and follow the same process as above.

Day 8

A medical certificate is required from the Doctor, Dentist or hospital. Should the absence continue, the medical certificate must be renewed and sent in within one week of the previous one expiring (this allows for postal delay). If for any reason a medical note is late, the individual must telephone the line manager and advise him/her of continuing absence. Any period of absence, not covered by a medical note will be considered as absence without leave.

The employee should give notice of at least one working day to return to work. An employee, absent for more than fourteen days, must produce a medical certificate confirming their fitness to return to work.

The Line Manager

Should ascertain the reason for absence and the likely duration

Should consider, if there are any barriers or difficulties in work, which have contributed to the absence and liaise with the individual to overcome these where possible.

Where the absence continues or the level of absence is unacceptable, refer to Occupational Health for medical advice via the Human Resources & Equalities department

Will maintain contact with the individual and arrange to meet on a regular basis to discuss their absence and progress to date and advise of their right to be accompanied. In circumstances where the absence is stress related, medical advice must be obtained before contact with the absent teacher is made. In such circumstances, the appropriate Trade Union should be advised.

Where an employee has been absent for twenty working days or more (pro rata for part

time workers), consideration should be made for a referral to Occupational Health, particularly if a known return date is not available.

For employees who are seeking ill health retirement, the line manager should contact or provide contact details to the Personnel Officer, Human Resources & Equalities department. The personnel officer will assist with the application, under the requirements of the Local Government Pension scheme or Teachers Pensions as appropriate.

Will conduct a return to work interview

The Headteacher will ensure that the Governing Body of the school is aware of the level of absences due to sickness.

7 SICKNESS ABSENCE PROCEDURES

The three main categories of sickness absence are:-

Short Term Sickness Absence

Frequent/High levels of Sickness Absence (either short or long term)

Long Term Sickness Absence

The above could take the form of a one-off absence, a series of absences due to one diagnosed cause, serious long term illness and absences due to minor unrelated illnesses. The approach will differ in each situation according to the nature and frequency of the absence/s.

Human Resources & Equalities are available for advice and guidance in preparation of the following:-

N.B. For all trigger points this should be pro rata for part time employees.

Flow process for Short Term sickness

Responsibility	Short Term Sick Absence	Action
Head teacher or Representative	Return to work interview , after each unauthorised absence to identify cause and complete documentation.	
Head teacher (Chair of Governors if Head teacher)	Informal absence interview (after three absences in six months or twenty days (pro rata to days worked), to identify any underlying cause and make a plan to reduce sick absence. Possible referral to Occupational Health for guidance or a health check. Offer help and counselling as appropriate. Provide five working days notice of the meeting and allow for representation. Emphasise the importance of the individual's role in the school. Provide written advice of the outcome of the meeting.	
Head teacher (Chair of Governors if Head teacher)	Formal absence interview (after six absences in twelve rolling months), to identify any underlying cause; make a plan to reduce absence; refer to Medical Adviser; advise of procedure and likely consequences.	Formal warning, advice given of need to improve and the procedure is explained. If there is no good reason for the continued absence and the absences are having a significant adverse affect on the work of the section, take medical advice. Advise if no improvement, the consequence could be dismissal. Confirm in writing, outcome of the meeting and set time scales for expected improvement.
	Final Stage interview (after eight absences in fourteen months), medical advice sought, plan to improve on given time scale made, advise on procedure and likely consequences.	Final warning given, if improvement not achieved within agreed time scales. New time scales for improvement set, consequences explained. Take medical advice, consider redeployment, ill health retirement etc.

Responsibility	Short Term Sick Absence	Action
Dismissal Committee	Termination. Where no improvement made this is the final stage of the process.	Termination If no improvement Chair of Governors / Head teacher recommends to Governing Body Dismissal Committee to issue notice in line with contract of employment and advise of right of appeal in consultation with Personnel Officer
Appeals Committee	Appeal against dismissal. Call Appeal committee to hear any appeals	Appeal against dismissal. The Appeals Committee review the case to determine if fair treatment given.

N.B. for all trigger points this should be pro rata for part time employees

Long Term Sickness (four weeks +)

Responsibility	Long Term Sick Procedure	Action
<p>Head teacher or Chair of Governors or council Nominee in case of Head teacher</p>	<p>Stage 1 Sickness in excess of four working weeks including school closure periods: Meet to ascertain whether employee's health will improve. If so, when? Establish exact medical position and RTW date, offer support/ counselling.</p> <p>Offer employee representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employer to keep employee informed of work issues - Employee to keep employer informed on state of health - * Decisions on re-deployment, termination or ill health termination are employment, not health decisions - Employee must be consulted at all stages - Employee's representative must be kept informed of situation - Employee must attend meetings called by manager to review the situation 	<p>Consider back to work plan, where there may be a requirement for a phased return, adaptations, redeployment etc.</p> <p>Refer to Occupational Health and seek advice</p>
<p>Head teacher recommends to Dismissal Committee</p>	<p>If there is a further period of absence and there is no indication of a return to work in the foreseeable future (i.e. the absences are going to continue)</p>	<p>Dismissal Committee issue notice of dismissal to the employee This should not be done until the most recent Doctor's report is available</p>

APPEALS

All employees have the right of appeal to the Governing Body, against dismissal stages of the policy. The appeal must be in writing and must clearly state the grounds for the appeal. This must be received within ten working days of the date of the letter advising the decision.

The hearing should be arranged within twenty working days of receipt of the letter of appeal.

If the appeal is against the final stage of the procedure, which has resulted in dismissal, the appeal panel will be the relevant appeal committee of the Governing Body.

No appeal to the Governing Body can be made against ill health retirement not being granted as this is not a Governing Body decision, or where medical opinion obtained by the employee, conflicts with the medical opinion of the Occupational Health with the school. However, in such instances a right of appeal does exist with the pension scheme administrator - details can be supplied by Human Resources and Equalities.

ALTERNATIVE WORK

If the employee has a second job, or undertakes any other paid or voluntary work whilst off on sick leave, they must advise their line manager and request permission. In some circumstances, confirmation from a Doctor will be required to ensure that this work is not detrimental to the individual's recovery.

Recoverable elements of pay will include gross sickness allowance paid including all salary plus on costs(Employers Pension / National Insurance contributions etc) in addition to any other benefits paid by the council e.g. car allowance, professional fees etc.

SICK PAY

All entitlements to payments due to sickness, will be in accordance with the Burgundy book "Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales" and within the "N.J.C for Local Government Services" handbook, in respect of Support Staff employees. These are contracted entitlements, which cannot be varied at school level.

Sickness during annual leave:

In the event of an employee on Local Government NJC terms and conditions falling sick during annual leave, the absence will be regarded as sick leave from the date of a medical certificate and further annual leave will be suspended from that date. Under the terms of the Burgundy Book for Teachers, only sick absence that occurs in term time counts towards occupational sick pay entitlement and will be recovered by the terms of this policy

Third Party Claims

An employee, who is absent as a result of an accident, where damages may be receivable from a third party, will be paid Occupational Sick Pay as an advance. It is a requirement for receiving this advance that an employee signs a form of undertaking, to include as special damages, a claim for the full extent of such advance payments in any claim for damages made against a third party and to refund to the employer, the amount of damages received, in respect of such advance payments.

RE DEPLOYMENT

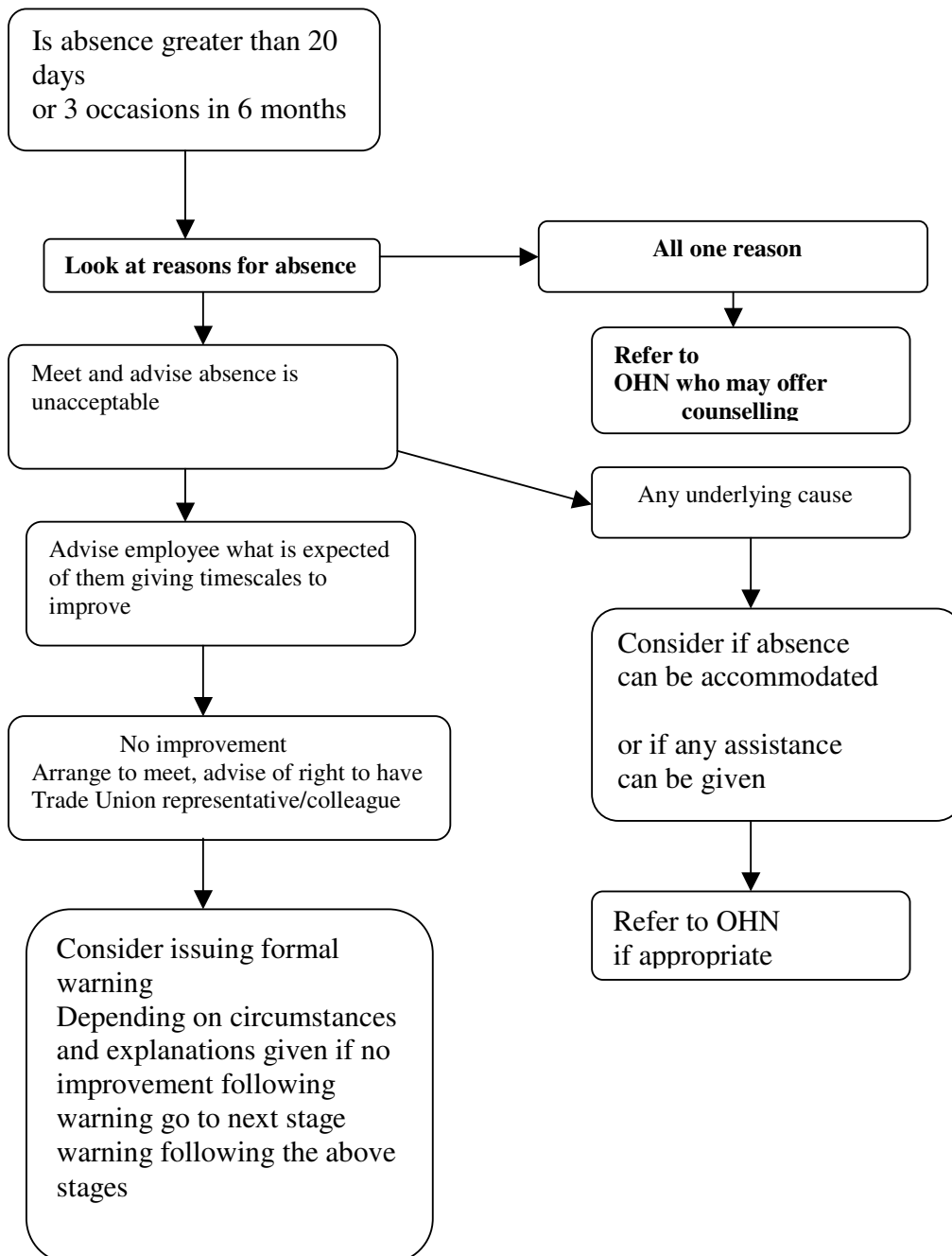
For employees who by reason of their health are unable to return to their substantive post, a copy of the vacancy bulletin for the Council will be sent to their home address. All employees who meet the minimum essential criteria should be interviewed for all centrally based positions. The Governing Body of other schools will be encouraged to do the same.

SHORT TERM SICKNESS – AT A GLANCE

Keep accurate records

Identify patterns or trends

Always conduct RTW interviews



LONG TERM SICKNESS – AT A GLANCE

