



GREENHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

FOR STAFF

POLICY AIMS :

- To work in partnership with all parties to ensure that everyone attends as often as is possible to achieve the overall school targets.
- To ensure that there are fair and consistent practices and procedures to support good attendance in school.
- To minimise the disruption of absence on children's achievement and attendance.
- To ensure the school complies with the legal requirement to record and report on absences of all the school community.

The Local Authority (LA) recommend to Governing Bodies that schools adopt a number of principles which should govern the way that sickness absence is monitored and management action needed. The principles are designed to ensure that schools take proactive measures to effectively manage sickness absence, whilst also having regard to the need to support employees who are sick and treat them with sympathy and understanding.

These principles are:

- All employees are entitled to expect fair and reasonable treatment, including taking account of equal opportunity considerations
- All employees who suffer from serious or chronic ill-health problems necessitating long periods of absence from work must be treated sensitively and with sympathy
- Employees are entitled to a working environment and to systems of work that do not create health problems and in particular do not impose an undue level of stress.
- Sickness absence needs to be managed fairly, consistently and systematically to ensure the continued provision of high quality education.
- All employees should be aware of and adhere to the procedures relating to sickness absence.

Roles and responsibilities

Role of Employees

The role of each employee is to:

- Attend work promptly and ready to work at your start time
- Comply with the schools sickness absence reporting procedures
- Ensure medical advice and treatment, where possible, is sought as quickly as possible in order to facilitate a return to work.
- Keep the School informed of developments
- Notify the School as soon as possible in the case of an injury sustained in the course of employment



Role of the Headteacher

The role of the Headteacher is to manage the attendance of teaching and support staff. This is achieved by:

- Recommending the governing body adopt the policy, attend training and seek advice from the appropriate officers.
- Reporting absence summaries to Governors for monitoring
- Ensuring that the procedure for reporting sickness and absence is made known and available to all employees in the school, that they are informed that it applies during any period of special leave and holidays and that it is a condition of the sick pay scheme; making all employees aware of these rules and procedures. Employees need to know whom they should contact when sick and how much information they will be asked to give.
- Acting fairly and consistently in applying appropriate procedures
- Ensuring that accurate sickness absence records are maintained and absence returns are quickly and accurately completed, both for monitoring and sick pay purposes.
- Overseeing the Review of each employee's sickness absence record in accordance with the procedures set out in these guidance notes.
- Contributing to the development and implementation of policies and practices that will reduce the health and welfare risks to individual employees, using the full range of the schools' sickness absence monitoring records and advice from the authority
- Ensuring that where appropriate and justifiable, quick and decisive action is taken with employees who do not comply with the sickness absence notification procedures.
- Establishing clear plans for an employee where it is decided that action is needed.
- Ensuring that any employee with responsibility for receiving notification of another's employee's sickness absence is properly trained in the schools procedure and treats the information as sensitive & confidential.

Role of the Governing Body

The role of the governing body is to ensure that:

- The school has a policy on the issue of absence
- That there is a clear procedure for reporting absence
- The Headteacher is carrying out their responsibilities
- That there is a designated governor to act appropriately in relation to sickness absence of the Headteacher and that the designated governor seeks advice from the Employee Relations team in respect of such sickness absence.
- It monitors the absence of the Headteacher and applies the appropriate procedures.

Role of Occupational Health Services

The role of occupational health will be to:

- Arrange an appointment to see an employee as quickly as possible after a referral has been made
- Deal with employees referred to them in a sympathetic way
- provide, in as much detail as professionally possible, relevant information about an employees condition and circumstances to allow head teachers to be able to take informed decisions about a particular employees likely return to work, ability to continue to the work in school and where necessary the long term prognosis about that employees overall health.
- Recommend phased returns or reasonable adjustments where appropriate.



Data Protection Act

All parties have responsibilities under the Data protection act when dealing with cases of sickness absence. They should treat all aspects of a case as confidential. In addition, sickness data comes within the data protection acts definition of sensitive personal data. Any data relating to absence will therefore need to comply with the eight data protection principles;

1. processed fairly and lawfully
2. proceeded for limited purposes and not in any manner incompatible with those purposes
3. adequate, relevant and not excessive
4. accurate
5. not kept for longer than is necessarily
6. proceeded in line with data subjects rights
7. will be kept securely, both digitally and physically
8. not transfer to countries that don't protect personal data adequately.

OFFICIAL POLICY



PROCEDURES

Greenholm School follows Birmingham advice and guidelines in regard to absence monitoring and practices.

Recording and Monitoring absences

What to do when a member of staff is absent/sick

Staff who are ill should telephone the school as soon as possible and speak to the Business Manager or directly to the Headteacher, giving a brief outline of the nature of the illness, when the illness began and the likely duration of the illness to ensure the school can plan effective cover. This call should happen every day unless covered by a 'Fit Note' and always before the employees start time. Emails or text messages should not be used and it must be the employee him/herself that calls rather than a relative. A self-certificate sick note should be completed for all absences between 4 and 7 days. An actual FIT note from the GP/Hospital is required from the 8th day onwards. The absence will be properly recorded.

Return to work discussion.

1. When a member of staff returns to work after any period of absence, a discussion should take place. This should be conducted by the Headteacher or the member of staff's line manager.
2. The discussion should take place within three days of returning to work or may be at the end of a long-term absence (long term being deemed as 4 or more continuous weeks). The purpose is to recognise that the employee has been off work, and to make any appropriate adjustments to working arrangements. It should cover any changes to the timetables, or any additional training the member of staff may need as a result of the absence.
3. Where a FIT note recommends a phased return to work, the School should give due consideration to the suggestions for up to a maximum of five weeks. The school is however under no legal obligation to follow the suggestions.
4. The discussion should be supportive to both the employee and the employer. They should not be used to express doubts about the validity of a particular absence, deal with concerns about levels of absence or raise matters of misconduct or capability.
5. The matters covered in the discussion should be summarised in an aide memoir for retention in school with a copy given to the employee. They must be given the right to respond to the aide memoir.
6. Any claim that the absence has been caused by an injury at work should be reported to the Headteacher during the absence. Appropriate paper work should be kept for this and the injury reported to the LA. A copy of any paperwork should be given to the employee.

Sickness absence investigation.

1. Whilst there is no acceptable level of sickness absence, all absence records are monitored by the Headteacher, Personnel officer and Governors on a half termly basis. Patterns of absence are noted and may lead to a further absence investigation.
2. All absences are investigated where there are two absences amounting to 2 days or more in a term. This is in line with national average absence rates of 6.8 days per annum (figures as at Sept 2013).



3. Following this if the Headteacher is not satisfied with the responses and that there are special circumstances, this will lead to an absence-monitoring interview.

Special circumstances revealed in sickness absence investigations

1. Any employee with a terminal, or life threatening condition should not be asked to attend sickness-monitoring interviews. Please refer to the End of life policy.
2. Employees who develop a disability during the course of their employment should not automatically be considered unfit to continue working.
3. All pregnancy related absence should be recorded in the usual manner. The school has a duty not to endanger the health and safety of a pregnant woman.

Stress related to work

As the employer, the Governing body and the Headteacher has a duty of care to its employees and a failure to carry out this duty could result in legal redress. Therefore as far as possible, all steps are taken to address the problems created by stress and seek to prevent or at least reduce stress, as well as alleviating the effects of stress on the school's workforce.

Absence monitoring interviews.

- Absence monitoring interview must be based upon reliable evidence justifying concern over the levels of sickness absence and therefore should be preceded by proper investigation of the case.
- The Headteacher, or another member of senior staff conducts the absence-monitoring interview. Its purpose is to investigate, offer help and advice to the employee and to improve attendance. The interview should be conducted in private with the sickness absence record ready for discussion. An employee has the right to be accompanied by a representative of their choice. The discussion should cover the reasons for absence, any remedial action that might be feasible, including the employee seeking further medical investigation where appropriate and guidance from the Local Authority. A plan of action should be agreed for a 13 week period (working weeks) and a date arranged for a second meeting to assess the outcome of the agreed plan.
- All matters covered in the interview should be summarised in an aide memoir for retention in the school with a copy given to the employee. The employee should be able to comment on the aide memoire with their representative. The aide memoire does not constitute a warning and should not be part of an employee's personal file.

Action following absence monitoring – frequent short term sickness absence.

Where there are further absences despite support, further action must be taken.

Before taking further action the Headteacher should ensure that they are fully up to date with all previous sickness absence notes and aide memoire and be sure that the level of support offered to the employee has been appropriate. A further 13 week monitoring may be undertaken following this second meeting if sickness record has not improved. A Decision meeting will then be held at the end of this second monitoring period.

Having reviewed all the evidence at the Decision meeting, the Headteacher must decide whether the sickness record remains unsatisfactory. Referral to occupational health for a full report is recommended to review the level of sickness and any underlying reasons for sickness. Having considered all the evidence it may be appropriate to follow one of the following options :

- Continuation monitoring of the employers absences for a further reasonable period.
- No further monitoring necessary
- Referral to Governors for dismissal



At each stage a member of staff has a right to be accompanied at meetings and appeal to the appeals committee of the Governing body. A member of staff wishing to exercise this right will need to notify the Governing body within ten days of receiving the final decision.

Special leave

In the procedures set out in this document, this process is monitoring only sickness absence. Where permission is given to staff to take special leave, this should not be subsequently linked to sickness absence. Special leave should always be sought in advance.

Time off for medical appointments

Where an employee needs to attend a routine medical appointment, then as far as possible, it is reasonable to expect these outside of school hours. However, urgent appointments may be necessary during school time. In this case the Headteacher should satisfy themselves of the need for the individual to have time off school, by asking the member of staff for the appointment letter.

Long term absences

When dealing with cases of long-term sickness absence employees must be treated with sensitivity. Seeking professional consultations can be of mutual benefit to the school and the employee.

Whilst an entitlement to sick pay may last for 100 working days it is not necessary to wait this length of time before addressing issues created by the long term sickness absence.

The employee's absence and medical condition should be reviewed at regular intervals starting at four weeks of continuous absence. At each review the HT should decide on the appropriate action asking for a referral to Occupational Health, taking into account the prognosis of the condition and an expected date for a return to work where available. It is important that matters around sickness are not allowed to drift and regular consultation is absolutely essential so that the school is kept aware of the employee's views on the prognosis and how this may affect the employment position.

A welfare visit may be appropriate in the employees home, with the permission of the employee. It may be appropriate to write to the employee first, especially if the illness is linked to stress where extra sensitivity is required. Fortnightly contact is deemed as reasonable where an employee has been absent for more than 4 consecutive weeks.

Medical information, whether from a doctors certificate or from Occupational Health will be essential. For employees expecting to make a full recovery, then a phased return (of no more than 5 weeks) may be planned to support their integration back to the workplace. Employers are required to consider reasonable adjustments if the condition comes within the scope of the Disability Discrimination Act. Consideration may be given to a reduction in contracted hours, or stepping down to a post of less responsibility, or medical redeployment. Where there is no prospect of a return to work it is best to work with the professional associations to work out the best course of action. Throughout the discussion the emphasis should be on preserving the dignity for the employee at the same time as meeting the needs of the school.

If all options have been discussed without an agreed acceptable outcome, it may be appropriate to consider whether to instigate a process leading to the termination of employment. This is most likely to happen when the employee

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has been absent for a year or more, sick pay is due to expire and there seems no prospect of a return to work in the near future.

Monitoring.

This policy will be monitored annually by the staffing and personnel committee.

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