



'Doing our best to achieve our best'

Clarendon Primary School, Nursery and Family Centre

Absence Management Policy

Policy Scope and Purpose

Scope and Purpose:	<p>Clarendon Primary School cares about the health and wellbeing of all who work for us as everyone counts towards the school's success.</p> <p>As a school we want to have a happy, healthy, effective and efficient workforce and to achieve this it is critical to balance the needs of the school with the need to provide reasonable, fair and consistent employee support.</p>
Policy Statement:	<p>This policy establishes principles that will ensure fair and consistent reviews of short-term sickness absence and long-term sickness absence. It outlines the process which employees, managers and the HR department should follow in relation to sickness absence.</p> <p>It also describes the processes to be followed in relation to sick leave and returning to work and how the school monitors sickness absence.</p>
Who uses this Policy:	<p>This document is applicable to the management of both short and long-term sickness absence of all members of staff employed at the school with the exception of employees serving a probationary/induction period. Employees on temporary or fixed-term contracts will be subject to this procedure with adjustments made, where appropriate, to reflect the likely duration of the contract.</p> <p>This document does not cover conditions or entitlements in relation to sick pay. Such payments will be made in accordance with the relevant conditions of service for teachers and support staff.</p>
Roles and Responsibilities:	<p>The Governing Body is responsible for the overall monitoring of the effectiveness of this procedure.</p> <p>The Chair of Governors will be responsible for monitoring the absence levels of the Headteacher and will act as the line manager in relation to the management of the Headteacher's absence in accordance with this document.</p> <p>The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that those with line management responsibilities are suitably skilled to manage sickness absence and have received appropriate training. The Headteacher will also fulfil the responsibilities of the line manager in respect of certain individuals.</p> <p>All line managers (including the Headteacher) are responsible for ensuring that members of staff are familiar with the expectations placed upon them in relation to their attendance at work, for monitoring absence, ensuring that consistent reporting is in place and conducting informal and formal meetings with individuals in accordance with the various stages outlined within the procedure. References in this document to actions taken by the line manager are intended to refer either to the Headteacher or the line manager acting in consultation with the Headteacher.</p> <p>All employees are expected to comply with reporting and certification procedures outlined in this document (or as otherwise notified to them) and to take responsibility for maintaining general health and fitness in order to sustain a high level of attendance.</p>

Equality Impact Statement

Equality is not about treating everyone the same; equality is about valuing a person as an equal regardless of their characteristics and treating people according to their needs in order to achieve a fair outcome. The headteacher / line managers are responsible for having an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) discussion with their employee at the earliest stage possible, to understand if equalities issues could be a contributing factor to low attendance and to understand if anything could be considered to enable them to fully participate in this process and their role within the school. This could include but are not limited to; disabilities or long-term health conditions (including undiagnosed), religious or cultural needs, caring responsibilities, interpreters, specific location access, specialists or modified equipment.

It may also be appropriate to check in from time to time to ensure any measures put in place are fit for purpose and likewise an employee should notify the headteacher / their line manager of any changes in their circumstance. Additional advice and support can be sought from 'My HR Helpdesk' or 'Trade Unions'.

Approach to Absence Management

- Everyone should all be able to decide for ourselves if we are well enough to work.
- Sickness related to disability, maternity and menopause gets special consideration and support.
- As we do not want our employees to struggle financially as a result of being too ill to work, we have a separate sick pay policy. (One for teaching staff and one for Surrey support staff.)
- There is also a specific process to record workplace health and safety incidents, which may result in absence from work.

Short Term Sickness Absence

Frequent absence refers to cases where an employee is often absent from work for relatively short periods due to sickness. Most employees will have some short-term sickness absence during their employment.

Sickness Absence Notification

As a general rule, an employee who is unable to attend work because of sickness or injury should, where possible, report this to his/her line manager as soon as he/she becomes aware of the inability to attend work, and in any event by no later than the time he/she would normally start work on the first day of absence.

In the event of sickness the following staff should be contacted to ensure appropriate cover is organised.

- Headteacher– Deputy Head - (in the event of longer term sickness contact Chair of Governors.)
- Deputy head and Business Manager to contact – Headteacher
- Teaching and support staff to contact – Deputy Head
- Office staff to contact Business Manager
- Caretaker to contact – Business Manager and Headteacher
- Cleaning staff to contact the office at the earliest opportunity.
- Family Centre Manager to contact the Headteacher.
- Family Centre staff to contact – Family Centre Manager.

To report an absence staff member should call their appropriate line manager as soon as possible to either speak to the relevant person or leave a voice message. Line managers will respond, to confirm that the message has been received; however if a response has not been received by 8.10am please report staff absence using the school's main switchboard. If an employee is unable to make contact directly by phone, e.g. due to hospitalisation, then someone else is able to contact their line manager on their behalf; however, the employee is still expected to make contact with their line manager as soon as they are able to do so.

Reporting should include the reason for absence and the likely duration, as well as any necessary briefing on work commitments so that appropriate arrangements for cover can be made. The employee

may ask to discuss the medical reasons for absence with another person, such as a different line manager or occupational health adviser, where he/she views the information as particularly sensitive.

If absence continues for longer than initially anticipated, the employee is expected to regularly update the line manager in the same way, confirming the likely duration of absence.

Employees who become unwell during the course of the working day should ensure that the line manager (or a senior manager, if the line manager is unavailable) has been notified before leaving work early. Any accident or incident at work must be reported as soon as possible in accordance with the school's health and safety procedures so that it can be appropriately recorded and any required action taken at an early stage.

All absences, including part days, should be notified and recorded.

Sickness absence in the last 4 weeks of pregnancy may trigger an earlier start to maternity leave.

For support staff employed on a full-year contract, (where holiday can also be taken during term time) they should also call in to report sickness while on annual leave. If you do this you can claim back the leave lost due to sickness.

Reporting (Certification requirements)

Absences of less than one calendar week must be supported by a self-certificate form completed upon return to work. This should be completed and forwarded to the school Business Manager to ensure the correct recording and payment of staff absence.

If the absence exceeds, or is likely to exceed seven calendar days, employees must provide a fit note provided by their treating specialist (nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and certain pharmacists) stating the reason for absence and confirming they are not fit for work or that they may be fit for work under certain conditions.

Where an employee is required to provide a fit note, should a fee be charged for obtaining this, the employee can be reimbursed for the cost of this upon production of an expense claim form.

During periods of longer-term absence, employees must provide ongoing medical certificates. (Please refer to the Long-Term Sickness Absence section of this policy for more details.)

The school will only accept backdated fit notes in exceptional circumstances. In these circumstances, it is essential the employee follow this up quickly as it may affect their pay.

Returning To Work and recording an absence

On returning to work the member of staff, who was off sick, must record the reason for absence and the amount of time taken. This should then be passed to the business manager, who will record this on 'Unit 4' Portal.

The line manager will hold a 'Return to Work Discussion' with the member of staff on their first day back at work or as soon as practical after this. The purpose of this discussion is to welcome the staff member back and check on their wellbeing. This discussion also provides the opportunity to discuss the reason for their absence and whether any reasonable adjustments need to be considered by the school. Where relevant, an additional record (beyond the information recorded on the absence form) will be kept for future reference and will be shared with the employee.

Informal Sickness Absence Discussion

Absence is a cause for concern when it impacts on the school's ability to deliver our services and it stops and staff member from working effectively. If this happens, we will take action to help improve attendance.

The headteacher / line manager will set up a sickness absence discussion if an employee is absent for 10 days or more in any 12-month period or there are concerns over perceived patterns of absence. (The headteacher has the discretion to decide, on an individual basis and based on reasons for absence, whether an informal meeting is required at this stage.)

In relation to sickness absence management, where the effects of an employee's disability results in a need to be absent from work due to illness or where an employee requires leave which is directly associated with their disability, this will be accommodated within the terms of the Equality Act 2010. Any such absence will be clearly recorded, which will prevent the headteacher / line manager judging the individual's attendance record in exactly the same way as other employees and thus avoiding unnecessary 'triggering' of formal action under the Absence Capability Procedure. Please note, this does not prevent management intervention or action related to the absence, but an understanding that a failure to acknowledge these needs could amount to a failure to make a 'reasonable adjustment'. The same is true for the recording and management of menopause related sickness absence.

Maternity related sickness absence, during protected periods, must not be taken into account as grounds for subsequent dismissal, but should still be recorded. The protected period is from notification of inception of pregnancy to the end of the woman's maternity leave.

All action taken under this policy will be taken with due regard to the 'Equality Act 2010' and the 'Code of Practice on Disability in Employment', where the reasons for absence are related to an underlying medical condition or disability. (This extends to maternity and menopause related absence.)

Where short term absence reaches more than 15 working days, within any 12 month period, the employee will need to provide a fit note for the first day of any subsequent absence.

Any informal meetings held will be held in private. Any reasonable request for trade union representation will not be refused. During the meeting, part of this discussion may also address the level, pattern or frequency of other absences and how the school can support the member of staff to provide regular and effective attendance. Based on this discussion both the member of staff and the manager will suggest actions to take to help improve absence levels. A review period will be set, normally for no longer than 12 weeks, and both parties will agree how absences will be monitored during that period.

If monitoring during the review period shows that the member of staff's attendance is no longer a cause for concern, they will be notified of this by their line manager / business manager.

Where an employee has been unable to improve their level of attendance, or where arrangements to manage the level and/or pattern of attendance have proved unsuccessful, the member of staff will be reviewed through the formal stages of the capability procedure as set out in the Absence Capability Policy.

Long Term Sickness Absence

Long-term sickness absence is defined as 4 calendar weeks continuous absence or intermittent absence that amounts to 20 working days. Sickness absence exceeding these timescales maybe managed under the Absence Capability Policy.

The school understands that each absence is different depending on individual circumstances; however, this policy sets out the process that will be followed as a guideline.

Keeping In Touch

It is expected that the member of staff keep in touch with the headteacher / line manager and inform them of any developments relating to their condition.

On an ongoing basis, it is the member of staff's responsibility to provide the headteacher / line manager with updated doctor's certificates to cover the ongoing period of absence.

It is important that the right documentation is provided, as not doing so can impact pay.

Unauthorised Absence

If a member of staff fails to notify the headteacher / line manager of their absence it may be considered as an unauthorised absence or absence without official leave (AWOL).

There is a separate process for managing unauthorised absence.

Infectious diseases

To protect the health and wellbeing of everyone, it is mandatory for managers of employees, who are immuno-suppressed, to carry out an individual risk assessment. In addition to this the school will either:

- Seek advice from the staff member's care specialist as to guidance on working arrangements
- Make an occupational health referral to seek guidance on working arrangements. OR

Members of staff that are in regular close contact with someone who is immuno-suppressed, such as a family member, will be offered the same process of guidance from a specialist or occupational health referral.

Managing Covid

Staff members can experience the effects of long covid for varying amounts of time. Individuals can be impacted by the symptoms for weeks, months or even years. In addition to this, the symptoms can come and go and may worsen or improve. As a result, this may impact on a staff member's ability to work or deliver an effective and/or efficient service. As the impacts of long covid vary from person to person the absence will need to be managed on a case by case basis.

The line manager will explore all of the supportive options available as set out within this policy prior to considering the 'Absence Capability Policy'.

Home Visits

Ordinarily home visits can be carried out once a member of staff has been absent consecutively for four weeks. The visit can be either at the staff member's home or in a mutually agreeable location.

The visit will be carried out by the headteacher or a staff member's line manager and will only be done with the staff members prior consent. The purpose of the visit is to establish the staff member's wellbeing and what supportive measures can be put in place to support them returning to work.

The nature of the sickness absence reason will dictate if a home visit is necessary.

Occupational health

The purpose of a referral to Occupational Health is to obtain professional advice about the staff member's fitness to perform their current job. It also enables the school to seek guidance as to any reasonable adjustments that can be made to support them in the workplace or other appropriate advice to reduce the possibility of further absence.

The school should consider an OH referral:

- As soon as they become aware that a member of staff is absent from work because of stress and/or depression.
- Where a member of staff has been or is expected to be absent for a continuous period of 20 days.
- Where there is a period or nature of absence, which the manager identifies as a cause for concern.
- Following an accident at work that has either caused, or may cause, a significant absence from work or results in an individual being unable to undertake their normal duties.
- Where there are concerns about a member of staff's health in relation to their ability to perform their duties safely and effectively.
- Where a manager receives a "may be fit for work" fit note from a treating specialist and they need occupational health guidance.

The school may request a member of staff to undergo a medical examination at the school's expense and to authorise the disclosure of any resulting report to them. The school will comply with the provisions of the 'Access to Medical Reports Act 1988' with regard to any report.

Members of staff are contractually obliged to attend Occupational Health appointments; however, they do have a right under the 'Access to Medical Records Act 1988' to refuse to co-operate with the school's attempt to gain information from their GP. In such cases, they must be made aware that decisions will be taken in the light of the information available.

Reasonable Adjustments

The school will always try to support members of staff by making reasonable adjustments to working arrangements. The school is mindful of a person's right to privacy, and staff members are not obliged to disclose their personal circumstances. It is however important to note that choosing not to share relevant information with the school may mean that we are unable to fully support if the staff member if they are affected by ill health. Any information disclosed will, as far as possible, be treated in confidence and in line with data protection policies.

Reasonable adjustments may come as a recommendation in an occupational health or fit to work report, with amended duties note. The school also recognises reasonable adjustments recommended via the Governments 'Access to Work scheme' or 'Microlink', Surrey's specialist reasonable adjustments provider.

Medical Re-deployment

In some cases of ill health an occupational health report may suggest as a supportive measure that the member of staff should be temporarily re-deployed to aid their recovery. Where possible, and reasonably practical, the school will make arrangements to facilitate redeployment. (For the duration of the temporary redeployment, normal contractual pay arrangements will apply.) Where temporary redeployment is not possible, the headteacher / line manager is able to refuse this request/suggestion and require the member of staff to remain on sick leave until they are fit to return to their normal duties. In these circumstances normal sick pay arrangements will apply.

If a member of staff does not and cannot return to their substantive post, further occupational health advice and guidance will be sought and it may be appropriate to manage the absence in line with the Absence Capability Policy.

Formal Process (On-going long term sickness absence)

When an employee is away from work on long-term sick and it becomes evident at any stage that a return to work in the reasonable foreseeable future is unlikely, or that they will be unable to fulfil their role effectively for health reasons, they may be invited to attend a capability review hearing in line with the Absence Capability Policy.

If a reasonable solution cannot be found, and all other options have been exhausted then employment may ended on the ground of ill-health capability. However, before any decision, which might affect employment, the school will seek appropriate and up to date advice from occupational health and consider other possible actions such as redeployment or demotion.

Policy review:

Reviewed by the headteacher: Autumn Term 2023

Reviewed by the governing body: Autumn Term 2025

