WALTON HIGH SCHOOL

Proud to be part of Walton Multi Academy Trust

(School Version)
Sickness Absence Policy

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Leadership Link Person	HR

Walton Multi Academy Trust refers to all schools within the Trust.
When referring to Trust Boards, this includes Local Governor Boards, and the term 'Governor' includes all Trustees or Local Board Governors.

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1 Statement

This policy has been adopted from SCC

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2 Guiding Principles

We are committed to developing policies and processes that reflect our People Strategy, our values and contribute to promoting a positive working environment. Our principles therefore comprise:

- Encouraging adult-to-adult conversations where everyone acts to address workplace concerns early
- Being supportive, proactive and solution focussed, addressing concerns quickly and fairly, tailored to individual needs
- Recognising that everyone has a responsibility and role to play in creating the right conditions to do their job well
- Focussing on wellbeing and building trust within the workplace
- Developing policies that support diversity and inclusion and promote an inclusive work environment free from any form of discrimination, bullying, harassment, or victimisation
- Holding ourselves and each other to account to always behave and act in the best interests of the school, and the people of Staffordshire

3 Purpose

This policy sets out what you can expect if you are absent from work through ill health. It aims to strike a balance between the pursuit of operational needs, delivering for the people of Staffordshire and where you have a genuine need to take time off work from time to time due to ill health.

The aim of this policy is to encourage and enable you to improve and sustain your health and attendance at work. Additionally, where you have health issues adversely affecting your work, it will help support you in managing those issues so that you can continue to fulfil your role.

4 Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all employees, regardless of length of service but does not form part of your contract of employment or any other contract to provide services and can be amended from time to time and in consultation with our recognised trade unions.

This policy does not apply to agency / supply workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.

If issues arise during your probationary period which fall in the scope of this policy, these will normally be addressed under the Probation Policy, rather than through the formal procedures set out in this policy. The Probation Policy provides the appropriate

framework for setting expectations, providing support, reviewing progress and, where necessary, determining whether you are suitable for ongoing employment.

Decisions will be made in line with the school's local scheme of delegation or equivalent mechanism for making decisions at the appropriate level.

5 Reporting absence and staying in touch

On the first day of any sickness absence, you must:

- call your manager/Head Teacher as early as possible to let them know you are unwell,
- meet any other local reporting requirements in the school/ setting,
- provide the reason for your absence and the likely duration.

We would also ask that you let your manager/ head teacher know about any outstanding or urgent work that requires attention.

Throughout any period of absence, you should keep your manager updated about:

- any support that has been recommended to you
- whether you are accessing that support and
- whether it is assisting you.

You should also give an indication of when you are likely to be able to return to work.

Your manager will record all absences on any local recording system.

The frequency of contact will depend on the nature of your illness and should be agreed with your manager.

- For short-term absences this might be contact every other day
- For long term this might be agreed as once a week.

If you have any concerns whilst absent on sick leave, you should contact your manager or wellbeing services at any time. More details about Wellbeing Support for you is available on the SLN or via your manager.

If you hold more than one post, you should ensure both of your managers are kept fully informed. In some circumstances it maybe that you are fit for work in one role but not another and therefore you should discuss this with both managers.

For any period of absence up to 7 calendar days you will need to complete a self-certification form and pass to your manager/ head teacher on the first day of your return to work.

For any absence in excess of 7 days (including weekends), you must also provide a Statement of Fitness for Work (referred to as Fit Note) from your healthcare

professional. For example, your GP, pharmacist, nurse. This should be sent to your manager / head teacher without delay, as this may affect your sick pay.

6 Entitlement to Sick Pay

You are entitled to occupational sick pay in accordance with your terms and conditions of employment and national conditions of service.

Details of the occupational sick pay scheme can be found on your national conditions of service website and from your Head Teacher. Failure to provide the required Fit Note within a reasonable period of it being due, may result in your occupational sick pay being withheld.

In circumstances where your sickness is due to an accident involving a third party you will need to complete an indemnity form. If you are successful in your claim for damages against a third party, this form will enable the school to recover our incurred costs, i.e., of any sickness absence payments made, via their Payroll Provider.

7 Returning to Work

Return to work discussions encourage dialogue and open communication between you and your manager after a period of absence.

We recommend using the WARM framework outlined below to help structure a return-to-work discussion. We use this framework to discuss any underlying causes of absence, provide support, encourage an improvement in attendance where there may be a concern and so that you understand what may happen if absence levels don't improve.

Your manager will usually arrange to meet with you on the first day of your return to work or as soon as reasonably practicable. Where operating over multiple sites your manager may undertake the discussion with you using technology, such as Microsoft Teams or over the telephone.

If working remotely, you must ensure your manager knows you are well and have returned to work.

The WARM Framework

W - Welcome – welcome you back to the workplace, check you are feeling properly fit to resume your role, and that your contribution has been missed.

A - Absence - discuss the nature of your absence, any reasons that may have contributed to it (in or outside work) or that are impacting on you, whether there are likely to be further related absences, explore any support measures that could prevent future absence, consider whether Occupational Health advice would be helpful (from your schools Occupational Health provider)

R – Responsibility - understand that you are responsible for doing what you can do to reduce the likelihood of further absence (personal management strategies), understanding the impact this might have had on your work or with your colleagues and what may happen if further absences occur. Where absence concerns are emerging, an assessment of your overall absence and conversations about whether a formal process, is necessary now, or could be considered if you have further absence will take place.

M – Move on - focus on getting back to work, catching up with any work missed, assistance you may need to do this and agreeing post absence priorities. Your manager will record the date of the return-to-work discussion and close the absence on any local absence recording system.

8 Absence Concerns

Where there are concerns about your health which result in sickness absence from work, your manager will have a conversation with you at the earliest opportunity. This is usually during a return-to-work discussion or follow up conversation or another day-to-day management conversation.

The following thresholds are set so that you understand when your absence levels may start becoming a concern.

- Four or more episodes of absence
- The equivalent of 2 or more weeks absence, relative to your working hours (cumulative or continuous),
- Absences in a short period warranting immediate intervention. For example, three episodes in six months.

- A pattern of absence causing concern, for example:
  - Regular Fridays or Mondays
  - Absences regularly occurring on a particular day or when completing tasks
  - Pre or post annual leave
  - Around school holidays
  - Public holidays
  - Payday

Whilst in most cases we will consider absences in a rolling 12-month period, where there are related absence patterns of a cyclical nature beyond 12 months, we reserve the right to consider up to a 24-month rolling period.

Where you reach one of these thresholds, it does not automatically mean that a formal process will commence. The thresholds serve as a prompt for discussion and intervention around your attendance levels to ensure you can deliver the requirements of your role.

As an aide to making the decision as to what is appropriate, your manager may use the Absence Assessment template to consider a range of key issues, including, but not limited to:

- Consideration of your individual circumstances
- Absence and any medical information
- The impact on the school / setting where you work
- What has happened to date

Any sickness absence by a pregnant employee for a pregnancy-related reason should not be taken into account when determining the need for formal consideration under our policy.

Careful consideration will be given to:

- Absences as a result of a Disability, Domestic Abuse or Accidents at Work
- Linked absences (where you may have returned to work too early and subsequently gone off sick with the same illness within a relatively short period i.e., a week).
- Part day absences. Where you have been unable to complete your normal working hours for the day due to being unwell. Consideration will be given to whether part day absences become part of a pattern of absence.

Where required, advice can be sought from the school HR Provider.

9 Expectations for formal meetings under this policy

In reaching the decision to move to a formal process your manager will have discussed and reviewed your absence or health related performance concerns with you.

Your manager, or the relevant Deciding Manager, will send you a formal invitation letter to meet with them under the formal process and include a copy of the completed Absence Assessment form, where used, and/or any other relevant information.

For all formal meetings, we will give you a minimum of 10 calendar days' written notice (unless there is an agreement with you to meet sooner) of the meeting taking place. You will also have a right to be accompanied.

If you or your companion are unable to attend a formal meeting, you have the right to suggest an alternative time and date so long as it is reasonable, and it is not more than five working days after the original date.

A record of the meeting will be made, either by the person conducting the meeting, a note taker or electronic recording (where the meeting is held remotely).

Where electronic recordings are made, for the purposes of transcription, this will be with prior consent by all attendees and data protection obligations being met. A written record or transcription of the meeting will be shared with you.

You are expected to attend meetings which form a key part of processes in relation to your employment. Meetings will be rearranged where possible however not usually more than once.

If you are unable to, or fail to, attend a rearranged meeting, without good reason, the meeting may be held in your absence. Where you have indicated, in advance, that you are unable to attend you may be invited to submit written representation (to arrive at least 24 hours before the meeting).

Where a decision is made in your absence it will be based upon the information available at the time, including any written representations you have made.

A member of the HR provider will be present at any formal meeting of this Policy to advise a Deciding Manager wherever possible and appropriate. Where the outcome may be dismissal, a member from the HR Provider will always be present.

If you have difficulty at any stage of this procedure either

- because of a disability or
- because English is not your first language,

you should discuss the situation with your manager as soon as possible, so that suitable support can be explored.

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting under this procedure, we may conduct the process remotely, for example using Microsoft Teams. We will ensure that you and your companion have access to the necessary technology for participating. Your rights will not be affected, and we will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.

A meeting may be adjourned if the Deciding Manager is awaiting receipt of information, needs to gather any further information or consider matters discussed at a previous meeting. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the meeting is reconvened.

Outcomes of formal meetings will be confirmed to you in writing at the earliest opportunity and within 5 working days of meeting taking place. However, where there is any delay to making the decision the Deciding Manager will contact you, explain the reason for delay and confirm when a decision can be made.

In cases where dismissal is an outcome, an authorised officer of the Trust will write to you within 7 days of the decision being communicated to them by the school.

10 Formal Process for Intermittent Absence

10.1 Stage 1 Formal Meeting

Where it is appropriate to consider your absence levels formally your manager will invite you to a formal Stage 1 meeting. This will provide opportunity to:

- Recap on previous discussions with your manager in relation to reasons for your continuing absence and discuss your Absence Assessment, where used, and/or any other relevant information provided
- Reflect and communicate if there is any new information you have not previously shared
- Review the effectiveness of any actions or support already put in place, as well as those which were not possible.
- Discuss what measures you can take yourself to improve your attendance and wellbeing.
- Review any advice or actions resulting from a referral to an Occupational health provider
- Consider whether medical advice is required
- Consider what, if any, measures might improve your health and/or attendance on both sides
- Set out the improvements required in your attendance and your responsibility for engaging in support to help improve your attendance.
- Agreeing a way forward, action that will be taken and a timescale for review and/or a further meeting under the sickness absence procedure.

Where your manager decides to issue a Stage 1 formal warning, this will be confirmed in writing to you and will include:

- Confirmation that the warning will remain live for 6 months,
- Explain that if an improvement in your attendance is not achieved or further absences occur within the 6 months warning period, a Stage 2 warning will be considered
- Detail any other actions or agreements arising out of the meeting
- Include your right of appeal under the appeal procedure.

Where your manager decides not to issue a Stage 1 formal warning, this will also be confirmed in writing to you.

10.2. Stage 2 Formal Meeting

If at any point during the live Stage 1 formal warning, you have further absence or an improvement in your attendance is not achieved, your manager may decide to invite you to a Stage 2 formal meeting. In reaching that decision your manager will have discussed and reviewed your absence/s with you and reviewed your Absence Assessment, where used, and/ or other relevant information.

You can expect the same manager to make a decision at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 formal meetings.

The Stage 2 Formal meeting should explore the same points outlined in Stage 1 and additionally, but not exclusively, explore why there has not been an improvement in your attendance. It will include:

- an update of your Absence Assessment (where used) and/or any other relevant information
- discussing the reasons and impact of your ongoing absence(s)
- where you have been absent for a number of occasions, discussing the likelihood of further absences
- any new identified support measures that could be reasonably considered (which may include redeployment opportunities or other reasonable adjustments that can be made to your job).
- Review of any advice received from the school's Occupational Health provider and referral where this has not yet taken place
- Considerations as to whether any further medical advice may be required.

Where the decision is made to issue a Stage 2 formal warning, this will be confirmed to you in writing and will include that:

- The warning will remain live for 12 months
- Explain that if an improvement in your attendance is not achieved or further absences occur within the live 12 months warning, a Stage 3 formal meeting will be considered and include a warning that you may be at risk of dismissal
- Detail any other actions or agreement arising out of the meeting.
- Outline your right of appeal under the Appeals Procedure

Where your manager decides not to issue a Stage 2 formal warning, this will be confirmed in writing to you, outlining the remaining life of the original Stage 1 warning, any actions agreed and clarify any improvements required.

10.3. Stage 3 Final Formal Meeting – Consideration of Dismissal

If at any point during the life of your Stage 2 formal warning, concerns continue with regards to your absence you may be invited to a Stage 3 formal meeting. Your manager / head teacher will contact their HR Provider for any advice they may require in relation to your potential dismissal.

A different manager or a panel from the governing body, not previously involved, will conduct your Stage 3 meeting and consider your dismissal at Stage 3, and a member from the HR Provider will also be in attendance.

You will be advised within the formal invite letter that a possible outcome could be your dismissal. At this stage, your manager will have already sought your consent for up-to-date medical advice from their Occupational Health provider.

Medical advice being considered at dismissal is recommended as being dated within the last 3 months. Sometimes we may want more recent information if your condition has significantly changed.

You can also expect your manager to complete the Absence Assessment template in full, including details of how your absences have been managed, and shared this with you.

The Stage 3 Formal meeting should explore the same points outlined in both Stage 1 and Stage 2, additionally, but not exclusively:

- the likelihood of any improvement in the pattern of your absence,
- your length of service,
- your overall absence record and
- any new information not already shared by you.

We will also review the meetings that have taken place to date, and the matters discussed with you.

Following the meeting the Deciding Manager, or panel from the governing body, chairing your Stage 3 meeting will have discretion to either:

- re-issue a Stage 2 formal warning with a further 12 months live warning period, or
- dismiss you on the grounds of capability. Your notice period would be with full pay.

The outcome of the Stage 3 formal meeting will be confirmed to you in writing, and you will have a right of appeal via the appeal procedure.

Where a pattern emerges of a warning being issued with attendance improvements being met, only to then relapse after the warning expires, we reserve the right to bear this in mind when deciding how long any new warning should last. Additionally, we reserve the right to take into consideration past warnings in the previous 2 years and may escalate to the next stage of the process, where appropriate. The purpose of this will be to help you achieve a sustained improvement in your attendance. Each case will be considered on its own merits.

11 Long-Term Absence Process

Long-term sickness absence is defined as absence which continues (or is likely to continue) for 15 working days or longer (3 calendar weeks). Where your absence duration continues for 15 working days, or more, then you can expect your manager to seek consent from you for an Occupational Health referral via their Occupational Health provider.

Your period of long-term absence will be managed on an individual basis, as it will be unique to you.

You can expect regular communication and conversations, and a review/s of your absence, with your manager / Head Teacher. Their efforts to support you returning to work will continue throughout your absence. Where appropriate, you may be invited to come into the workplace to have catch ups with your manager as well as your colleagues to help you still feel part of the team and our wider organisation. It is important for you to seek and engage in external support from NHS services and providers, in order to maximise your ability to recover and return to work as soon as possible.

Your manager will seek Occupational Health advice, where you provide consent, and explore with your support, reasonable adjustments (temporary or permanent), and what options are available to you. Regular communication will be with the aim of helping you to achieve a sustained return to work as quickly and as safely as possible. It will also help identify whether your return to your current role is going to be possible within a reasonable timescale. There may also, be situations where your return to work is not possible. For example, if we are unable to make adjustments to your role. If you are not able to return, we will explore redeployment opportunities with you. If redeployment is not possible dismissal may be considered.

11.1 Returning to work following long-term absence

When you return to work following a period of long-term absence, you might benefit from a phased return to work plan to gradually increase your resilience and reintegration back to into your workplace. It is helpful to consider this plan prior to your return and it might include such measures as: a gradual increase to your full duties, lighter duties for a fixed period, reasonable adjustments, a work-based risk assessment and/or a reduction in your hours of work.

The plan will also normally take into consideration any of the schools Occupational Health provider's advice that has been obtained during your absence and consider any information on your fit note, where provided. Managers should fully consider any recommendations and whether they can be accommodated. This should be done in consultation with you, and where necessary with the school's HR and Occupational Health Providers.

The content of the phased return plan will need to consider what is practical for the business / school area within which you work and will be determined and agreed by your manager. As a guide, a phased return to work plan can be between 1 – 4 weeks, depending on the circumstances. If you are undertaking reduced hours, during that period, you will be paid your full contractual pay. If there is a need to extend reduced hours for a longer period, you can discuss the following options with your manager: a temporary reduction in hours (which affects pay), use of flexitime (where applicable), unpaid leave or annual leave.

If the adjusted or lighter duties require more of a medium-term solution, your manager will assess the potential duration and sustainability of these and discuss this

with you. This may include a re-referral to your Occupational Health Provider, individual risk assessment and regular reviews.

As part of your return from a long-term sickness period, if your absence level is a concern your manager will talk to you in line with the process set out in Section 8: Absence Concerns.

11.2 Formal Process for Long Term Sickness Absence

Despite allowing a reasonable time to investigate the reason for your absence, for recovery, exploration of support and reasonable adjustments, it is possible that you may not be fit to return to work at all or return within a reasonable timescale. In such cases your manager will progress to a formal meeting to consider dismissing you, on the grounds of capability due to ill health. Your manager will use the Absence Assessment form to assist them in determining the point at which a move to the formal process becomes necessary, and they will discuss this with you. Your manager will also contact their HR Provider for any advice they may require in relation to your potential dismissal.

Where redeployment may have been agreed as an option to enable your return, this will usually be informed by Occupational Health and will depend on the availability of a suitable alternative vacant post being identified at that time to another post in the school or federation.

11.3 Long Term Absence: Formal Meeting to Consider your dismissal

When and if we have reached the point where dismissal for ill-health is contemplated, we will usually have held at least two previous meetings with you before moving to a formal meeting to consider your continued employment. The preceding meetings are important for you to fully understand the process and so that we can make informed decisions relating to your continued absence.

You will be invited to attend a formal meeting to consider your dismissal with a manager who has not previously been involved. In schools this is usually a Governors panel.

You can expect to be provided with a copy of your updated Absence Assessment with your invite letter. The Absence Assessment will provide an overview of your long-term absence and key factors to be considered.

In addition to the right to be accompanied, we recognise that it may be helpful to allow a family member, friend, or advocate to support you where this will help overcome particular difficulties caused by a disability, or difficulty understanding English. We may also at our discretion permit other such companions. If you feel this would be beneficial you should discuss this with your manager prior to the meeting. In making their decision, the manager will undertake and consider:

- A review of any previous Absence Assessment and meetings that may have taken place
- Any written statement you wish to be considered in relation to your health situation, return to work and any relevant matters you wish to raise
- The latest medical advice from Occupational Health, i.e. usually dated within the last 3 months (where you have consented to a referral). We may want newer information if your condition has significantly changed.
- The effectiveness of any support actions and interventions
- The possible effectiveness of any support actions and interventions not yet considered
- The likelihood of a return from long-term sickness within a reasonable period or achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time
- The prospects and likelihood of redeployment (continued exploration of redeployment would also run concurrently with any notice period)
- The overall sickness absence record
- The role undertaken, overall length of service and employment history

Assessing all the facts and information available at the meeting, the following outcomes may be applicable although note that this list does not restrict other reasonable options or decisions being made:

- Dismissal on the grounds of capability due to ill health/long term absence – your notice would be with full pay.
- Redeployment to a suitable alternative vacancy
- A return-to-work plan with a date agreed by all parties (where an imminent return to work date is given)
- It is deemed reasonable to wait longer for a return to work or the meeting be adjourned to seek additional information to make a decision.

Should you return to work but be unable to sustain acceptable attendance, a formal meeting to consider your dismissal meeting will be reconvened. This will be discussed with you, and you will receive a formal invite to meet.

If you are absent through long term sickness, but you are too unwell to attend a formal meeting to consider your dismissal, you can discuss with your manager the option of them writing to you, outlining the case for your dismissal instead. You will still be able to submit any information you feel is relevant to be considered.

The outcome of the formal meeting will be confirmed to you in writing, and you will have a right of appeal via the **Appeal Procedure**.

Redeployment opportunities will continue to be explored with you wherever possible and appropriate.

If you are a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme, consideration will be given to an application for ill-health retirement and the release of your pension benefits. This is a separate process to the consideration of your continued employment and will be dependent on the nature of your illness and future capability

to undertake work of a similar or different nature. We may commence this process prior to a formal meeting to consider your dismissal. If a decision is made to award ill health retirement benefits after your employment has ended, the benefits will be backdated to your last day of employment. Members of Teachers Pensions can also apply directly for ill health retirement benefits from the Teachers' Pension scheme.

As part of this process, and with your consent, your manager will provide their Occupational Health provider with detailed information about your role, adjustments considered and any adjustments made, other efforts made to maintain your attendance at work, and any other relevant issue about how your absence has been managed.

You can obtain advice about Ill Health Retirement via your Pension provider, such as Teachers Pensions, the Local Government Pension Scheme Administrators or whichever Pension Scheme is applicable to your terms and conditions of employment.

12 Health related performance concerns

There may be occasions where your performance at work is adversely affected by underlying health issues for prolonged periods. Where this happens, you can expect your manager to meet and discuss this fully with you to:

- understand the impact and duration of your condition or health issue,
- explore any support that may assist you at work,
- seek your consent to obtain Occupational Health advice and
- consider reasonable adjustments to enable you to fulfil your role.

Redeployment opportunities will also be explored with you wherever appropriate.

If, despite on-going discussions, support and reasonable adjustments (where disability is a feature), you are not able to sustain your performance at a reasonable level because of your health issues, then your manager will review the situation with you fully and determine whether dismissal may need to be considered. We will usually have held at least two previous meetings with you, keeping you fully informed, before moving to a formal meeting to consider dismissal.

Your manager / Head Teacher will contact their HR Provider for any advice they may require in relation to your potential dismissal.

Where dismissal may be an outcome, you will be kept fully informed and invited to a formal meeting (as set out in **Section 9**) with a manager who has not previously been involved and have the right to be accompanied.

You will be provided with a copy of an Absence Assessment with your invite letter. The Absence Assessment will provide an overview of your health-related performance concerns and key factors to be considered.

Redeployment opportunities will continue to be explored with you wherever possible and appropriate.

Where you are in a Pension Scheme (such as Local Government Pension or Teachers Pension Schemes) you may be eligible to apply for ill health retirement benefits. Relevant discussions will take place with you about this as part of the process.

13 Wellbeing and Support

Supporting wellbeing is an integral and essential part of our People Policies. You do not need to be absent from work to access any of this support. If you are absent, then whether your absence is long or short term, there is a diverse range of prevention and early intervention available to assist you with many aspects of your health and Wellbeing.

Your school can access Physiotherapy or Counselling services through a council Service Level Agreement or on a PAYU basis and self-referral or a management referral is possible.

Early access can help you to focus on your own health and wellbeing, prevent future absence and aid a safe return to work where absence has occurred.

Your school will have access to an Occupational Health service. An Occupational Health service consists of professionals that provide independent advice to support your health and wellbeing. Accessing their services is one of the most effective methods for managing absence from work and can make a real difference to your health, and attendance for our overall workforce. We will always encourage you to engage with them. However, if you choose not to then your manager may need to make decisions based on the information available to them.

14. Sickness and Annual Leave

Your statutory holiday entitlement will continue to accrue if you are absent through sickness. You can carry forward up to 20 days of statutory entitlement (pro rata part time hours), less any already taken, into the next annual leave year. This must be used within 18 months of the date it is carried over. You are also able to continue to take paid holiday whilst you are on sick leave, particularly, if you have exhausted your occupational sick pay entitlements.

If you are on a term time contract, in most cases, the statutory holiday entitlement will be ‘used up’ through the normal school closure periods.

15. Medical Suspension

There may be occasions where you indicate you are fit for work, but your manager has some concerns relating to your health and wellbeing.

In those circumstances your manager will need to consider your medical suspension. This means that they may ask you to refrain from work on medical grounds whilst further medical advice is sought. Your manager will seek advice from Occupational Health, their HR Provider and/or the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Provider to discuss the risk, concerns, and rationale for your potential medical suspension.

16. Disability Related Absence

If your absence or illness is disability related, you should discuss any reasonable adjustments with your manager. This includes any adjustments that may help you to remain in work and prevent absence.

Any adjustments will be documented on an Individual Risk Assessment, and this should be reviewed with you regularly. If you feel something has changed that would affect your risk assessment, then you will be responsible for discussing this fully with your manager. If you make an internal move to a new role, it is important that you provide your latest risk assessment to your new manager so that they can reassess this with you to take account of your new duties. You should not confuse disability related absence with Disability Leave. If you need to take time off from work due to a disability but are not sick, e.g. for an appointment, you may be eligible for Disability Leave. Further information is available under Disability and Reasonable Adjustments Guidance. You can discuss any requests with your manager.

Throughout any formal process related to absence, your disability will be taken into account, particularly where there are any further reasonable adjustments that could be made or other support that you could be provided. Further guidance is available on managing disability related absence Disability and Reasonable Adjustments Guidance on the SLN.

17. Stress Related Absence

If you or your manager / Head Teacher identify that your absence is stress related to work, it is important that you discuss swiftly through your normal management conversations so that any concerns can be resolved as early as possible. Preventative action by you and your manager is key to preventing and managing stress related absence. Your manager will discuss and complete an Individual Risk Assessment well as signpost you to other support that they may have, such as learning and development opportunities, as well as MindKind, Wellbeing Action Plans, ThinkWell

Some professional associations also have helplines which offer members support and guidance.

18 Pregnancy Related Absence

If you are off sick because of a pregnancy related absence this will not be taken into account when reviewing your overall absence or considering a formal staged process.

You can expect your manager to discuss with you any support to ensure your safety and wellbeing at work as part of your Individual Risk Assessment.

19 Industrial Injuries and Accidents at Work

If you have an accident or incident at work, you must report this to your manager at the time it occurs and complete the relevant documentation. Your manager will ensure that the accident / incident or work- related ill health is accurately recorded and investigated and should follow the Schools Accident Management Arrangements on recording, reporting and investigating incidents. They will seek specific advice from the school Health, Safety and Wellbeing service provider where needed.

20 Terminal Illness

We are committed to support you if you are diagnosed with a terminal illness. In these circumstances we will always work with you to enable you to choose the best course of action for you and your family. This will include (if you are a member of the LGPS / Teachers pension schemes):

- Considering ill health retirement or
- A death in service payment

Your manager / Head Teacher will support you if you feel able to continue working with a terminal illness and you should discuss this with them. We also understand that there will reach a point where you will be unable to continue working. In those cases, it is important to have ongoing conversations with your manager so that we can ensure you can access support at the earliest opportunity.

You can seek advice from your manager, HR Provider team, Occupational Health provider and can access ThinkWell counselling on a pay as you go basis or via a service level agreement, if in place, to support you during these difficult times.

Other pension schemes provide advice directly in relation to death in service and ill health retirement benefits and information is available from the pension providers direct.

21 Right to be Accompanied

At any formal meeting you have the right to be accompanied by either:

- a work colleague
- a trade union representative, or
- an official employed by the trade union.

You should confirm to the Deciding Manager who will accompany you in advance of any meeting.

At the meeting, your companion may make representations to us, and can ask questions, but they should not answer questions on your behalf. You may talk privately with them at any time during the meeting.

Acting as a companion is voluntary, and your colleagues are under no obligation to do so. If they agree to do so they will be allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay to act as a companion.

We may, at our discretion, allow you to bring a companion who is not a colleague or union representative (for example, a member of your family) if this will help overcome a disability, or if you have difficulty understanding English.

22 Data Protection and Confidentiality

All sickness absence matters should be dealt with sensitively and privately. Information relating to sickness absence management must be treated as confidential. Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action under our Disciplinary Policy.

If you are invited to a formal meeting, you must not make any electronic recordings. An exception to this may be where it has been agreed by all parties as a reasonable adjustment related to a disability.

Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

Written outcomes will be placed on your personnel file along with a record of any decisions taken and any notes or other documents compiled during the formal process. We process personal data collected during sickness absence procedure in accordance with the school's privacy notice and data protection policy.

23 Related Policies

This Sickness Absence Policy is part of a suite of policies to support positive health and wellbeing in the workplace. Other related policies that you may wish to read are as set out below:

- The schools Health and Safety Policy
- The schools Stress at Work policy/management arrangements
- The schools Equalities Policy
- The schools Probation policy

- The schools relevant Family Leave Policy
- Appeals Procedure

24 Further Advice

If you need any further information about any aspect of this policy, please initially speak to your manager or Head Teacher. Alternatively, you can contact the school's HR Provider.

25 Reviewing the Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually unless there is a requirement to do so before due to legislative or best practice changes.

26 Community Impact Analysis

We consider carefully how the decisions we make affect people who share different protected characteristics (race, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, religion, belief, sexual orientation, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity).

The Community Impact Analysis available to support this policy, highlights the proactive and positive approach we take to supporting staff experiencing short and long-term illness, or health performance concerns whilst taking into consideration any employee protected characteristics.

The completed community impact analysis to support this policy is available on request.

Version Control and History

Version	0.2		
Issue Date:	*Insert date*	**Review Date:**	Reviewed periodically to ensure legal compliance and continuous improvement
Author(s)	People Services (People Operations)		
Owner:	Sarah Getley – Assistant Director for People Services		

History

Version	Author(s)	Reason For Change	Date
0.1	Staffordshire County Council People Services (People Operations Team)	Policy refresh for managing sickness absence. Previous policy Managing Attendance at Work	June 2023

0.2	Staffordshire County Council People Services (People Operations Team)	Added: Exclusion of those under probation	September 2026 – referenced Probation Policy