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# SAINT NICHOLAS SCHOOL

## STAFF ABSENCE POLICY

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*Note: This policy applies to all sections of the school including EYFS*

Reviewed October 2021

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Absence Management is a process by which employers aim to achieve better employee attendance at work. Central to this are better communications with staff, greater awareness of employee's absences and the adoption of a proactive approach to managing sickness absence. Saint Nicholas School aims to secure the attendance of all employees in order to maintain high standards of safety, security and service. Absences should be kept to a minimum through effective management and employees will be treated in line with good employment practice. A certain amount of sickness absence may be inevitable and justifiable absence will be treated sympathetically.

Saint Nicholas School recognises the need to manage staff absences sensitively, to ensure that the organisation carries out its functions efficiently and effectively to meet operational requirements. The school is committed to promoting the health and well being of its staff and supporting them through periods of ill health.

### 2. AIMS

The aims of this policy are;

- To ensure that staff absence is kept to a minimum through effective management;
- To provide support to staff with health problems;
- To ensure that all staff are treated fairly and consistently in line with good employment practice;
- To assist the employee's return to managing and controlling of absence will rest with the Head.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

### 3. NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE BY EMPLOYEE

Employees who are absent from work are required to follow the reporting procedure set out below.

- The employee must normally telephone the Deputy Head to give details of his/her absence by 7:30 am or as early as possible on the first day of absence. Where the nominated person is not available the employee should contact another member of the SLT.
- All absences are recorded on the school's Engage MIS.
- If the employee is the Deputy Head he/she should notify the Head or other suitable person to assume responsibility for the discharge of duties during their absence. In the case of the absence of the Head being protracted or of a serious nature then the Chair of Governors should be informed.
- If an employee is absent from work due to sickness for a period of up to and including 7 consecutive days he/she must complete a self certificate and return it to the Head/nominated person for signature.
- If the sickness absence lasts for more than 7 days the employee must obtain a medical certificate from their GP and forward that to the Head/nominated person.
- Payment of sick pay is subject to following of the notification procedures.

## **4. ARRANGEMENTS FOR COVERING ABSENT TEACHERS**

### **4.1 Covering lessons**

Staff should inform the Deputy Head of their absence and ensure that 'cover' work is set. When absence is known in advance (such as with INSET days) it is also the responsibility of teachers to arrange to swap duties that may be required on the day(s) of their absence. Where possible 'cover' work should be emailed to the Deputy Head.

## **5. TYPES OF ABSENCE**

### **5.1 Authorised absence**

This includes days where permission has been sought such as training days out of school, attending funerals, etc

### **5.2 Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absence is defined as any Absence where the employee is absent from work without prior permission or as a result of sickness which is not covered by medical or self-certification.

### **5.3 Frequent Short Term Absences**

Frequent short term absences will normally be defined as:

- Three occasions of absence due to illness (either uncertified or self-certified) in any four month period or term.
- Total absence exceeding 5 working days in a four-month period/term.

### **5.4 Long Term Sickness Absence**

Long term absences are defined as a continuous period of absence, due to sickness which exceeds 10 working days.

## **6. AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

### **6.1 INSET and CPD**

Staff should request permission to attend training courses or similar time out of school from the Head.

### **6.2 Personal matters**

Wherever possible medical and dental appointments should be made in the school holidays or after school to avoid unnecessary need to cover absent staff. Where this is unavoidable staff should request time away from school from the Head. It should not be assumed that this will always be granted and where possible appointments should be made after permission for absence has been granted.

Requests for all other absences should be made to the Head.

## **7. RECORDING ABSENCE**

### **7.1 Self certification form**

All staff who are absent from school are required to complete a self certification form which is shown at the end of this policy. All absences will be recorded and the self certification forms will be retained on file by the school for the duration of the member of staff's employment.

### **7.2 Return to work forms**

It is the member of staff's responsibility to complete a return to work form and to pass this to their line manager on the day of their return to work.

## **8. RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW**

Return to work interviews take place after each absence and are conducted by the member of staff's line manager.

The purpose of the interview is:

1. To establish the reasons for absence
2. To demonstrate the school's duty of care to individuals and show that their absences are noticed, and matter to the school

3. To provide a forum for frank, open discussions about any relevant issues that may be contributing to the employee's absence
4. To help pinpoint any underlying pattern or cause of absence, which can then be discussed and tackled.
5. To brief the member of staff on any important information that they have missed as a result of their absence

If an absence lasts more than 1 week or there have been 5 absences in a four-month period or term the employee will meet with the Head or appointed person.

The purpose of the interview is:

- To enquire on the employee's well-being and decide whether they are fit to return to work.
- To demonstrate the school's duty of care to individuals and show that their absences are noticed, and matter to the school
- To give the Head/nominated person an opportunity to pinpoint any underlying patterns and explore any other problems which may have contributed to the absence
- To discuss the effect the absence had on work related matters.

It is not intended that after every sickness absence the employee should be given a full formal interview. The contact may be anything from a short interview to a more detailed interview depending on the nature of the absence.

## **9. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

Where an employee is absent from work and has not reported that he/she is sick, the school will attempt to contact the employee to establish the reason for the employee's absence and failure to inform the Head/nominated person of his/her sickness.

Unless a satisfactory explanation is given, the Head/nominated person will counsel the employee on his/her return to work and further action may be taken including disciplinary action.

## **10. FREQUENT AND PERSISTENT SHORT TERM ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

When the Head/nominated person identifies that an employee's absence qualifies as frequent short-term absence he/she will personally interview and counsel the employee on the first day the employee returns to work or at the earliest opportunity.

The Head/nominated person will discuss with the employee his/her attendance record and the detrimental effect of their absence on the delivery of teaching or other functions in the school.

The Head/nominated person will state the acceptable standard of attendance required and, where appropriate, offer assistance and agree a course of action.

In all cases the employee must be informed in writing of the improvement that is expected and the likely consequences if this does not happen.

If the employee refers to a medical problem the Head/nominated person have the right to request a medical report. The employee will be consulted about the medical report. The employee's capability for carrying out the duties of the post will be considered before any decision is taken. In the light of the report the Head, in consultation with the school governors, will decide whether to:

- provide more time for improvement ;
- consider suitable alternative employment, where appropriate;
- terminate the contract of employment on grounds of ill health.

If after investigation it appears that there is no good reason for the absence then the Disciplinary Procedure should be invoked which could lead to a formal warning and ultimately dismissal.

## 11. LONG-TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE PROCEDURES

### 11.1 Maintaining communication

Where the employee is absent from work due to long term sickness the Head/nominated person will maintain contact with the employee and offer any assistance, which may be appropriate.

### 11.2 Medical report

Where the employee's recovery period is uncertain or the absence is likely to continue significantly beyond 10 working days, then the Head/nominated person will advise the employee that he/she may be required to provide a medical report. The purpose of the medical report is to provide management with information about the likely duration of the absence and/or the long term implications for the employee's fitness for work.

On receipt of the report, the Head, will determine a strategy for monitoring and managing the absence.

### 11.3 Absences of one term or longer

Where an absence has been monitored and has lasted for one term, the Head should arrange to meet the employee to discuss the situation.

During that meeting the following areas of concern should be discussed:

- When the employee considers they will be fit to return to work;
- Where they will be fit what adjustments in working arrangements, if any, do they require for a short period to assist their return to work;
- Where the employee is unfit to perform his/her current duties but is capable of carrying out other work, suitable alternative employment will be considered. This may be either lighter or part-time work. However, the school will be under no obligation to create a job for the employee.

## 12. PHASED RETURN TO WORK

In certain circumstances the School may offer the opportunity for an employee to resume their duties on a phased basis. A phased return to work:

- is a way of enabling employees to return to their duties in a gradual way following illness.
- may be offered after sickness absence longer than 4 weeks
- gives employees a way of coming back to work before they are fully fit by doing fewer hours and modifying their duties so that full recovery takes place at work in a stepped way.
- will not normally exceed four weeks except in exceptional circumstances, depending on appropriate medical advice.

Increasing the hours of work from the start point can be done in 2 ways.

- Increase number of days in school
- Increase number of hours worked per day.

The school will consider regular increases on a staged basis. If possible a regular increase of 3-5 hours of work per week will be encouraged. Progress is often rapid in the early part of the rehabilitation programme and likely to slow down if the health condition is not improving as it should.

Example of a phased return to work schedule

Week	Total days worked	Consecutive days worked	No of hours worked	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
1	1	1	3 - 5	Any Day				
2	2	1	6 - 10	Off	3 - 5	Off	3 - 5	Off
3	3	1	12 - 15	4 - 5	Off	4 - 5	Off	4 - 5
4	4	2	20 - 24	5 - 6	5 - 6	Off	5 - 6	5 - 6
5	5	5	Full time					

### **13. RETIREMENT AND DISMISSAL**

Where the employee is unfit to work and, or, there is no suitable alternative work, the employee may be either;

- Retired on grounds of ill health in accordance with the appropriate pension scheme; or
- Informed that the procedure for dismissal on the grounds of Ill Health capability may be invoked

Written details of the discussion and the actions that were agreed will be sent to the employee.

Where a member of staff is on long-term sickness it should be remembered that they have an individual sick pay entitlement that is related to their length of absence. This sick pay entitlement should not be seen as a right to an amount of paid sickness absence.

**Strictly Private and confidential**

**SAINT NICHOLAS SCHOOL - Self Certification Form**

**This form must be completed by the member of staff and the line manager where indicated.**

**Section 1: For completion by member of staff**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: Infant / Junior / Subject teacher / TA / Non-teaching (please ring)

Date absence commenced: \_\_\_\_\_ Date sickness ended: \_\_\_\_\_

Date returned to work : \_\_\_\_\_ Total number of days absence (include ½ days): \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for absence: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If the absence was caused by an accident at work has an accident form been completed: YES / NO

*(If yes please attach a copy of the form)*

Have you been absent for a period longer than 1 week? YES / NO

Have you had 3 or more absences in the last 2 month period? YES / NO

Staff member's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please also complete the Data Protection declaration in Section 2 below.

**Section 2: Data Protection Statement - For completion by member of staff**

This absence record will be maintained confidentially by the school for the duration of the employment. Information relating in particular to a Return to Work meeting will be maintained confidentially for a period of 2 years from the date of the meeting. The School will process the information provided on this form, and on medical certificates, for the purpose of meeting its legal obligations, and ensuring accurate calculation of entitlement to pay during a period of absence.

Individual data on the Return to Work form and in medical certificates is normally expected to be shared by the member of staff with his/her line manager for the purpose of responding fairly and appropriately to an individual's overall level of sickness absence, to identify any adjustments or support required by the individual, and for the appropriate management of his/her health and safety at work. Failure by a member of staff to provide data relating to a sickness absence may result in entitlement to sick-pay being withheld.

I confirm that I have read and understood the above statement.

Staff member's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Strictly Private and confidential**

**Return to Work Meeting Record**

**Section 3: For completion by the line manager, in discussion with the member of staff.**

- Background information An absence lasting more than 1 week YES / NO  
3 absences within a 2 month period YES / NO

Other relevant information \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Does the member of staff have any apparent absence patterns: YES / NO  
*(e.g. frequent absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, or following annual leave days. If YES please record the details in Section 4 below.)*
- Does the member of staff feel there is an underlying health issue connected with his or her absences? YES / NO
- Has any specific support been agreed for the member of staff? YES / NO  
*(If YES, please provide details in Section 4 below.)*

**Section 4: Return to work meeting record. For completion by the line manager.**

This section should be used to record the issues discussed and specify whether there is a need for the member of staff to try and improve his/her attendance level. Where such a need is deemed to exist, the actions and objectives that are agreed (including timescales) and any support that will be provided should also be recorded.

**Section 5: For completion by the member of staff returning from sickness absence.**

I confirm that the above is an accurate record of the issues discussed and the actions and support agreed at the return to work meeting with my line manager. In addition, I wish to make the following comment:  
*(optional)*

**Once completed this form should be forwarded to the Head. Please retain a copy.**