

Schools Sickness Absence - Procedural Guide

Department of Children Services



Introduction

Your school is interested in you, your personal development and your contribution to the work of the school. We also care about your health and welfare and the impact of your absence on the school and its pupils.

We have set out arrangements for your information which are in line with arrangements across the Council. To be fair on all our staff, these procedures will be used at all times unless there are appropriate extenuating circumstances.

Sickness Arrangements – all types of sickness

Your responsibilities when unwell:

- To notify your Headteacher and/or the School, as early as you are able, of your intention not to attend work, with reasons, on the first day of sickness, not later than 30 minutes before the start of the school day. Please refer to your own School's internal procedure for reporting absence.
- To provide a self-certificate for periods of sickness absence up to seven days (five working days) and a GP's Statement of Fitness for Work or 'Fit Note' for any absence period over seven days (five working days).
- To maintain regular contact with the School during your sickness absence, to ensure that they are aware of when you are likely to return to work.

What to expect during periods of sick leave:

During all Absences

- Regular contact from the School during your absence to see how you are, to see if you need any support and to establish your expectations for a return to work.
- Sick pay entitlement as defined in your National Scheme of Conditions of Service.
- Referral to the Council's Occupational Health Department if you are unfit to work for long term continuous periods or have irregular/high levels of short term sickness. The usual 'trigger' period for long term sickness absences is four weeks continuous sickness absence or two weeks, if the reason for absence is stress or back-related.

Short Term Sickness Absences – “Trigger Levels”

Short term sickness absences taken over three separate periods amounting to seven days or more in any 12 months are seen to cause concern and hit Borough “trigger levels”. This Borough set “trigger level” is based on statistical evidence which demonstrates that the average number of days taken off for sickness absence within a year is seven days.

- An informal meeting with a senior member of staff if absent for periods which total seven working days or more spread over three or more separate periods.

- Informal and/or formal meetings as clearly identified in the Schools Sickness Absence Policy if absence/s reach defined “trigger levels”.

Long Term Sickness Absences

Long term sickness absence is defined as any sickness absence which is continuous for more than four calendar weeks. As detailed above, should you reach this long term “trigger” or, have linked absences relating to an underlying medical condition or, have 2 weeks continuous sickness absence relating to stress or back problems, then your Headteacher is advised to refer you to the Council’s Occupational Health Service.

If, upon receipt of an Occupational Health report, you are unlikely to return to work within a four week period, an informal stage one long term sickness absence meeting may be arranged. Further details regarding the full procedure can be found in the School’s Sickness Absence Policy.

Who monitors your absence?

- The school completes an absence return form on a weekly basis and send it to Human Resources.
- Either Human Resources or your School (if your School uses Oracle Self-Service) enter your absence and reason for absence onto a computerised system (Oracle).

Short Term Absences

- Print-outs of persons who have taken over seven days sickness for three separate periods or more are generated regularly and sent to each School.
- Human Resources issue two copies of standard letter notification of concern to Headteacher, who will hold a short-term informal meeting with you and hand you the letter, unless, in their judgement, there are extenuating circumstances. This meeting and further details on this process can be found in the Schools Sickness Absence Procedure.
- Recommended proformas to be used during the informal stage of the Short Term Monitoring process are attached to this document as appendices.

Long Term Absences

- Notification that staff have had over four weeks continuous long term sickness absence or two weeks continuous absence for stress and back pain can either be received by Schools HR from the School or Headteacher directly, or through Human Resources monitoring long-term sickness absence cases, following the regular receipt of absence return forms.

Details of Short Term Informal Sickness Monitoring Meeting

Name: _____ School: _____

Number of days sickness absence: _____ over _____ periods

PERIOD	REASON
1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____
6 _____	6 _____

Issues Headteacher* might wish to cover (N.B. Further advice is available from Schools Human Resources)

- a Explain that the frequency of the absence is over the departmental average.
- b Ask if the individual is experiencing any difficulties at work/home or has any other mitigating circumstances.
- c Consider if there is a need for referral to the Occupational Health Service (i.e. if a disability or long-term health condition is identified).
- d Get an undertaking from the member of staff to reduce and sustain the level and frequency of the sickness (unless absences are related to a disability or are pregnancy related, which should not be monitored without further advice from Human Resources).
- e Set a date to review the situation after a specified period of time (3 months) and set a target number of absence days during that period.
- f Indicate that failure to meet the target, could result in progression to Formal Stage 1 of the Sickness Absence Procedure and ensure they are given a copy of that Procedure.
- g Continuously appraise the situation during the 3 month review period and ensure that the informal review meeting is held when scheduled.

* or delegated individual

N.B. It is advised that you make some detailed notes of the meeting you have with this individual. Note sheet is attached.

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Notes of the Meeting

Date: _____

Present: _____

**Issues covered
i.e. points a-g**

Any mitigating circumstances highlighted by individuals

Review date and targets set

Signed: _____
(Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/ Manager)