



SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

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PART A – POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The Girls' Learning Trust (The Trust) is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all employees. When managing sickness absence, the Trust has to carefully balance the duty to ensure employees are supported, while also ensuring the needs of the Trust are protected.
- 1.2 To safeguard the provision of high-quality education and outcomes for our students, the Trust expects a high level of attendance and requires each employee to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining excellent attendance.
- 1.3 The Trust recognises that on occasions employees may be absent from work due to ill health and that health issues may also impact on performance in the workplace. The Trust is committed to supporting an employee during a period of absence with the aim of assisting their return to work and to maintaining the required levels of performance.
- 1.4 However, in cases of repeated short-term absence or long-term sickness absence, the Trust recognises that there may come a point when senior leaders must consider if the situation is tenable, and that it may be appropriate to invoke a series of formal meetings that provide for formal action in line with the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- 1.5 The aims of this policy and procedure are to:
 - Ensure all parties are aware of their responsibilities in respect of sickness absence.
 - Set out our procedures for reporting sickness absence.
 - Set out how sickness absence will be managed to ensure an effective, consistent, fair and transparent approach across the Trust, which complies with our duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.6 This policy should be read with reference to the following policies, which can be located on the GLT Staff Zone:
 - GLT Special Discretionary Leave Policy
 - GLT Disciplinary Policy
 - GLT Capability Policy
 - GLT Family Leave Policy

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all permanent staff who are employed by the Trust.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to agency workers, self-employed contractors, or supply staff.
- 2.3 Casual workers (e.g. on zero-hour contracts) should seek advice from HR regarding their sickness entitlements.
- 2.4 This policy does not apply to staff who are taking maternity, paternity, shared parental and/or adoption leave. Please refer to the GLT Family Leave Policy.
- 2.5 This policy applies to both short-term and long-term sickness absence.

- 2.6 This policy does not address absences for reasons other than sickness. Non sickness related absences are covered in the Special Discretionary Leave Policy which can be accessed on the GLT Staff Zone.
- 2.7 This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

3. LEGISLATION & DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 The policy reflects best practice guidance set out in Acas guidance on holiday, sickness and leave. The procedures outlined in Part B reflect the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- 3.2 The following definitions referred to within this policy apply:
- The term 'schools' means any of the schools in the Trust.
 - Short-term absence refers to short, intermittent periods of ill health that may be unconnected. A short-term absence may last between one day and 20 working days.
- 3.3 Long-term absence is any absence that lasts for a continuous period of longer than 20 working days.

4. DISABILITY

- 4.1 The Trust has an obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for staff with a protected characteristic (such as a disability, pregnancy and gender reassignment) where the reasonable adjustment would remove or reduce a disadvantage the employee faces.
- 4.2 The law says that someone is disabled if both of the following apply:
- They have a physical or mental impairment.
 - The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.
- 4.3 An employee who considers that they are affected by a disability that affects their ability to undertake their work, should inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity so that the Trust is able to consider appropriate reasonable adjustments and support.
- 4.4 We take seriously our statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments to support an employee's return to work, or prevent recurring absences, when suffering from a disability. This could include a phased return, amended duties, altered hours or workplace adaptations. At each stage of the procedure, outlined in Part B, particular consideration will be given to this.

5. PREGNANCY-RELATED SICKNESS ABSENCE

- 5.1 Pregnancy-related sickness absence will be reviewed separately and will generally not count towards the triggers outlined in section 15.2.
- 5.2 However, if the Trust has concerns about the reasons, patterns or length of absence, it reserves the right to explore the nature and cause of absence.

- 5.3 Employees should refer to the GLT Family Leave Policy for further information on parental leave entitlements and illness during pregnancy.

6. STAKEHOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 The management of sickness absence is the responsibility of multiple stakeholders across the Trust. It is important that everyone understands and discharges their responsibilities in connection with this.

6.2 Responsibilities of the Trust Board

- As the employer, to ensure the wellbeing of all staff, providing a working environment conducive to enabling employees to thrive.
- To ensure all employees are aware of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.
- To ensure sickness absence is accurately recorded, monitored, and routinely reviewed.

6.3 Responsibilities of Line Managers

- To meet with employees on their first day back from absence to check on their wellbeing via a return-to-work meeting.
- To make suitable arrangements to discuss any absence or ill-health related under-performance concerns and to take appropriate management action.
- To work with staff to find supportive strategies for improving attendance and work performance or facilitating a return to work.
- To ensure regular and appropriate contact is kept with an absent employee.
- To consider suitable workplace adjustments that may facilitate and/or improve an employee's attendance at work.
- To take reasonable action to maintain an employee's confidentiality in matters relating to health.

6.4 Responsibilities of Employees

- To ensure attendance meets the required standards.
- To make their line manager aware of any health issues that may be impacting on their ability to maintain good attendance and performance.
- To take care and responsibility of their own health and wellbeing.
- To comply with the procedure outlined in Part B of this policy regarding absence notification and certification requirements.
- To attend meetings, where able, in connection with the management of absence issues (i.e. return to work meetings, absence meetings, Occupational Health appointments).
- To work with their line manager to identify supportive strategies for improving attendance or facilitating a return to work where possible.

6.5 Delegated Responsibility

- The management of absence issues may be delegated to staff other than the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher will remain accountable for absence within their school.
- Any references to the role of the Headteacher in this policy and procedure include their delegated nominee.
- The following table outlines the stages of the Absence Management Procedure (as detailed in Part B) and the delegated staff responsible.

Stage of Procedure	Staff Responsible
Return-to-work interviews:	Conducted by line managers or their nominated representative if not practicable.
Monitoring and informal meeting:	Line manager.
Formal absence review meetings:	Formal hearings to consider ongoing absence may be delegated to a member of the extended senior leadership team.
Appeal against formal warnings:	Appeals may be heard by another member of the extended senior leadership team (with no prior involvement in the case).
Dismissals:	Dismissal decisions will be heard by the Headteacher or COO, providing they have had no previous involvement in the case.
Appeal against dismissal:	CEO

- Where the absence relates to a Headteacher or COO, any sanction will be determined by the CEO and any appeal will be heard by Chair of Trust.
- Where the absence relates to the CEO, any sanction will be determined by Chair of Trust and any appeal would be heard by a panel convened with members of the Trust Board.

PART B - PROCEDURE

7. NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

- 7.1 All employees must contact their school or the Trust as early as possible on the first day of absence. If the employee is taken ill or injured while at work, the following contact procedures will still apply.
- 7.2 Contact should be made from the employee to the school via the process agreed and established by the school. This is outlined in the following table.

Location	Role	Contact
Carshalton High School for Girls	Teaching Staff	Call the Cover Office between 7.00am and 7:15am on 020 8544 4680.
	Support Staff	Call the Cover Office between 7.00am and 7:15 am on 020 8544 4680.
Nonsuch High School for Girls	Teaching Staff	Call the school by 7.45 am on 020 8394 3400, option 7 followed by option 2 and leave a message.
	Support Staff	Call the school by 7.45 am on 020 8394 3400, option 7 followed by option 2 and leave a message.
Wallington High School for Girls	Teaching Staff	Email the Cover and CPD Coordinator by 7.00am
	Support Staff	Email the Cover and CPD Coordinator by 7.00am
GLT	Shared Services Staff	Email to HR@girlslearningtrust.org.uk And Call Line Manager by 7.30am

- 7.3 When reporting an absence, employees must give the following information:
- The specific reason for the absence with symptoms (reporting general sickness, unwell, or poorly will not be sufficient).
 - The expected length of absence.
 - Any outstanding or urgent work that requires attention.
- 7.4 Employees are required to follow the procedure outlined in 7.2 on every working day of their absence using the same contact and timings outlined above. The only exception to this is where a fit note has been provided which covers the entire absence or where the absence is a known absence which has been discussed with a line manager.

8. EVIDENCE OF INCAPACITY

- 8.1 For self-certification purposes, when working out the number of days of sickness, employees should count all the days in a row that they have been sick, including days they do not usually work, such as weekends and bank holidays. The HR system will deduct non-working days from the calculation on their record.

- 8.2 Part-time workers are entitled to the same provision as full-time workers. Sick pay entitlements will not be pro-rated for part-time workers. As such, part-time employees should count all days in a row that they have been sick, including non-working days. The HR system will deduct non-working days from the calculation on their record.
- 8.3 Either a self-certification form or a fit note will be required, depending on the length of the absence, as below. If these are not provided, then pay may be affected.
- 8.4 Self-Certification Form: Days 1 - 7
For sickness absence of seven calendar days or less, employees must complete a self-certification form, via Every HR. The only exception to this is where employees are able to produce a Fit Note from day one and therefore do not also need to complete a self-certification form. The self-certification form must include the specific reason for the absence with symptoms (recording general sickness, unwell, or being poorly will not be sufficient). Employees will receive a notification by email, informing them of the requirement to complete this form.
- 8.5 Fit Note / Statement of Fitness for Work: From Day 1 or Days 8+
For sickness absence of more than seven days, employees must obtain a fit note (or Statement of Fitness for Work) from an appropriate healthcare professional. This must be provided not later than the eighth day of absence (including where this falls on a weekend) and should be emailed to their respective Cover Coordinator and HR@girlslearningtrust.org. The HR team will add the fit note to the employee's absence record on Every.
- 8.6 If the 'fit note' states that the employee 'may be fit for work', this must be discussed with the employee by their line manager to determine whether any additional measures may be needed to facilitate their return to work. This will take place at a return-to-work interview. If appropriate measures cannot be taken, the employee must remain on sick leave and a date to review the situation will be set.
- 8.7 In the event where the employee feels well enough to return to work before their fit note runs out, the Trust will ensure that their health is not put at risk by returning early. Line managers will talk to employees before agreeing to an early return.
- 8.8 The Trust reserves the right to require employees to remain away from work if it reasonably believes they are too unwell to attend work or to postpone their return to work after a period of absence, until it has received a report from a medical practitioner, or a GP's fit note, confirming that they are fit to work or to return to work.

9. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

- 9.1 Any sickness absence that has not been notified according to the notification procedure in section 7, will be treated as unauthorised absence.
- 9.2 Where the employee does not report for work and has not followed the notification procedure to explain the reason for their absence, we will try to contact the employee by telephone and in writing if necessary. The purpose is to make sure they are safe and give them an opportunity to explain their absence. This may be the line manager or a delegated individual on their behalf, for example a member of the cover team or HR.

9.3 Cases of unauthorised absence may be dealt with under the GLT Disciplinary Policy.

10. SICK PAY ENTITLEMENT

10.1 Eligibility for sick pay will depend on full compliance with the notification procedure set out in section 7 and the evidence of incapacity procedure in section 8 of this policy.

10.2 Employees should refer to their individual employment contract for specific information regarding sick pay entitlement. The GLT contract terms are summarised below.

10.3 Contractual sick pay is inclusive of any Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) that may be due for the same period and is paid on the following basis.

Length of Service	Number of sick days
Less than one month's service:	Full pay from the fourth day you're off sick (no pay on days 1 – 3 of each period of sickness).
Less than one year's service:	25 working days full pay in any 12-month period and, after completing four calendar months' service, half pay for the next 50 working days.
One to two years' service:	50 working days' full pay and half pay for the next 50 working days' in any 12-month period.
Two to three years' service:	75 working days' full pay and half pay for the next 75 working days' in any 12-month period.
Three years or more service:	100 working days' full pay and half pay for the next 100 working days' in any 12-month period.

10.4 Where contractual sick pay entitlement has been exhausted, employees who meet certain qualifications may be eligible for SSP, which is normally paid for a maximum of 28 weeks in any 3-year period.

10.5 Both the Trust and the employee will continue to contribute to the employee's pension scheme during any SSP or contractual sick pay, where the scheme's rules allow this.

11. KEEPING IN TOUCH DURING A PERIOD OF ABSENCE

11.1 Employees absent on sick leave should expect to be contacted to discuss their wellbeing, expected length of continued absence from work and any of the work that requires their attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance, will be via a phone call or email, and will be kept to a reasonable minimum.

11.2 If an employee has any concerns while absent on sick leave, whether about the reason for their absence or their ability to return to work, they should feel free to contact their line manager or HR at any time.

12. MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS & OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

12.1 Line Managers may, at any time in operating this policy, ask employees to consent to a medical examination by the Trust's occupational health provider. The purpose of this is to get advice on their condition and any adjustments that may help their return to work, support them in work or prevent future absence.

12.2 Employees should be aware that OH reports will be shared with the Trust. If employees choose not to engage with referrals to OH, the Trust will make decisions about the management of an ill health issue based on the available information and without the guidance of an occupational health advisor.

12.3 The purpose of an Occupational Health report is to:

- Identify how an employee's health or medical condition may impact on their attendance or ability to undertake their job.
- Ascertain when or if an employee will be fit to return to work in the foreseeable future.
- Provide guidance on any adjustments which may support a disabled employee in the workplace.
- Provide guidance on the employee's ability to attend formal meetings and investigations under any procedure while absent.
- To advise how any employee may be able to improve their health and wellbeing.

13. PHASED RETURN TO WORK

13.1 Medical professionals or the Trust's occupational health provider may recommend that a staff member returning to work from sickness should work reduced hours or have lighter or different duties. This will be followed by a gradual increase of working hours and/or duties over a period of time, depending on individual circumstances.

13.2 Employees will continue to be paid their normal salary during the initial period of phased return to work. This arrangement will be reviewed after a period of 4 weeks, after which the Trust may pay the employee for the actual hours worked, in addition to their entitlement to statutory sick pay where conditions are met.

14. RETURN TO WORK MEETINGS

14.1 All employees will be expected to attend a return-to-work meeting with their line manager following any period of absence. This should ideally be conducted on day one of their return from both a wellbeing and operational perspective.

14.2 A return-to-work meeting enables line managers to confirm the details of the absence and ensure the wellbeing of the individual. It gives employees the opportunity to raise any concerns or questions and to bring any relevant matters to their attention. It also provides an opportunity for line managers to update the individual on any work they have missed or key information of which they should be made aware.

14.3 At the return-to-work meeting employees may be asked to complete a self-certification form (for absences of seven days or less) online via Every HR, **if this has not already been completed**. The self-certification form must include the specific reason for the absence with symptoms (recording 'sickness', 'unwell', or 'poorly' will not be sufficient).

14.4 At this meeting, line managers may informally discuss any concerns regarding the level or pattern of absence, clarify whether there are any mitigating factors. If appropriate they may inform the employee that continued absence may lead to more formal action.

- 14.5 Where the return to work is from a long-term sickness absence, the meeting will specifically include the dissemination of key information from the period of absence and an agreed return to work programme to ensure effective support.

15. SHORT-TERM ABSENCE TRIGGERS & MONITORING

- 15.1 How sickness is managed will depend on the specific and unique circumstances of each case. The procedure below should act as a general guide, but each case will be dealt with on its own facts. Line managers should seek advice from HR where necessary.

15.2 Triggers

Using absence triggers is an important way of managing attendance. The Trust will use the following triggers to help identify short-term and persistent attendance records that may give cause for concern.

- 3 or more episodes in any 6-month period.
- 10 days in a rolling 12-month period.
- 12 days in a rolling 12 months, lasting over two periods of sickness.
- 15 consecutive days.
- The timing of the absence, such as a pattern being identified for absences regularly falling on specific days.

Trigger points for employees working fewer than five days in a week will be pro-rata. The number of days will be pro-rated but not the number of episodes.

When any of these triggers have been met, this will be flagged by Every HR, which will notify line managers, senior leaders and the HR team.

Where any of the trigger points are met, the Trust would deem this as a cause for concern and the employee's individual absence record will be considered and appropriate action taken. The specific action will depend on the circumstances of the case. It may lead to a period of monitoring, via the automated monitoring process, or it may lead to a Formal Stage 1 Review Meeting as outlined below.

Monitoring may also be implemented where an individual persistently falls just below the trigger points and where absence is perceived to be a problem.

15.3 Monitoring

Where it has been determined that an employee's absence should be monitored via the automated monitoring process, the line manager will speak with a member of the HR Team, who will set up a Monitoring Round for the individual employee within their Every record. This will be unique to the employee and will automate a trigger which will go to the line manager, senior leader and HR team if any of the monitoring conditions are met.

The line manager should speak to the employee informally to let them know that triggers have been met and their absence is going to be monitored. Within this meeting the line manager should discuss their concerns regarding the level or pattern of absence and clarify whether there are any mitigating factors. It would be appropriate to inform the employee that continued absence within the monitoring period is likely to lead to formal action.

Where it is determined that the triggers or monitoring presents a cause for concern which should be explored further with the employee, a formal meeting will be arranged.

16. ABSENCE MEETING PRINCIPLES (SHORT & LONG TERM ABSENCE)

- 16.1 The Short-term Sickness Absence Review Process and the Long-term Sickness Absence Review Process each has three formal stages, with provision for an appeal at each stage.
- 16.2 Timescales for each stage will depend on individual circumstances and some sickness absence may be dealt with over a longer or shorter period than others. The point at which a manager decides to move an employee to the next stage of the process will vary from case to case.
- 16.3 The employee will receive a written notification at least 5 working days before the meeting. The meeting could be sooner if it is agreed by both parties. The notification will include:
 - The purpose of the meeting – to establish the facts and allow the employee to respond to the concerns and make relevant representations.
 - The concerns about the employee's absence and possible consequences.
 - Copies of any written evidence / reports.
 - The date, time and location of the meeting (including the details if the meeting is to be held over video conferencing if relevant).
 - A statement that the employee has the right to be accompanied.
 - Notification that relevant witnesses may be asked to attend the hearing with sufficient notice to arrange their attendance.
 - The name of the designated hearing manager who will conduct the meeting and any HR representation.
- 16.4 The employee must make every effort to attend the meeting as failure to attend without good reason may be treated as misconduct under the GLT Disciplinary Policy. If an employee fails to attend without good reason or is persistently unable to do so (for example for health reasons), the meeting may proceed without the employee and a decision may have to be reached in the employee's absence.
- 16.5 Employees have a statutory right to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague, a workplace trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union. Employees must notify the hearing manager in advance of the meeting, to allow them to prepare a suitable location and time off for the companion if necessary.
- 16.6 Acting as a companion is voluntary and 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.
- 16.7 If an employee's chosen companion will not be available to meet at the proposed time, the meeting will be postponed to a time proposed by the employee, as long as the alternative time is reasonable and not more than 5 working days after the original date.
- 16.8 The companion can address the meeting to put and sum up the employee's case, respond on behalf of the employee to any views expressed at the hearing and confer with the employee during the meeting. The companion does not, however, have the right to answer questions on the employee's behalf, address the meeting if the employee does not wish it or prevent the employer from explaining their case.

- 16.9 At the meeting the hearing manager will explain the absence concerns and go through the evidence that has been gathered.
- 16.10 The employee will be invited to respond to the evidence and set out any relevant mitigation.
- 16.11 Employees and their representatives are not permitted to make any electronic recordings of any meetings. Summary notes will be taken by a member of HR or a suitably qualified notetaker.
- 16.12 The Trust reserves the right to electronically record any meetings or hearings. In these circumstances, employees will be informed that a recording is to be made and will be given a copy of the recording upon request.
- 16.13 The meeting may establish that there are no grounds to pursue the issue. In this case, the formal process will come to an end and the concerns will continue to be addressed through informal action.
- 16.14 The meeting may be adjourned if further investigation is needed, or if more time is needed to consider additional information presented.
- 16.15 Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, and any right of appeal, will be given to employees in writing within a reasonable timeframe of the meeting (usually not more than 10 calendar days). If there is any reason for this timeframe to be delayed, employees will be notified of such.

SHORT-TERM ABSENCE REVIEW PROCESS

17. STAGE 1: ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING

- 17.1 This will follow the principles set out in section 16.
- 17.2 This meeting will usually be conducted by a member of the extended senior leadership team, who will be the hearing manager.
- 17.3 The purpose of a Stage 1 meeting will depend on the type of sickness absence being investigated but may:
- Discuss the length and date of absence.
 - Discuss the reasons for each absence.
 - Discuss the likelihood of further absence.
 - Consider whether any medical advice is required or, if already obtained, what that advice is.
 - Consider what, if any, measures might support and improve attendance.
 - Consider the impact of the absence (i.e. workload, other colleagues, department, disruption to the school, impact on students etc).
- 17.4 Following the meeting, the employee will be sent formal summary meeting notes.
- 17.5 The hearing manager will write to the employee to confirm the outcome.
- 17.6 Possible outcomes of the meeting may include:

- Adjourning the meeting to obtain further medical evidence.
- A return-to-work programme, possibly with a phased return where appropriate.
- No further action at this stage.
- Issuing an improvement notice which sets out the required improvement in attendance, along with a first written warning that if the requisite improvement is not achieved this may result in further formal action.

17.7 Where an improvement notice and written warning are issued, the improvement notice shall set out:

- The commencement of a monitoring and review period (normally between 4 – 12 working weeks).
- The required attendance levels.
- Any measures which may be taken to support improved attendance.
- The implications of not meeting the required attendance levels.
- Information about appealing the warning.

17.8 Any written warning will normally remain active for 12 months. After the active period, the warning will remain permanently on the employee's personnel file but will normally be disregarded in deciding the outcome of future absence review meetings.

18. MONITORING & REVIEW PERIOD

17.1 The employee's attendance will be monitored during the review period.

17.2 At the end of the review period the employee will be invited to a formal review meeting under Stage 2 of the process.

19. STAGE 2: ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING

19.1 Arrangements for meetings under Stage 2 will follow the principles set out in section 16.

19.2 The meeting will usually be conducted by the same hearing manager as Stage 1 where it will be confirmed that:

- The employee has met any required attendance levels set and no further action will be taken. If there are further concerns regarding the employee's attendance while the written warning is still active, a meeting under Stage 2 may be held.
- Progress has been made towards meeting the attendance levels set, but they have not been fully achieved (or other factors have been present e.g. leave) and the monitoring and review period will be extended.
- The employee has not met the attendance levels set and a final written warning and improvement note is required.

19.3 Following the meeting, the employee will be sent formal summary meeting notes.

19.4 The hearing manager will write to the employee to confirm the outcome.

19.5 Where an improvement notice and final written warning are issued, the improvement notice shall set out:

- The continuation of a monitoring period (normally between 4 – 12 working weeks).
- The required attendance levels.

- Any measures which may be taken to support improved attendance.
- That the implications of not meeting the required attendance levels within the review period may result in dismissal.
- Information about appealing the warning.

19.6 The employee will be invited to a Stage 3 meeting at the end of the monitoring and review period.

20. STAGE 3: ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING

20.1 Arrangements for meetings under Stage 3 will follow the principles outlined in section 16. The employee must be informed in writing that a possible outcome of the Stage 3 Absence Review Meeting could be dismissal.

20.2 A meeting at Stage 3 will only be conducted by the Headteacher, COO, CEO, Trustee or delegated member of the senior leadership team.

20.3 The purpose of the meeting will be:

- To review the meetings that have taken place, the matters discussed, and the warnings issued.
- To review attendance levels during the monitoring and review period.
- To review the history of the employee's absence.
- To consider any medical evidence obtained.
- To consider any further matters that the employee wishes to raise as mitigating factors.
- To consider whether there is a reasonable likelihood of the employee achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time.
- To consider alternative options or ill-health retirement.
- To consider the possible termination of employment.

20.4 If an acceptable standard of attendance has been achieved, no further action will be taken and the formal process will end. If there are further concerns regarding the employee's attendance while the final written warning is still active, a meeting under Stage 3 may be held.

20.5 If the employee's attendance has not improved to a sufficient standard, a decision may be made that:

- The review period should be further extended.
- An active final warning should be extended.
- The employee should be redeployed to a suitable job.
- Ill-health retirement should be considered.
- The employee should be dismissed on the grounds of ill-health capability.

20.6 Following the meeting, the employee will be sent formal summary meeting notes.

20.7 The hearing manager will write to the employee to confirm the outcome.

20.8 Where the outcome of the meeting is dismissal, any termination will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice.

LONG TERM ABSENCE REVIEW PROCESS

21. LONG-TERM ABSENCE PRINCIPLES

- 21.1 All cases of long-term absence will be unique, and the approach taken by the Trust will give consideration to the nature of the illness and the likely duration.
- 21.2 In cases of prolonged sickness absence, there is no maximum period that an employee can be signed off work sick, as much will depend on the nature of their illness or injury and the prognosis for their recovery.
- 21.3 Equally, there is no minimum period that the Trust should wait before instigating proceedings. Again, this will depend on whether or not the employee is likely to fully recover and, if so, the potential timeframe involved, as well as the resources available to the Trust to keep the job open.
- 21.4 If the employee has been absent, or is due to be absent, for a consecutive period of 20 working days or more (or a 4-week continuous period for part-time staff) a senior leader should hold an informal meeting with the employee at an early stage, with sensitivity to the specific circumstances.

22. INFORMAL MEETING

- 22.1 An informal welfare meeting will usually take place within the first four weeks of any period of absence.
- 22.2 The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting.
- 22.3 Employees do not have a statutory right to be accompanied to an informal meeting. However, employees may be permitted, at the discretion of the manager, to bring a companion if it helps them overcome a difficulty.
- 22.4 The purpose of the meeting is to:
 - Agree and maintain reasonable contact throughout the sickness absence (weekly or fortnightly).
 - Explore the reasons for absence and give an opportunity for the employee to raise any health or other concerns.
 - Consider the likely duration of the absence.
 - Discuss the impact of the absence on the school or Trust.
 - Identify any support or adjustments that may be provided or any action the employee can take to facilitate a return to work.
 - If appropriate, make a referral to Occupational Health, with HR's support.
 - Agree any actions for either party.

23. STAGE 1: ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING

- 23.1 If the employee remains absent for an extended period of time (i.e. 8 – 12 weeks), a formal meeting may be convened. This will follow the principles set out in section 16.
- 23.2 The meeting will usually be conducted by a member of the extended senior leadership team.

23.3 The meeting will be held at an agreed location if the employee is not well enough to travel into the workplace. If the employee is too unwell to physically attend a meeting, another form of communication will be agreed.

23.4 The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Discuss the impact of the absence on the individual and the school or Trust.
- Discuss any treatment, doctor's advice or any advice received from Occupational Health.
- Consider whether the employee is able to return to work in the foreseeable future.
- Consider the employee's views on continuing employment.
- Identify any support or adjustments which could facilitate a return to work.
- Consider other options which may be available, such as ill-health retirement or redeployment.
- Explain that if the employee is unlikely to be in a position to return to work in the foreseeable future, the situation will be reviewed after an agreed period.
- Explain the impact of the absence on the individual's pay.
- Advise the employee that if they are unable to return to work within a reasonable period, consideration may be given to the termination of employment on the grounds of capability due to ill health.

23.5 Possible outcomes of the meeting may include:

- Agree the issue has been resolved and take no further action.
- To set out a period of monitoring and review.
- To agree a return-to-work plan.
- To seek further medical advice.
- To issue a first written warning that employment may be at risk on the grounds of capability due to ill-health if it's unlikely they can return to work over a reasonable timescale.

23.6 Where there is no prospect of a return to work or the employee is permanently unfit to undertake the duties of the post and all reasonable adjustments have been considered, the Trust reserves the right to move immediately to a hearing to consider the case for dismissal on the grounds of capability due to ill health.

23.7 Following the meeting, the employee will be sent formal summary meeting notes.

23.8 The hearing manager will write to the employee to confirm the outcome.

24. STAGE 2: ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING

24.1 If the employee remains absent from work, a second review meeting may be convened. This will usually take place between 4 – 8 weeks after the Stage 1 meeting. This will follow the principles set out in section 16.

24.2 The meeting will usually be conducted by a member of the extended senior leadership team.

24.3 Possible outcomes of the meeting may include to:

- Agree the issue has been resolved and take no further action.
- Set out a further period of monitoring and review.
- Consider whether the employee is able to return to work in the foreseeable future.
- Consider the employee's views on continuing employment.

- Consider other options such as redeployment support or ill-health retirement.
- Issue a final written warning that employment may be at risk on the grounds of capability due to ill-health if it's unlikely they can return to work over a reasonable timescale.

24.4 Following the meeting, the employee will be sent formal summary meeting notes.

24.5 The hearing manager will write to the employee to confirm the outcome.

25. STAGE 3: FINAL HEARING TO CONSIDER DISMISSAL ON THE GROUNDS OF CAPABILITY DUE TO ILL HEALTH

25.1 If the employee remains absent from work, a third review meeting may be convened. This will usually take place between 4 – 8 weeks after the Stage 2 meeting. This will follow the principles set out in section 16.

25.2 The notification will advise the employee of the case to be considered and the possible outcomes, including dismissal.

25.3 If the employee wishes to provide any relevant documents for consideration, they must provide this to the panel no later than 5 working days before the hearing.

25.4 The hearing panel will be convened to fully review the case. The panel will usually include the Headteacher and Trust COO, supported by HR. During the hearing the case for dismissal will be presented and the employee will be given the opportunity to respond.

25.5 In reaching a decision the panel may consider:

- The employee's length of service.
- The employee's attendance record.
- The impact of the employee's ill health on the workplace.
- The length of absence and whether the impact can be sustained.
- Whether it is envisaged that the employee may be able to return to work and, if so, when.
- What support the employee has received and whether all appropriate options have been properly explored.
- The employee's attitude towards recognising and addressing the impact of their absence.
- Any specialist advice that has been received regarding the employee's condition, current and future ability to undertake the job role and anticipated timescales for return.
- Whether any alternative options have been discussed, including redeployment and ill health retirement.

25.6 The panel will provide the employee with written confirmation of the discussion and the outcome of the hearing within 5 working days of the decision.

25.7 The panel may decide to:

- Keep the employee's absence under review for a defined period of time.
- Agree a return-to-work plan
- Dismiss the employee with notice.
- Decide whether the employee can retire on the grounds of ill health (where appropriate).

25.8 Where dismissal is the outcome the notification letter will:

- Specify the reason for dismissal, the termination date and any notice period.
- Advise the employee of their right to appeal.

25.9 Any appeal will be heard by the Trust’s CEO.

26. APPEALS PROCESS

26.1 The employee has the right to appeal any of the sanctions outlined in this procedure. Appeals must be made in writing within 5 working days of the decision, setting out the grounds for appeal.

26.2 Appeals may be made under any of the following terms:

- Where the employee feels that the outcome is too severe.
- Where the employee believes that any part of the absence review process was wrong or unfair.
- Where the employee has new evidence which they can provide.
- Where the employee has been dismissed for an unfair reason.

26.3 An appeal hearing manager will be appointed. This will be an impartial member of the extended senior leadership team or Trustee who has not previously been involved in the case as follows:

Stage of Procedure	Staff Responsible
Appeal against formal action:	Appeals may be heard by another member of the extended senior leadership team (with no prior involvement in the case). In cases relating to a Headteacher or COO, appeals will be heard by the Chair of Trust Board.
Appeal against dismissal:	CEO Where the appeal is brought by the CEO in connection with their absence, it will be heard by a panel convened with members of the Trust Board.

26.4 Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay, either in person, or over video conferencing if relevant.

26.5 Employees’ statutory right to be accompanied by a companion will apply.

26.6 Summary notes will be taken by a member of HR or a suitably qualified notetaker. A copy will be sent to the employee.

26.7 The employee will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing as soon as reasonably practicable.

27. TIME OFF FOR MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

27.1 Time off for medical appointments is detailed within the Special Discretionary Leave Policy.

28. TIME OFF FOR ELECTIVE PROCEDURES

28.1 Employees will only qualify for sickness absence for elective surgery / procedures if they provide evidence from their GP that they meet the criteria for having such treatment on the NHS (though

treatment may be provided privately) i.e., that the surgery is necessary for the physical, psychological and wellbeing of the employee.

28.2 Where GP's evidence is required for the purpose of 28.1, and a charge is made by the GP, reasonable reimbursement for the GP's note can be authorised by the Senior Leader.

28.3 The employee will be required to inform a member of the senior leadership team of any planned absence at the earliest opportunity and request the time off via Every HR under General Absence/Medical and upload the relevant medical certificates/hospital letter as per the requirement in section 8.

28.4 Any time off for recovery following an operation would be classed as sickness absence.