

HAVEN HIGH TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

1. Introduction

The levels of absence amongst staff are of vital importance to the success of any organisation and none more than at Haven High Technology College.

Health and Safety legislation requires that employers are responsible, as far as is reasonably practicable, for the health, safety and welfare of their employees. The management of the school are convinced of the need to properly manage the levels of sickness absence which may occur, not least for the reasons of staff welfare and to try to ensure that where staff are experiencing problems relating to sickness absence, we are able to provide the appropriate support.

There are a number of benefits to be gained from the proper management of sickness absence. Not only can staff welfare and support be provided but also the highest level of continuity can be achieved both for the school and the pupils where absence is properly managed.

The financial implications of sickness absence are inescapable and whilst this is certainly not the paramount issue it would not be right for us to ignore such implications.

The principles of this policy are to be applied to all staff employed at Haven High, teaching and associate staff.

2. Objectives

Haven High is placing great emphasis on the management of absence. The main objectives are to try to achieve full attendance and to properly manage cases of absence.

- To improve attendance
- To protect the health and safety of employees by providing a safe environment
- To identify work related causes of absence
- To ensure that paid sick leave is available as appropriate

These objectives will be underpinned by the following principles: -

- staff will be treated fairly and compassionately with all appropriate support being given (for example, the services of the Employee Support and Counselling Service)

- management will be consistent in their approach to the procedure for dealing with individual cases
- high standards in health, safety and welfare will be a constant objective for all
- any information received during the application of the procedures involved in absence management will be treated confidentially and sensitively.

3. **Monitoring of Sickness Absence**

Proper absence management can only occur if the appropriate monitoring of absence takes place.

The responsibility for monitoring absence on behalf of the Governing Body will be Polly Champion, Admin Manager.

Her role in this respect will be to:-

- ensure that all staff receive a copy of the school's sickness absence management policy;
- ensure that a procedure for the reporting of absence has been agreed and is followed;
- ensure that both the duration and the reasons for absence are recorded;
- conduct return to work interviews as appropriate;
- consider 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled employees;
- discussing work and family life balance;
- monitor absences, analysing the appropriate information in order to identify any problems, which may develop regarding employee's absences.

NB: Monitoring of the absence of the Executive Headteacher will be undertaken by the Governing Body although day to day recording will be administered by an appropriate member of staff.

4. **Managing Sickness Absence**

It is intended that sickness absence records for each member of staff will be maintained and that the Head of School will review these records on a periodic basis as part of the college's Monitoring and Evaluation process. Each record will provide details of the number of occasions the member of staff has been absent, the total number of days for each absence, and a running total of that member of staff's level of absence. Reasons for absence will also be maintained on these records.

The review of each absence record will be carried out with a view to deciding, where appropriate, that measures need to be taken regarding individual cases and what those measures should be.

It is recognised that it is of paramount importance to ensure that any decisions regarding action to be taken in individual cases are made on an entirely objective basis. In order to ensure consistency and objectivity, when absence records are reviewed, a comparison of each record will be made against standard, agreed levels of absence. Those levels when reached will 'trigger' an automatic consideration of further action in those particular circumstances.

Initially the following levels of absence may indicate the need to consider further measures:-

- 4 or more episodes of unrelated sickness absence in every rolling 12 month period and/or
- 10 days of unrelated sickness absence in every 12 month period
- And/or where the number of related absences in a short period warrants immediate action. e.g. 3 episodes or 9 days in 6 months.

Where the level of absence in a particular case has reached the stage where further action is to be considered, such action will depend on the circumstances of the case, including:-

- the frequency and duration of absences
- the reasons for absence
- the numbers of days absent
- the nature of duties undertaken and the effects on service provisions
- the outcome of any previous reviews and any previous action taken.

5. **Absence Procedure**

Employees who are absent from work due to sickness or accident must conform to the following procedure.

- Please telephone Polly Champion, Administration Manager up to 10pm each evening and from 6.45am – 7.30 am on 01205 361695 giving details of absence. Teaching staff should note that suitable work needs to be set for both classroom and cover centre. If absence is likely to last for more than one day please telephone Polly on a daily basis prior to a return to work.
- If a return to work is made after no more than 7 days an SSP form must be completed and handed to Polly Champion.

- If absence lasts for longer than 7 days (including weekends – 5 working days) medical certificates should be forwarded to Polly Champion.

A record is kept of all cover completed by staff . The use of non-contact periods for cover is published annually, however, any member of staff can request this information at any time from Mrs Champion.

6. Return to Work Discussions

All employees will be required to have at least a brief discussion with Polly Champion after every episode of absence. The aim of the discussion is to establish the reason for absence, update the employee, enquire about the welfare of the employee and identify and address any work related causes etc. The discussion should be quite informal in nature although may be recorded if felt appropriate.

In circumstances where the employee's attendance becomes a cause for concern, this discussion will become an informal absence interview and will involve the Head of School and will be recorded as such.

Informal Absence Interview with Polly Champion and the Head of School.

Where an employee's absence meets the College's trigger points, the employee will be invited to attend an informal absence interview.

At the interview the employee will be provided with a list of their absences with reasons and advised that their attendance at work is a cause for concern. However at the interview other areas possibly associated with the absences will also be explored, e.g., are the absences caused by personal, family or work related problems? If they wish, their trade union representative or colleague may accompany the employee.

Once a full discussion has taken place with the employee about the nature of the absences and possible reasons why, the employee may be referred to Occupational Health. If applicable, the aim of the referral will be to establish whether the employee has a short-term absence problem, or, whether as a result of the informal absence interview, the employee has an underlying health problem, which was not previously identified.

Once the medical report is received from Occupational Health, the employee will be invited to meet again to conclude the Counselling Interview.

Where a short term absence problem is confirmed, as well as being advised that their attendance is unacceptable and that there must be an immediate and sustained improvement, they will also be advised that should their attendance not significantly improve they will be subject to a Formal Review Meeting with the Executive Headteacher and thereafter should their attendance still not improve they could be dismissed by the Executive Headteacher. The employee will be either advised in writing of the main points of the meeting or receive a copy of the notes of the meeting.

Where an underlying condition is confirmed, the employee will be dealt with as an employee with a disability.

Formal Review Meeting(s)

If following an informal absence interview an employee fails to provide an immediate and sustained improvement in their attendance within a reasonable timescale, the employee will be subject to a formal review meeting to discuss the way forward with the Executive Headteacher. At the meeting the employee can be accompanied by their trade union representative or colleague and, if required, the Executive Headteacher or appropriate manager may request an HR Adviser to be present.

Prior to a formal review meeting, the employee will be given a full list of their absences and copies of records of return to work discussions since the informal absence interview and advice from Occupational Health.

At the meeting, the employee will be required to give an explanation as to why their attendance has not improved and the Executive Headteacher will be required to demonstrate what action and discussion has taken place with the employee.

If the Executive Headteacher is satisfied that the absences are attributable to short term sickness only and that the college has done everything possible to help, he/she will advise the employee of the following:

- their absence record is still unsatisfactory and they require an immediate and sustained improvement
- should there not be an improvement within the next 3 to 6 months, the employee will be required to attend a Final Review Meeting with the Executive Headteacher.
- at the Final Review Meeting, the Executive Headteacher has the option of dismissal on grounds of medical incapability (if there is an underlying medical condition). OR
- Some Other Substantial Reason – the reason being unsatisfactory attendance levels (if there is no specific underlying reason).

At the formal review meeting, the Executive Headteacher can also suggest other options to try and improve the employee's attendance, e.g., requirement to produce a medical certificate for all absences, part-time working etc. (The college will pick up any costs of medical certificates).

If the Executive Headteacher is not satisfied that the absences are wholly attributable to short term sickness and/or the appropriate manager has not taken satisfactory action, he/she can consider the following options:

- the need for further involvement of Occupational Health.
- further extend the review period and agree to meet again should there not be a significant improvement

The outcome of the Formal Review Meeting will be confirmed in writing to the employee.

Final Review Meeting

If following the Formal Review Meeting(s), the employee still fails to provide an immediate and sustained improvement in their attendance within the next 3-6 months (or earlier in some cases), the employee will be subject to a Final Review Meeting with the Executive Headteacher. At the meeting the employee can be accompanied by their Trade Union representative or colleague and the Executive Headteacher will be assisted by a HR Adviser.

Prior to a Final Review Meeting, the employee will be given a copy of the written outcome of the Formal Review Meeting, a full list of absences and copies of records of return to work discussions since the Formal Review, and the original advice from Occupational Health. The employee will also be advised that a possible outcome of the meeting may be dismissal on grounds of SOSR (some other substantial reason) or medical incapability.

At the Final Review Meeting, the employee will be required to give an explanation as to why their attendance has not improved. The Executive Headteacher will be required to demonstrate what action and discussion has taken place with the employee throughout the informal and formal management of the employee's absences. The Executive Headteacher will also take into consideration information provided by the employee, providing the opportunity for the employee to make representations in respect of their potential dismissal from the school.

If the Executive Headteacher is satisfied that the absences are attributable to short term sickness only and everything has been reasonably done by the employee's appropriate manager, he/she will have the option of dismissing the employee with notice on grounds of SOSR (some other substantial reason) the reason being their unacceptable attendance levels.

If the Executive Headteacher is not satisfied that the absences are wholly attributable to short term sickness and/or that the appropriate manager have not taken satisfactory action, he/she can consider the following options:

- the need for further involvement of Occupational Health.
- further extend the review period and agree to meet again (with the employee notified of the possibility of dismissal) should there not be a significant improvement.

If the decision is for dismissal, the agreed LA process will be followed in these circumstances, full details of which can be found in the Education Handbook.

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