



Special Partnership Trust

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

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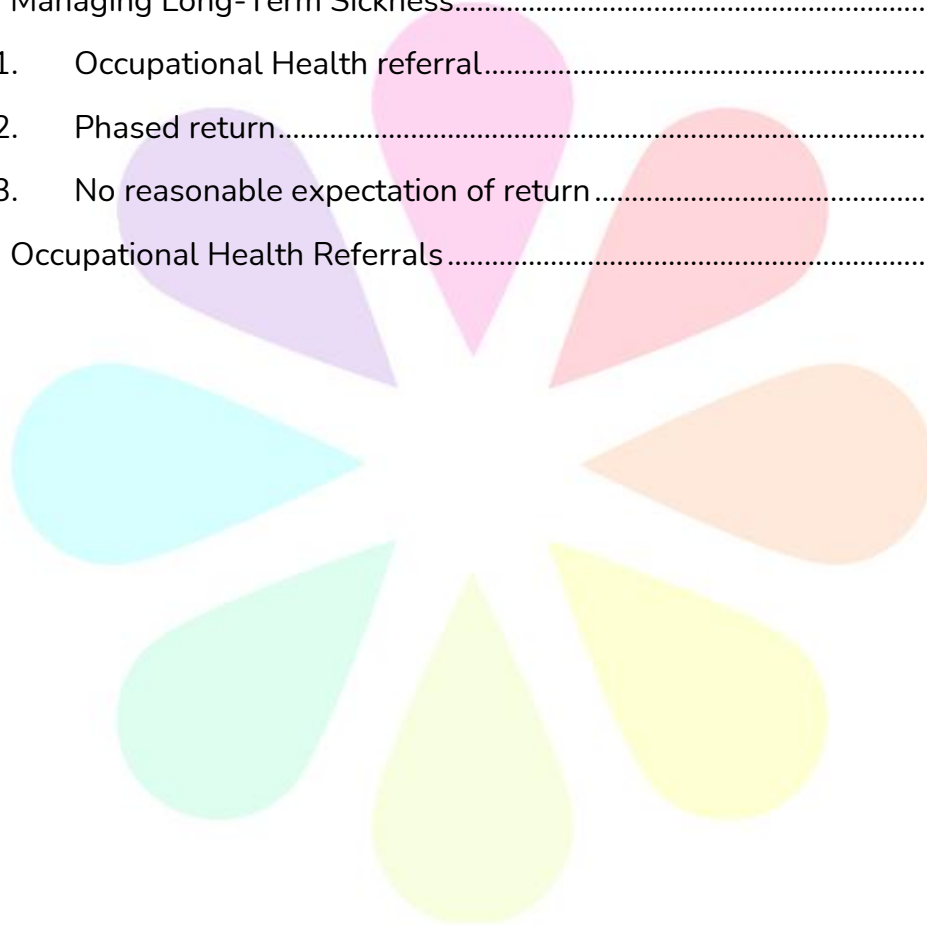


Absence Management Policy

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1. Background

From time to time, employees may experience ill health, and it's important that we support them with care and understanding. Our ability to deliver high-quality provision and maintain strong performance as a Trust relies on a healthy, motivated workforce. By managing absence well, we ensure our people feel supported and valued, while continuing to provide the best outcomes for our learners. In line with our Trust Values and People Strategy, we aim to approach all absence with empathy, fairness and a focus on wellbeing.

The Trust will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and will always consider reasonable adjustments to support employees with disabilities or long-term health conditions. We will apply ACAS guidance and ensure all decisions are fair, consistent, and non-discriminatory.

2. Introduction

This policy provides a clear and supportive framework for managing sickness absence. It is designed to help managers respond consistently and constructively to absence, and to ensure employees receive the care, communication and guidance they need throughout any period of ill health.

We recognise that absences can happen for many different reasons. Where absence relates to a disability or long-term health condition, this will be clearly noted in the Absence Management System and taken fully into account when reviewing attendance.

Information shared with us about an employee's health will be treated with sensitivity and processed in line with our Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR requirements.

This policy applies to all SPT employees. It does not apply to agency workers, contractors, consultants, volunteers or interns. The policy does not form part of any employment contract and may be updated when required.

The Trustees have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but have delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the Extended Leadership Team.

Line managers have day-to-day responsibility for supporting their teams with absence management. Employees should speak to their line manager if they have any questions about this policy or need guidance. This policy is reviewed annually.

3. Disability Considerations

The Trust recognises its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 to support employees who have a disability or long-term health condition. Sickness absence may at times be related to a disability, and at each stage of the absence management process, the Trust will consider whether reasonable adjustments can be made to support employees at work and/or assist a return to work.

Employees are encouraged to inform their line manager or their School's Admin/Operations/Business Manager if they believe they may be affected by a disability or a medical condition that impacts their ability to undertake their work. Any information provided will be handled sensitively, confidentially, and in accordance with the Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR requirements.

3.1. Reasonable adjustments

The Trust will explore and implement reasonable adjustments wherever possible. These may include, but are not limited to:

- changes to duties or tasks
- adjustments to working hours or shift patterns
- flexibility with start/finish times
- alterations to working environment or equipment
- adaptations to sickness absence triggers
- phased returns to work
- remote or hybrid working arrangements
- redeployment to an alternative role where appropriate

Reasonable adjustments will be determined on a case-by-case basis following consultation with the employee and Occupational Health.

3.2. Access to Work

Access to Work is a government-funded scheme that provides practical and financial support to help disabled employees or those with long-term health conditions start or stay in work. The support offered is personalised and may include:

- specialist equipment, software or assistive technology
- job-coaching or support workers
- travel assistance for employees unable to use public transport
- communication support
- adaptations to the workplace
- mental-health support plans

The Trust is committed to supporting employees who may benefit from Access to Work. We will:

- assist employees with understanding eligibility
- provide any required employer information for an application
- facilitate workplace assessments
- implement recommended adjustments where reasonable and practicable

Employees who believe they may benefit from **Access to Work** support are encouraged to speak with their line manager or the HR Team at the earliest opportunity, so that an application can be made promptly.

Further information can be accessed on the Government Website: [Access to Work: get support if you have a disability or health condition: What Access to Work is - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

3.3. Adjusted triggers

Where an employee's absences are related to a disability or long-term condition, the Trust will consider whether standard absence triggers should

be modified or whether a bespoke absence review approach is more appropriate. Adjustment decisions will take into account individual circumstances, medical advice and equality considerations.

3.4. Mental health conditions

Where absence relates to stress or mental health, a **Work-Related Stress Risk Assessment** will be completed in line with HSE standards. A Wellness Action plan may also be considered and implemented.

3.5. Workplace Adjustments Passport

Employees may request a **Workplace Adjustments Passport** to record agreed adjustments and support continuity if line management changes. The Trust HR Team can assist with creating or updating this documentation.

Employees may choose to use the Government's Health Adjustment Passport ([Health Adjustment Passport - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/health-adjustment-passport)) to help identify the adjustments they find helpful at work. This is an optional, employee-owned document and does not replace the Trust's Workplace Adjustments Passport, which records the adjustments formally agreed within the Trust.

4. **Leave of Absence Considerations**

Employees may request a range of statutory and discretionary leave types in line with the Trust's **Leave of Absence Policy**. These include, but are not limited to, parental leave, dependants' leave, bereavement leave, and Carer's Leave.

Where an employee takes approved leave under the Leave of Absence Policy, this must be recorded separately from sickness absence to ensure accurate reporting and compliance with statutory entitlements.

5. **Flexible Working Considerations**

Employees have a statutory right to request flexible working from day one of employment and may submit a request as part of an absence support plan. Please refer to the **Flexible Working Policy** for details.

6. Roles & Responsibilities

Below is a list of responsibilities and who should undertake them:

6.1.1. Headteacher / Senior Leadership Team

- Maintain accurate attendance records.
- Ensure employees follow reporting procedures.
- Keep clear and confidential notes of discussions and actions.
- Hold formal absence management meetings.
- Be mindful that personal or domestic pressures may contribute to sickness absence.
- Signpost to relevant wellbeing support, including Trust benefits, Wellbeing Leads, Access to Work and Occupational Health.
- Progress matters promptly under relevant policies where concerns arise.
- Attend absence management training.

6.1.2. Admin/Operations Manager or Designated Officer

- Maintain up-to-date absence records.
- Regularly analyse patterns and reasons for absence to identify early support needs.
- Be mindful that personal or domestic pressures may contribute to sickness absence.
- Signpost to relevant wellbeing support, including Trust benefits, Wellbeing Leads, Access to Work and Occupational Health.
- Hold informal/early-stage formal absence management meetings.
- Attend absence management training.

6.1.3. Trust HR Lead

- Attend later stage formal absence management meetings in a supportive capacity where escalated.
- Signpost to relevant wellbeing support, including Trust benefits, Wellbeing Leads, Access to Work and Occupational Health.
- Provide training on absence management and staff wellbeing to staff and line managers.

6.1.4. Line Managers

- Attend absence management training.
- Be mindful that personal or domestic pressures may contribute to sickness absence.
- Signpost to relevant wellbeing support, including Trust benefits, Wellbeing Leads, Access to Work and Occupational Health.
- Ensure employees understand their responsibilities.

6.1.5. Employees

- Take reasonable steps to maintain attendance.
- Follow reporting procedures.
- Engage with the absence management process, including attending meetings and Occupational Health appointments.
- If you have a concern about a colleague's welfare, please consult the Headteacher, Trust HR, your School's Wellbeing Lead or the Director of the Trust.

7. Reporting & Contact Requirements during Absence

7.1. Reporting absence

If you are unable to attend work, you must contact your line manager or designated officer **giving at least one hour's notice before your normal start time.**

Most schools have their own absence reporting procedures. Where this is the case, you must follow your school's procedure, which will take precedence over the requirements set out in this policy.

Contact should normally be by telephone so the reason for absence, support needs and cover arrangements can be discussed, unless a different method has been agreed as a reasonable adjustment.

For the purpose of this policy, the designated officer is the person responsible for recording and managing absence within the School.

Texts, emails or Teams messages may only be used where agreed as a reasonable adjustment.

See Appendix C for the standard form used by Admin/Operations Manager or Designated Officers when absence is reported.

7.2. Infectious diseases

If you believe you have, or have been exposed to, an infectious disease, inform your line manager or designated officer as soon as reasonably practicable. Following medical advice, you may be required to stay away from the workplace to reduce risk to others.

7.3. Medical certification and medical opinion

For absences of more than four but fewer than eight days (including weekends and bank holidays), you must complete a self-certification form (see Appendix F). For eight days or more, a medical certificate (fit note) is required. Fit notes may be issued by GPs, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists or occupational therapists.

If your fit note indicates you may be fit for work, we will discuss temporary adjustments with you. If adjustments cannot reasonably be made, you will remain on sick leave and a review date will be agreed.

The Trust may seek an **independent medical opinion** during prolonged or recurring absence. Attendance at Occupational Health appointments is a requirement of the Occupational Sick Pay scheme. Failure to attend may affect entitlement.

You may be asked to consent to the disclosure and discussion of medical reports so that appropriate support can be planned.

7.4. Staying in touch

Maintaining appropriate contact helps ensure you receive the right support and enables the School/Trust to plan effectively. When first

reporting your absence, please outline the nature of your illness and your expected return date. Ongoing contact will be agreed according to your circumstances and medical advice. Examples include:

- **Absences up to 7 calendar days:** Employees must provide regular updates for cover planning. Daily contact is recommended where the absence is unexpected or operationally sensitive.
- **Absences of 8 calendar days or more:** A **fit note is required from day 8**. Employees should provide an update on the day the fit note is submitted and again the day before their expected return.
- **Absences of around 2 weeks:** A check-in should take place during the second week to review progress, confirm expected return, and identify any support needs.
- **Absences over 1 month:** A personalised contact plan must be agreed, setting out:
 - who will make contact,
 - how often,
 - by which method, and
 - any adjustments to support wellbeing and return-to-work planning.

Contact arrangements will always take account of individual needs, including reasonable adjustments.

7.5. Staying in touch – mental health conditions

Your designated officer or line manager will agree contact that is supportive but not overwhelming. If direct contact is difficult, you may nominate an alternative point of contact, such as a family member or trusted friend.

If you find contact too difficult in this situation, the Designated officer / Line Manager will ask if there's someone else they can check in with. For example, a family member or close friend.

7.6. Return to Work Meetings

Return-to-work meetings should take place after five consecutive days of absence (or one working week for part-time staff). These discussions help establish:

- The cause of absence
- Any patterns or concerns
- Whether medical advice is needed
- Any support or adjustments required

See Appendix D for the standard form used by Admin/Operations Manager or Designated Officers for Return to Work meetings.

8. **Payment During Absence**

This section should be read with Appendix B – Sick Pay Scheme.

You may be entitled to **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** and/or **Occupational Sick Pay** depending on your contractual entitlement.

From 6th April 2026, the rules for SSP changed. Under the new legislation:

- SSP is payable from the first full day of sickness absence. The previous three “waiting days” no longer apply.
- All employees qualify for SSP regardless of earnings, as the Lower Earnings Limit has been removed.
- SSP is paid at the lower of:
 - 80% of your Average Weekly Earnings (AWE), or
 - the statutory flat rate (£123.25 per week for 2026/27).
- SSP can be paid for up to 28 weeks, subject to eligibility.

Please refer to the Government website for further details: [Statutory Sick Pay \(SSP\) : Overview - GOV.UK](#).

Details of your Occupational Sick Pay entitlement can be found in your Statement of Particulars of Employment. If your absence continues beyond your

Occupational Sick Pay (full and half pay) entitlement, you may still receive SSP under the rules above. To check your remaining entitlement, contact the designated officer.

The Trust may seek an **independent medical opinion** during prolonged or recurring absence. Attendance at Occupational Health appointments is a requirement of the Occupational Sick Pay scheme. Failure to attend may affect entitlement.

If you are absent for any reason other than ill health, please speak to your manager to confirm applicable payment arrangements.

9. Sickness during Annual Leave

Statutory holiday continues to accrue during sick leave. Statutory requests to reinstate holiday lost due to sickness will be honoured.

Employees may choose to cancel booked annual leave that overlaps with sick leave. You should notify your line manager or the designated officer as soon as possible that you wish to do this.

10. Absence Management Procedure / Managing Short-Term Absence

10.1. General

Absence generally falls into three categories:

- **Long-term absence** (usually defined as four weeks or more, see Section 12)
- **Short-term intermittent absence** (frequent, unplanned periods of sickness absence that are typically short in duration (usually 1–7 days each) occurring repeatedly over a 12-month rolling period).
- **Unauthorised absence** (where an employee is not at work and has not followed the required reporting procedures, or where the reason given for absence is not accepted as valid by the Trust see Section 13).

The designated officer and Headteacher will assess how absence impacts the School. Each case will be managed individually, with support from the Trust HR Team where needed.

10.2. Template Letters

Template letters for Admin/Operations Managers/ Designated Officers/ Headteachers are available to use on the Trust-Wide Admin Drive in the Absence Management Policy:

- Appendix G – Invitation to Informal Attendance Meeting
- Appendix H – Informal Attendance Meeting Outcome
- Appendix I – Stage One – Invitation to Formal Attendance Meeting
- Appendix J – Stage One – Formal Attendance Meeting Outcome
- Appendix K – Stage Two – Formal Review Meeting
- Appendix L – Stage Two – Formal Review Meeting Outcome
- Appendix M – Stage Three – Final Formal Meeting Invitation
- Appendix N – Stage Three – Final Formal Meeting Outcome

10.3. Absence Triggers

Monthly Trust-wide absence trends will be monitored by the Special Partnership Trust management team and Admin/Operations Managers will monitor their School's absence trends on a monthly basis. Absence triggers will be based around the "Bradford Scoring Factor". The Bradford Score is calculated using all sickness absence within the 52 weeks immediately preceding the most recent period of absence. The 52-week period is rolling, and the score is recalculated each time a new absence occurs.

The Trust will not apply triggers rigidly where doing so would disadvantage disabled employees or those with pregnancy-related, menopausal, or otherwise legally protected health circumstances. **See Section 3.3 for guidance on Adjusted Triggers.**

The Bradford Scoring Factor identifies persistent short-term absence for employees, by measuring the number of spells of absence, and is therefore a

useful measure of the disruption caused by this type of absence. It is calculated as follows:

'The number of 'spells' of absence squared, multiplied by the number of days absent.'

$$S \times S \times D$$

Where S = number of spells of absence in 52 weeks taken by an individual and
D = number of days of absence in 52 weeks taken by that individual

For example:

- one-day absences: $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1,000$
- 1 ten-day absence: $1 \times 1 \times 10 = 10$
- 5 two-day absences: $5 \times 5 \times 10 = 250$
- 2 five-day absences: $2 \times 2 \times 10 = 40$

10.4. Absence Management Meetings – Staged Approach

Absence concerns will be addressed through a clear, supportive, and progressive process, beginning informally and moving to formal stages only where attendance does not improve or further concerns arise. Each stage aims to identify underlying issues, offer appropriate support, and provide a fair opportunity for improvement.

10.3.1. Informal Attendance Review Meeting

This is the first step when absence levels reach a trigger point (**Bradford Scoring Factor of 150**) or cause concern. This stage is supportive and non-disciplinary. The Headteacher (or Admin Manager) will meet with the staff member to discuss their attendance at work and to see how the Special Partnership Trust can support them.

Purpose:

- Understand the reasons for absence.
- Explore any wellbeing, health, or workplace factors.

- Identify early support needs or reasonable adjustments.
- Agree expectations for improving attendance.

Possible outcomes:

- Signposting to Occupational Health or wellbeing services.
- Temporary or permanent reasonable adjustments.
- Agreeing an attendance improvement plan.
- No further action where concerns are addressed.

10.3.2. Formal Attendance Review Meetings Overview

If a staff member's **attendance does not improve and/or reaches a Bradford Scoring Factor of 250 (or above), or where a staff member has been absent for four consecutive weeks (see long-term sickness)**, the formal process may be initiated, and they will be invited to attend a **Stage One Formal Attendance Meeting**, in the first instance.

The formal stages of this procedure (Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Three) are designed to provide a structured and supportive framework for improving attendance. Stages do not automatically progress in a linear sequence; each case will be reviewed individually, taking into account the reasons for absence, any disability-related factors, and whether reasonable adjustments have been explored.

Each formal stage will normally remain active for up to six months from the date of the meeting, unless a different period is agreed based on medical advice or operational need. During this time, attendance will be monitored against the expectations set at the meeting.

A stage may be repeated where circumstances justify doing so. This may include situations where new medical information becomes available, where reasonable adjustments have recently been implemented and require time to take effect, or where the employee has made progress but further improvement is still required. Repeating a stage does not prevent progression to the next stage if attendance does not improve within the agreed timeframe.

Progression to the next stage will normally occur where attendance does not improve within the agreed review period, where the Bradford Score continues to rise, or where no further reasonable adjustments can be identified. Where absence becomes long-term (four consecutive weeks or more), the case may move into the long-term sickness process (Section 12), although the principles of the staged approach will continue to apply.

The purpose of Formal Attendance Meetings is to discuss the reasons why absence levels are high and will be chaired by the Headteacher (or delegated to a member of SLT). A HR Consultant/member of the Trust HR Team may also be present in a supportive capacity. Employees may be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague and adjustments to meeting format will be made where needed.

Employees will normally receive **5 days' written notice** of Formal Attendance Meetings and concerns and evidence will be shared in advance.

Employees must take reasonable steps to attend and failure to do so without good reason may be treated as misconduct. Meetings may be adjourned if further information is needed.

If, at any time, the line manager/designated officer considers that you have taken or are taking sickness absence when you are not unwell, they may refer matters to be dealt with under the Trust's disciplinary procedure.

Employees are allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay to act as a companion. However, they are not obliged to act as a companion and may decline a request if they so wish.

We may at our discretion permit other companions (for example, a family member) where this will help overcome particular difficulties caused by a disability, or difficulty understanding English.

A companion may make representations, ask questions, and sum up your position, but will not be allowed to answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during a meeting.

Decisions and appeal rights will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days (unless this time scale is not practicable, in which case it will be provided as soon as practicable).

Stage One - Formal Attendance Meeting

If a staff member's **attendance does not improve and/or reaches a Bradford Scoring Factor of 250 (or above)**, they will then be invited to a First Formal Attendance Meeting Formal meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the reasons why absence levels have resulted in this score.

Outcomes of a **Stage One Formal Attendance Meeting** may be a referral to Occupational Health and/or:

- an agreed change to working hours or times
- a request for flexible working
- targets for attendance
- agreed reasonable adjustments for a disability
- **a formal capability warning**

Stage Two - Formal Attendance Meeting

If there is no improvement within an agreed timescale, the staff member may be invited to a **Stage Two Formal Attendance Meeting** with the Headteacher to discuss the reasons why absence levels have resulted in this score.

Outcomes of the **Stage Two Formal Attendance Meeting** may be a referral to Occupational Health and/or:

- Consideration of Occupational Health report (where one has been obtained)
- An agreed change to working hours or times
- A request for flexible working
- Targets for attendance
- Agreed reasonable adjustments for a disability
- **Extension of formal warning**

- **A final capability warning**

A final capability warning would be issued in cases where a previous live (within the past 6 months) capability warning has already been issued.

Stage Three - Formal Attendance Meeting

If absence levels continue to be high the staff member should be invited to a **Stage Three Formal Attendance Meeting** with the Headteacher or the Trust CEO to:

- Review the meetings that have taken place and matters discussed with you.
- Where you remain on long-term sickness absence, to consider whether there have been any changes since the last meeting under the second stage, either as regards to possible return to work or opportunities for return or redeployment.
- To consider any further matters that you wish to raise.
- To consider the possible termination of your employment.

Outcomes of the **Stage Three Formal Attendance Meeting** may be:

- a re-referral to Occupational Health
- an agreed change to working hours or times
- a request for flexible working
- further targets for attendance
- agreed reasonable adjustments for a disability
- **redeployment or dismissal**

10.3.3. Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of any stage of this procedure you may appeal in writing, stating the full grounds of appeal, to the Headteacher OR the Trust HR Department **within five working days of the date on which the decision was sent to you.**

Unless it is not practicable, you will be given written notice of an appeal meeting within two to seven days of the meeting. In cases of dismissal the appeal will be held as soon as possible. Any new matters raised in an appeal may delay an appeal meeting if further investigation is required.

You will be provided with written details of any new information which comes to light before an appeal meeting. You will also be given a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the meeting.

Where practicable, the appeal meeting will be conducted by a senior manager who has not been previously involved in the case and is senior to the individual who conducted the previous meeting. A member of the Trust HR Department and/or the senior manager(s) who conducted earlier sickness absence meeting(s) will also usually be present. You have the right to bring a colleague or trade union representative to the meeting.

Depending on the circumstances, an appeal meeting may be a complete rehearing of the matter or a review of the original decision.

The final decision will be confirmed in writing, if possible within one calendar week of the appeal meeting. There will be no further right of appeal.

The date that any dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of an appeal. However, if the appeal is successful, the decision to dismiss will be revoked with no loss of continuity or pay.

11. Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence will be managed through the Trust's disciplinary procedure.

If you fail to report for work and have not contacted your line manager or designated officer, they will attempt to contact you. This does not replace your responsibility to report absence appropriately.

12. Managing Long-Term Sickness

Long-term sickness absence is normally defined as four consecutive weeks or more. The Trust will manage long-term absence through a structured, supportive and fair process, ensuring regular communication, appropriate medical advice, and full consideration of reasonable adjustments to support a return to work.

Each case will be managed individually, taking into account medical evidence, operational needs, and the Trust's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

12.1. Stage One – Long-Term Sickness Review Meeting

A Stage One Review Meeting should take place at, or shortly after, four consecutive weeks of absence. The meeting will normally be chaired by the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team, with HR attendance optional. Employees may be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague and will usually receive five working days' written notice.

Advice may be required from the Occupational Health service regarding:

- Likelihood and timing of return
- Adjustments required
- Phased return recommendations

The line manager should obtain the staff member's written consent before an Occupational Health Referral is made (**see Clause 13, Occupational Health Referrals**).

Purpose of the meeting:

- Review the reason for absence and current medical advice
- Discuss likely timescales for recovery and return
- Consider whether an Occupational Health referral is required/recommendations if already in place
- Explore reasonable adjustments
- Agree a personalised contact plan

- Identify any wellbeing or workplace factors affecting recovery

Possible outcomes:

- Referral to Occupational Health
- Temporary or permanent reasonable adjustments
- Planning for a phased return
- Agreement to continue monitoring with a further review date
- Signposting to wellbeing support

A follow-up meeting will normally be arranged within 4–6 weeks, or sooner if new medical information is received.

12.2. Stage Two – Formal Long-Term Sickness Review Meeting

A Stage Two Review Meeting will take place where absence continues beyond the agreed review period, or where medical advice indicates ongoing uncertainty about the employee's ability to return. This meeting will be chaired by the Headteacher or Senior Leadership Team, with HR present in a supportive capacity. Employees may be accompanied and will normally receive five working days' written notice.

Discussion points:

- Review of Occupational Health advice
- Whether a return to work is likely within a reasonable timeframe
- Whether further adjustments or redeployment options exist
- Whether a phased return is appropriate (see clause 12.4)
- Whether continued absence remains operationally sustainable
- Whether ill-health capability may need to be considered if no improvement occurs

Possible outcomes:

- Further Occupational Health referral
- Implementation or revision of reasonable adjustments
- Agreement of a phased return plan
- Redeployment exploration
- Continued monitoring with a further review date

- Notification that the matter may progress to a Stage Three Final Review Meeting

12.3. Stage Three – Final Long-Term Sickness Review Meeting

A Stage Three Final Review Meeting will take place where medical advice indicates that there is no reasonable expectation of return within a reasonable timeframe. The meeting will be chaired by the Headteacher or the Trust CEO, with HR present. Employees may be accompanied and will normally receive five working days' written notice.

This meeting will review all previous discussions, support offered and medical evidence obtained. The Headteacher or CEO will consider whether any final adjustments or redeployment opportunities exist, and whether a phased return remains feasible. If no viable options remain, the Trust may need to consider ending employment on the grounds of ill-health capability.

Where dismissal is considered, the employee will be informed of the reasons and their right of appeal.

12.4. Phased return

Where supported by medical advice, a phased return of normally **2–4 weeks** (up to **6 weeks**) may be agreed, unless an extension is agreed by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or HR Trust Team. Pay will follow Occupational Sick Pay rules until hours worked exceed pay entitlement.

Your line manager/designated officer will record the agreed hours/period of your phased return and notify payroll.

12.5. No reasonable expectation of return

If medical advice suggests no reasonable expectation of return within a reasonable timeframe, the Academy may consider ill-health termination following a fair process. Each case will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

Guidance for Headteachers on managing long-term absences can be found in Appendix R.

12.6. Right of Appeal

Employees may appeal the outcome of a Stage Three meeting, including dismissal, by writing to the Headteacher or Trust HR Department within five working days of receiving the decision. Appeals will normally be heard by a senior manager not previously involved in the case, with HR present. Employees may be accompanied. The appeal may be a rehearing or a review of the original decision. A written outcome will be provided as soon as practicable, usually within one calendar week.

If the appeal is successful, any dismissal will be revoked with no loss of continuity or pay.

13. Occupational Health Referrals

An Occupational Health (OH) Referral is a formal process where the Trust asks an independent, qualified Occupational Health professional to provide expert advice on how a staff member's health may be affecting their work, and what support or adjustments may help them remain at work or return safely.

Early referral is encouraged to prevent long-term issues and can also be requested (via the Line Manager or Designated Officer) by the employee.

OH professionals are medically trained specialists in the relationship between health, work, and wellbeing. Their role is supportive, not disciplinary.

An OH referral can help to:

- Understand health-related barriers to work
- Identify reasonable adjustments
- Provide advice on fitness for work
- Inform decision-making
- Support early intervention
- Support employees with disabilities or long-term conditions

Employees must attend OH appointments unless there is a reasonable reason not to. Reports are shared with employees and stored securely.

Short-term/intermittent absences which are related to one reason may require a referral to Occupational Health to obtain further information on the condition and how the School/Trust may support an improvement in attendance.

A template Letter for Occupational Health Referrals is available for Designated Officers/Headteachers to use in Appendix O. Appendix P also provides an Occupational Health Consent Form.

