



SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

February 2026

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

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1. The Mater Christi Vision

Our Trust is made up of school communities supported by a central team, all of which are committed to the Mater Christi Vision. This Vision statement is rooted in the person and teachings of Jesus Christ and is faithful to the mission of the Catholic church.

Our people and our children are at the heart of our Trust. By investing in our people and their wellbeing we can create excellent outcomes for children and ensure a solid foundation for growth.

This policy has been developed to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and this policy is reviewed regularly in this regard.

Our Mater Christi Vision has five sections. The fourth section sets out our goals for Staff:

Our Staff Together

- A. Ensure that we appreciate and are grateful for the contribution of our staff and Governors to our Mission.
- B. Actively encourage each other to discern the best possible actions that lead to excellence.
- C. Place well-being at our heart in the development of our policies and practice.
- D. Be attentive to the needs of our staff so that they are encouraged to meet their personal goals.

2. Commitment to Equality

We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed several key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

Mater Christi is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive working environment for all employees, especially during periods of sickness or ill health. We believe in treating all staff with respect, objectivity, and dignity, ensuring that sickness absence is managed fairly and consistently across the Trust.

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3. Definitions

In this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions shall have the following meanings:

- i. 'Academy' means the academy named at the beginning of this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure and includes all sites upon which the Academy undertaking is, from time to time, being carried out.
- ii. 'Mater Christi' or 'The Trust' means the company responsible for the management of the Academy, School or Central Team and, for all purposes, means the employer of all staff within the Multi Academy Trust.
- iii. 'Board' means the board of Directors of the Multi Academy Trust.
- iv. 'Chair' means the Chair of the Board as appointed from time to time.
- v. 'Clerk' means the Clerk to the Board as appointed from time to time.
- vi. 'Companion' means a willing work colleague, or a trade union official, an accredited representative of a trade union or other professional association of which the employee is a member, who should be available for the periods of time necessary to meet the timescales under this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.
- vii. 'Diocesan Schools Commission' means the education service provided by the diocese in which the Academy is situated, which may also be known, or referred to, as the Diocesan Education Service.
- viii. 'Directors' means directors appointed to the Board from time to time.
- ix. 'Headteacher' means the most senior teacher in the Academy who is responsible for its management and administration. Such teacher may also be referred to as the Head of School or Principal.
- x. 'Vice-Chair' means the Vice-Chair of the Board as elected from time to time.

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- xi. 'Working Day' means any day on which you would ordinarily work if you were a full-time employee. In other words, 'Working Day' may apply differently to teaching and non-teaching staff. However, part-time and full-time staff will not be treated differently for the purposes of implementing this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.
- xii. 'Working Week' means any week during which you would ordinarily work.
- xiii. 'Line Manager' means the individual managing the employee's sickness absence, their nominated deputy or other appointed person.

4. Scope

This Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure applies to you if you are an employee or worker at Mater Christi Multi Academy Trust (hereinafter referred to as an "employee" or "you"). Regular attendance at work is a term of every employee's contract of employment. However, it is recognised that employees will, on occasion, have a genuine health reason to be absent from work.

The purpose of this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure is to establish a framework for the effective, consistent and fair management of staff sickness absence taking into account both the wellbeing of employees and the requirements of the Trust to deliver an effective education to its pupils. This policy is designed to:

- Provide support and guidance to employees during periods of sickness.
- Ensure that absence management procedures are applied consistently and fairly.
- Promote a healthy work-life balance and address factors contributing to illness where possible.
- Ensure compliance with equality legislation, promoting equal opportunity and eliminating any form of unlawful discrimination.
- Foster open communication between employees and management to address health-related issues promptly and effectively.

The Trust delegates its authority in the manner set out in this policy.

The Academy Trust Company is committed to providing a supportive working environment for all employees. The Academy Trust company is also committed to ensuring respect, objectivity, belief in the dignity of the individual, consistency of treatment and fairness in the operation of this policy. This commitment extends to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating

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unlawful discrimination throughout the Trust which includes all schools and the central team within Mater Christi.

This Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure offers opportunities to ensure justice for all employees and pupils alike and has the potential for the expression of Christian qualities such as honesty, self-knowledge, respect for others and their gifts, recognition of the needs and achievements of others, challenge of self and others, personal growth and openness.

The procedures contained in this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure allow employees to raise mental health concerns in the knowledge that the Trust will provide appropriate support when the employee seeks help. Employees experiencing mental health challenges will have access to appropriate reasonable adjustments, phased returns and Occupational Health referrals as set out in this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.

Consideration will be given to any difficulties which an employee may be facing, and the Trust will provide reasonable support and assistance to help the employee to overcome them. Such support and assistance may include, where appropriate, the Trust seeking medical or other advice regarding the effective management of any sickness absence.

All managers dealing with the management of sickness absence are to be properly trained for the task, familiar with the procedures, and apply these with discretion and sensitivity.

5. Legal Framework and policy links

Equality Act 2010 - When managing sickness absence, the Trust will take into consideration any underlying medical condition and disability. The Trust seeks to work with the individual, Occupational Health and HR to make reasonable adjustments to support the employee's attendance at work. Whilst following the guidance of this policy, managers are asked to ensure that the individual needs of each employee are fully understood and taken into consideration and that their statutory rights under the Equality Act 2010 are protected.

UK GDPR and Data Protection - An employee is entitled to have access, by arrangement, to their personnel file and to request the deletion of time-expired records in line with the provisions of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. All personal and sensitive personal data obtained during the operation of this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure will be handled with the utmost integrity and confidentiality and in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. Covert recording of any meetings held under this policy is not allowed and will be investigated under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.

This policy is aligned with the following; the Conditions for service for school Teachers in England and Wales (The Burgundy book), the National agreement on pay and conditions for support staff (the Green Book), the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD),

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The Education Act 2002 and its associated School Staffing (England) Regulations 2003 and 2009. Nothing in this policy is intended to override the provisions of these regulations.

When implementing this policy and procedure, regard should be given to the Trust's Health and Safety Policy and Procedure in relation to any overlapping health and safety consideration(s) that may arise.

This policy and procedure may be used concurrently with any other applicable policy and procedure. Where an employee is already subject to one of the Trust's policies there will not be any automatic delay or pause in the conduct of that policy because of an employee's sickness absence. In such circumstances, any decision will be based on available medical evidence and with advice from HR.

6. General Principles

It's important that we apply this policy in a way that is consistent and fair for everyone, ensuring all staff are treated equitably. The Trust will always take into consideration individual needs and any mitigating circumstances when reviewing employee absence. We aim to carefully monitor sickness absence in our schools, ensuring that the appropriate support is given in a timely manner. We strive to create an environment where employees feel encouraged and motivated to come to work, and place employee wellbeing as a central part of our practices. We encourage our Line Managers to seek advice and support from the Trust's central HR team, Occupational Health, and the Diocesan Schools Commission where required.

To support the application of this policy, employees are expected to:

- A. Attend work when fit to do so
- B. Comply with Mater Christi's sickness notification procedure contained within this policy
- C. Seek medical advice and treatment where possible and appropriate, to facilitate a return to work
- D. Take and follow the medical advice and treatment offered
- E. Keep in regular touch (consistent with your medical condition) and in line with the notification requirements set out in this policy.
- F. Inform your Line Manager of any significant developments affecting the period of absence
- G. Attend all medical appointments, (including Occupational Health appointments as required)
- H. Inform your Line Manager immediately of any side effects associated with your health condition and/or medication that could have an impact on your suitability to work with children.

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7. Sickness notification procedure

As soon as you are aware that you will be absent from work, you must contact your school or Line Manager in accordance with the Absence notification table in Appendix 1. If you do not report for work and you have not explained the reason for your absence then you should expect to be contacted by your Line Manager or other nominated individual who will want to enquire after your health and wellbeing.

Any absence which is not logged under this procedure, may be recorded as absence without leave (AWOL). This will be investigated under the disciplinary policy, unless mitigation is provided and contact made as soon as reasonably practicable.

You should make contact with your school or Line Manager personally and not ask third parties (such as members of your family or friends) to call on your behalf. However, in exceptional circumstances due to the nature of your illness, the Trust recognises that it may be necessary to rely on a third-party's explanation for your absence.

Brief details of the reason for your absence and, if possible, some indication of a likely return to work date should be given during this contact. The position in relation to current workload may be discussed in order to help the school/team make appropriate cover arrangements. You should ensure that your Line Manager is kept informed of your expected return to work date.

If your absence is the result of an accident or an injury sustained at work then this information must be made known. You should indicate if the incident has been reported, when it was reported and to whom.

If you are still unfit for work after three days you must contact your Line Manager or nominated person on the fourth day of absence and advise them of the likely duration of your continued absence.

WhatsApp or text messages are not recognised as an effective method of keeping in touch during a period of absence, and should not be relied upon as the main form of contact.

You must remain contactable throughout your period of absence. If for any reason you are away from home during your absence for a prolonged period of time, you must notify your Line Manager.

Consideration must be given as to the appropriate frequency of contact to support the employee during their period of absence. The requirement that you maintain regular contact during any period of sickness absence may be reviewed if a doctor's statement or OH report indicates that frequent contact could hamper your recovery. For example, if an employee is

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suffering from work related stress, particular sensitivity needs to be applied to the nature and frequency of keeping in touch. In this situation it is recommended that advice is sought from OH.

It is important to ensure that the employee doesn't feel isolated during a prolonged absence and it may be mutually agreed that a face to face meeting at an agreed location is arranged in addition to regular calls.

It is essential that line managers keep a secure record of all contact, discussions and meetings with the employee regarding their sickness absence. All employee sickness absence must be accurately recorded on Arbor.

8. Absence certification

Any sickness absence of 7 calendar days or less can be covered by a self-certification form. This must cover every day of absence, including half days and weekends. Any delay in the completion of this form has the potential to impact payment. It is important that this form is completed as soon as possible after your return to work.

A doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work (a "Fit Note") must be provided by all staff and sent to the Line Manager from the 8th calendar day of sickness (when counting days for this purpose Saturdays and Sundays are included).

If more than one doctor's statement is required for any period of absence, you must keep your Line Manager, or nominated person, informed of developments on a regular basis, following the guidance in section 7 above.

The fit note is classed as advice from your healthcare professional to help you and your employer discuss ways to support you to stay in, or return to, work and its contents will be considered carefully when determining what action to take pursuant to this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.

Where a doctor's statement indicates that you are fit for work but with adjustments, you will be asked to meet with your Line Manager to discuss what adjustments can be accommodated. Where it is not possible to make any of the suggested adjustments, you will remain on sickness absence until it is possible to make the adjustments or until adjustments are no longer required.

If an employee recovers from their illness more quickly than expected, they may return to work prior to the expiry of their Fit Note with the agreement of their Line Manager following a risk assessment. For long term absences, both an Occupational Health assessment and a risk assessment is recommended before an employee is allowed to return to work before the expiry of their fit note. The employee will be required to remain off work under sickness absence until the expiry of the fit note if the school is unable to make the necessary adjustments to accommodate an early return.

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Employees who fail to supply the relevant fit note or self-certification may lose their entitlement to both statutory sick pay and occupational sick pay for that absence, subject to the scheme rules. Failure to provide the necessary certification to cover sickness absence may be investigated under the Trust Disciplinary Policy.

9. Sick pay entitlements

If you require information relating to sick pay entitlements please refer to the relevant provisions in the Burgundy Book or the Green Book as appropriate.

10. Return to work discussions

After every absence your line manager will welcome you back to work within your first day back and discuss with you within a return to work meeting:

- (a) The reasons for your absence;
- (b) To enquire as to your wellbeing and review whether you are fit to return to work;
- (c) Whether the appropriate notification was provided;
- (d) Your fitness to work; and whether there are any issues which require support from the Trust which may include a phased return to work, risk assessments or reasonable adjustments.

During this meeting your return to work form will be completed and a copy of this will be placed on your personnel file. You will be provided with an opportunity to provide written comments on the record of the return to work discussion prior to it being included in your personnel file.

Your line manager may use the return to work discussion as an opportunity to bring you up to date with developments within the Trust during your absence.

Because of the nature of your medical condition you may prefer not to discuss the reasons for your absence with your Line Manager and, in that case, you may hold the return to work discussion with a suitable alternative person as agreed with your Line Manager. If you have any preference in relation to the identity of the nominated person, for example, because you would prefer to have the discussion with somebody of the same sex, such request should not be unreasonably refused.

All return to work discussions will be supportive and will seek to address any issues that might lead to future absence.

It should be noted that a return to work discussion will be held following every period of sickness absence regardless of its duration. If an absence review point has been reached as

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outlined in this policy, a return to work discussion will still be held and the employee will be told in this discussion to expect an invitation to a Formal Absence Review Meeting.

If you have been absent for a long period it may be appropriate to arrange for a return to work discussion to take place before the day of your return, at the agreement of both parties. A phased return to work may be planned in this meeting along with any reasonable adjustments. For more information about phased returns please see Appendix 3.

11. Occupational health referral

Your Line Manager may refer you to Occupational Health for an assessment of your health and:

- (a) Its impact on your attendance at work
- (b) Its impact on your fitness to perform the duties required by your employment
- (c) Its impact on your ability to attend formal meetings or interviews
- (d) What reasonable steps the Trust could take to improve your health and/or attendance, particularly where the Occupational Health assessment concludes that the condition is work related.
- (e) Advice on a likely timeframe for your return to work.

A referral to Occupational Health is a supportive measure and any Occupational Health referrals must be done with the employee's permission. Occupational Health appointments will be scheduled during working time, where possible.

Before making any decision to dismiss you on notice under this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure the Trust will have referred you for at least one Occupational Health assessment and will usually consider the most recent assessment.

If you decide not to engage in an Occupational Health referral the Trust will have no option but to proceed to make decisions without the benefit of medical advice.

12. Appointed person/s for the management of ill health

Table 1 and 2 below sets out the persons to be appointed throughout the stages of the short-term and long-term absence management process.

The Trust may appoint a suitable alternative to the below if any identified individual is not available due to extenuating circumstances. Any alternative will be discussed with the employee in advance.

Any appointed persons, including nominated deputies must have the authority to carry out the responsibilities outlined below.

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A director can not sit on both the absence panel and appeals panel, both processes must be kept separate and distinct.

Table 1: Table of appointed person/s for short term absence management

Employee Group	Absence Review (stage 1,2 and 3)		Capability Hearing	
	Chair	Appeals Manager	Chair	Appeals Manager
Headteacher	Director of School Improvement or their nominated deputy	COO or their nominated deputy	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel, appointed by the Chair
Other School Leadership Spine	Headteacher or their nominated deputy	Exec Head/ Headteacher/Deputy Head within the Trust who has no previous involvement with the case. Or Member of the Mater Christi Executive team	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair
Other Teaching Staff	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Exec Head/ Headteacher/Deputy Head within the Trust who has no previous involvement with the case. Or Member of the Mater Christi Executive team.	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair



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Other Support Staff	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Exec Head/ Headteacher/Deputy Head within the Trust who has no previous involvement with the case. Or Member of the Mater Christi Executive team.	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair
Central Team	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Member of the Mater Christi Executive team	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair
Executive Team (inc COO)	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Director appointed by the Chair	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair
CEO	Vice Chair of the board of directors	Chair of the board of directors	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair

Table 2: Table of appointed persons for long term absence management

Employee Group	Long Term Absence support Meeting (Informal)	Case Conference/s	Capability Hearing, Long term ill health	Appeal Manager (Capability Hearing outcome)
Headteacher	Director of School Improvement or their nominated deputy	Director of School Improvement or their nominated deputy	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair
Other Leadership Spine	Headteacher or their nominated deputy	Headteacher or their nominated deputy	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair
Other Teaching Staff	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair

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<i>Other Support Staff</i>	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair
<i>Central Team</i>	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair
<i>Executive Team (inc. COO)</i>	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Line Manager or their nominated deputy	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair
<i>CEO</i>	Chair of the board of directors	Chair of the board of directors	Directors' Absence Panel appointed by the Chair	Directors' Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair

In the event of a recommendation to dismiss, approval must be first obtained by the appointed person/s as outlined in the Trust Scheme of Delegation.

13. Persistent intermittent absence

Persistent intermittent sickness absence can be defined as frequent short-term absences from work that are normally sporadic and attributable to minor ailments, in many cases such periods of absence are unconnected. If periods of persistent intermittent sickness absence are for the same illness, a referral to Occupational Health may be required.

Managerial problems can be created by the frequency of persistent intermittent absences. The reasons behind persistent intermittent absences will always be investigated as such absences can only be addressed effectively through proper monitoring systems and effective management action.

At each stage of the short-term absence management process, employees will:

- A. Be invited in writing to attend any absence review meeting and given notice as outlined in Appendix 2.
- B. Have the right to be accompanied by a companion, which is either a recognised TU representative or a colleague.
- C. Be given the opportunity to present any evidence in relation to their absence.
- D. Have the outcome of any formal process confirmed in writing and confirmation in writing of any actions or agreements made during any formal meeting. All letters and minutes of any meeting will be recorded on the employees personal file in Arbor.
- E. Have the right of appeal against any attendance warning issued. This appeal must be in writing and received within 5 working days of the absence warning letter. The

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appeal letter must detail the grounds for appeal. These grounds should not have already been considered during the attendance management process.

14. First Stage Attendance review

If following the employees return to work, it is established that the employee has hit the absence review points below, they will be formally invited to attend a first stage attendance review meeting.

Absence review points for First stage attendance review	10 working days sickness absence and/or 4 periods of sickness absence in a rolling period of 12 months.
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A review meeting can be triggered at any point during the rolling 12 month period. Examples of this are below:

Examples of first stage review points:

- 1) Kaleb is off work with a cold for 3 days in January 2024. Following this he has a further absence in November 2024 for 6 days. He has no further absence until February 2025 where he is off for 4 days. Kaleb requires a first stage attendance review meeting in February 2025 as within a rolling 12 month period he has had 2 periods of absence totalling 10 days.
- 2) Jenny has 1 day of absence with a sore throat in September 2024, she has another 1 day of absence with a cold in November 2024. On October 2025 she has 1 day of absence. Jenny does not require an attendance review in October 2025, as within a rolling 12 month period she has had 2 periods of absence and a total of 2 days.

During the first stage attendance review meeting, the following points will be discussed:

- A. Identification of any factors contributing to the employee's absence.
- B. Review of any additional support required
- C. Consideration of any underlying reasons for absence, taking into account any OH advice.
- D. Confirmation of what level of improvement is required.

At the end of the first stage review meeting, the Line Manager may decide to:

- A. Agree that mitigating circumstances means that the employee should have a further opportunity to improve their absence. The employee will be informed that their attendance will continue to be monitored according to the attendance management

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policy and against the absence review points for first stage attendance review over a rolling 12 month period. This means that any further absence may lead to a further first stage attendance review meeting.

- B. Issue a First stage attendance warning which will be live for 6 months. This will be confirmed in writing and will place the employee on a 6 months monitoring period for their absence from the date of the letter.
- C. Adjourn the meeting whilst further information is gathered. For example, if there is any discrepancy in the information provided during the meeting and further investigation is needed or if further medical evidence is required, the meeting can be adjourned pending the collection of additional evidence. The meeting will be re-convened once the evidence is available and a decision will be made during the re-convened meeting.

If the employee does not meet the absence review points for a second stage attendance review whilst the first stage attendance warning is live (for 6 months), then the first stage attendance warning will expire and no further action will be taken.

15. Second stage attendance review

If an employee on a live first stage attendance warning hits the absence review points for a second stage review (shown below), they will be invited into a second stage attendance review meeting.

Second stage absence review points	2 periods of absence OR 1 period of absence of 10 days or more within a six-month monitoring period.
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During the second stage attendance review meeting, the following points will be discussed:

- A. Identification of any factors contributing to the employee's absence.
- B. Review of any additional support required
- C. Consideration of any underlying reasons for absence, taking into account any OH advice.
- D. Confirmation of what level of improvement is required.

It is recommended that an OH report is obtained before making a decision, if there is not a recent report already in place.

At the end of the second stage attendance review meeting the line manager may decide to:

- A. Agree that mitigating circumstances means that the employee should have a further opportunity to improve their attendance levels. The employee will be informed that their attendance will continue to be monitored according to the attendance management policy and any further absence within their current six months first

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stage monitoring period may lead to a further second stage attendance review meeting.

- B. Issue a second stage attendance warning, this will place the employee on a second stage attendance warning for 6 months from the date of the letter. The formal letter will explain the expectations on attendance going forward. This will include notification that any further absences within the review period may lead to dismissal.
- C. Adjourn the meeting whilst further information is gathered. The meeting will be re-adjourned once the evidence is available and a decision will be made during the re-adjourned meeting.

Letters and minutes of the meeting will be recorded on the individual's personal file.

If the employee doesn't hit the absence review points for a third stage attendance review during the period that their second stage attendance warning is live (6 months from date of the letter), then the warning will expire after the end of the review period and there will be no further action.

16. Third stage attendance review

If an employee on a live second stage attendance warning hits the following absence review points within the 6 month monitoring period, they will be invited into a third stage attendance review.

Third stage absence review points.	2 periods of absence or 1 period of absence totalling 10 days absence within a six month monitoring period.
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At this stage, if a recent OH report doesn't exist, then one must be requested before the attendance review takes place.

During the third stage attendance review, the following points will be discussed:

- A. Identification of any factors contributing to the employee's absence.
- B. Review of any additional support required
- C. Consideration of any underlying reasons for absence, taking into account any OH advice.
- D. Confirmation of what level of improvement is required.

At the end of the stage three review meeting the line manager may decide to:

- A. Agree that mitigating circumstances means that the employee should have a further opportunity to improve their absence, in this situation the monitoring period can be extended for a further 6 months on a stage 2 attendance review from the date of the letter. If the employee doesn't hit this absence review point

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within the additional 6 months then will come off absence review completely and no further action taken. If the employee does hit this absence review point, then they will be invited to a stage 3 review meeting.

- B. Identify further workplace adjustments to help the employee manage their attendance at work. These adjustments will be put in place where possible and the employee's attendance will be monitored to identify if the adjustments facilitate an improvement in attendance. A reasonable monitoring period and absence target will be identified for the individual taking into consideration OH advice and the nature of their health condition.
- C. That the employee's absence is a cause for concern and that all reasonable support has been given to help the employee maintain acceptable attendance at work. In this instance the Line Manager will recommend that the employee progresses to a Formal Capability hearing with the potential for dismissal.

If the employee appeals the decision to place them on third stage attendance review, then the formal capability hearing must be delayed until the appeal has been heard and concluded.

17. Formal Capability Hearing, short term absence

The Formal Capability hearing is the final stage of the attendance review process. A potential outcome of this meeting is dismissal.

This meeting will be held by the individual/s identified in Table 1, section 12. It is important they have not been involved in the management of the employee's ill health or in any previous stages of this policy. This is important to ensure that there is a 'fresh pair of eyes' to consider all the evidence. HR and OH advice should be sought prior to this meeting going ahead.

Employees will be formally invited to attend this meeting, and at least 10 working days notice of the meeting will be given. The employee will be strongly advised to bring a companion to the meeting to support them during the process. The formal invite will notify the employee that one potential outcome of the meeting is dismissal.

Prior to the meeting, the manager who made the decision at stage 3 attendance review, will prepare an evidence pack containing all the evidence for the case. This will contain all the previous absence review decisions, details of support given, any adjustments made and OH reports. The employee and the hearing manager will be provided with a copy of the full evidence pack prior to the meeting.

Employee permission must be requested prior to sharing the OH reports within the evidence pack. If permission is not granted, then the employee must be made aware that a decision will be made on the evidence available.

The hearing manager will consider all the evidence within the evidence pack when coming to a decision and a recent OH report must be reviewed (if employee permission given). It will be considered if all reasonable actions have been taken to support the employee in improving

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their attendance. Full consideration will be given to the Equality Act and whether any further adjustments may be reasonable in the circumstances to help the employee improve their attendance.

During the meeting the employee and their representative will be given every opportunity to state their case and present any additional evidence for consideration.

At the end of the formal capability review meeting the hearing manager must adjourn the meeting to fully consider all the evidence presented. During the adjournment, the hearing manager should discuss the case with the Trust HR or Legal team who will advise on the case.

Potential outcomes of the meeting are:

- A. Agree that due to exceptional mitigating circumstances, the employee should have a final opportunity to improve their attendance. In this situation, appropriate absence review points and monitoring period will be set from the date of the outcome letter. If the employee doesn't hit these absence review points within the monitoring period, no further action will be taken. If the employee does hit these absence review points within the monitoring period, then the individual will progress directly to a further Formal Capability Review Hearing.
- B. Consider redeployment if a suitable vacancy exists and medical evidence suggests that an alternative role could lead to improved attendance.
- C. Consideration of whether the individual meets the requirements for Ill health retirement.
- D. Dismissal on the grounds of incapability. This decision will only be taken once all medical evidence and mitigating circumstances are considered. Notice will be paid in accordance with the terms of their contract. Any dismissal decision must only be taken following consultation with the Mater Christi HR or legal team. Any dismissal decision must be first approved by the persons with 'approving authority' as identified in the Mater Christi Scheme of Delegation.

The employee has the right to appeal the outcome of the Capability hearing. This appeal must be made in writing within 5 working days of receipt of the outcome letter. Any appeals against a dismissal decision must go to the Directors appeals panel.

18. Sickness following an invite to an attendance review meeting

If you are absent following the invite letter but before the attendance review meeting, then this additional sickness absence will be considered as part of the attendance review meeting.

19. Long Term Absence

Long-term absence, (which is usually defined as an absence lasting at least 4 calendar weeks), is where an employee is absent from work for a prolonged period as the result of a serious

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health problem or planned medical procedure. It can normally be distinguished from persistent intermittent absence in that it tends to be continuous.

When managing long term absence, it is important to align with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Managers must seek medical advice on whether an underlying health condition exists and must consider all reasonable adjustments to enable the employee to return to work.

It is recommended that when supporting an individual on long term absence, advice and support is sought from the Mater Christi HR Team and Occupational Health.

At each stage of this process, employees will:

- A. Be invited in writing to attend any formal meeting and given notice as outlined in Appendix 2
- B. Have the right to be accompanied by a companion, which is either a recognised TU representative or a colleague.
- C. Be given the opportunity to present any evidence in relation to their absence.
- D. Have the outcome of any formal process confirmed in writing and confirmation in writing of any actions or agreements made during any formal meeting. All letters and minutes of any meeting will be recorded on the employees personal file in Arbor.

20. Long Term Absence Support Meeting

This is an informal meeting, designed to enable discussion and exploration of the employees' long term ill health and to consider what support actions need to be put in place to enable the employee to return to work at a suitable time.

An absence support meeting should be arranged as soon as it becomes apparent that the absence has the potential to be long term.

The appropriate format of this meeting (for example face to face, virtual or phone call) will be agreed between the line manager and employee taking into consideration their individual needs and medical circumstances.

In this meeting it is essential that the employee is open and honest about their medical condition and symptoms so that all reasonable options can be considered.

21. Case Conference

If the employee is unable to return to work on or around the expected return to work date agreed in the Absence Support meeting, or if no expected return to work date could be identified, then a case conference should be held with the employee.

The purpose of this meeting is to explore all support options, reasonable adjustments and medical advice relating to the employee's ill health situation. This is with the intention of

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agreeing a plan to enable the employee to return to work safely and within a reasonable timeframe.

The employee should be formally invited to this meeting in writing. The employee is entitled to 5 working days written notice of the meeting. The employee is entitled to be accompanied by a companion who is either a Trade Union representative or colleague.

It is expected that an OH referral will have been requested prior to this meeting, and a report (if available) is considered at this meeting.

The employee will receive confirmation in writing of any actions or agreements made during the formal meeting and provided with a summary of discussions for their own records.

22. Further Case Conference/s

If based on medical evidence and employee feedback, the Line Manager believes that further avenues can be explored in the management of the employees' long term ill health, then additional case conferences can be called to enable the exploration and consideration of these options.

These meetings will continue until all reasonable options to support the employee to return to work within a reasonable timeframe have been exhausted. The number of formal meetings and the timings between meetings will therefore depend on the nature of the individual case, the medical advice given and feedback from the employee.

It is recommended that any formal case conferences are done following consultation with the Mater Christi HR department and OH.

23. Capability Hearing, Long term ill health.

A Capability Hearing will only be held once all reasonable alternative options to support the employee to return to work have been explored and exhausted.

This meeting will be chaired by the individual identified in table 2, section 12 who has not been involved in previous stages and is of equal or greater seniority to the individual chairing the case conferences. It is recommended that HR advice is sought prior to holding the Capability Hearing.

The employee has 10 working days' notice of the meeting and should be told in advance of the meeting that the outcome of the hearing could include the possibility of dismissal.

Prior to the hearing, the chair of the Capability Hearing will be provided with a report detailing the actions taken in previous case conferences and any medical evidence which led to the progression to final review. This report is created by the individual/s chairing the previous case conferences.

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Employee permission must be requested prior to sharing the OH reports within the evidence pack. If permission is not granted, the employee must be made aware that a decision will be made on the evidence available.

A copy of this report should also be provided to the employee for their consideration prior to the hearing.

The hearing will consider the following:

- A. Recent medical evidence regarding the likely return to work within a reasonable timeframe.
- B. Have all reasonable adjustments to support the employees return to work been explored and considered?
- C. Whether any alternatives to dismissal exist which can be reasonably considered, for example - redeployment, reduced or adjusted hours on a temporary or permanent basis, extension of temporary variation for further given period if this is seen as assisting recovery and improving potential for resuming full role in foreseeable future. Full consideration will be given to the potential for Ill Health retirement.
- D. Any additional evidence or recommendations presented by the employee and/or their representative.

The possible outcomes of this hearing are:

- A. The Chair of the hearing identifies further reasonable adjustments or actions which have not previously been considered to support the employee to return to work. This support will be implemented and a clear timescale will be identified for the expected return to work and acceptable attendance levels. During this timeframe the employee's attendance levels will be monitored. If the adjustments do not facilitate a return to work with acceptable attendance levels, a further Capability hearing will be arranged.
- B. A contractual change is agreed which enables the employee to return to work, such as redeployment, permanent changes to working hours, job role or job grade. The employee would need to formally agree to any contractual changes. It is recommended that a trial period of 3 months is agreed. If the trial is unsuccessful, for example if the employee continues to have unacceptable absence levels, this would lead to a further Capability Hearing.
- C. The employee is dismissed on the grounds of incapability. Dismissal is with full notice or payment in lieu of notice and subject to the right of appeal. Any decision to dismiss must first be approved by the appointed persons as detailed in the Trust scheme of delegation. The outcome of the hearing will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

24. Dismissal with Notice

In coming to such a decision in relation to a case of persistent intermittent (short term) absence the Chair of the Capability hearing will consider:

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- (i) The total absence and pattern of absence
- (ii) The available medical prognosis
- (iii) Advice from Occupational Health
- (iv) The reasons provided for the absence
- (v) How long the employee has worked for the Trust.
- (vi) The additional demands the persistent intermittent absence has generated for other employees of the Trust.
- (vii) Whether other reasonable adjustments or flexible working have been considered
- (viii) Whether other reasonable adjustments have been made and, if so, whether they were effective
- (ix) Whether adequate support was offered by the Trust.

In coming to such a decision in relation to a case of long-term absence the Chair of the Capability Hearing will consider:

- (i) The available medical prognosis
- (ii) Advice from Occupational Health
- (iii) Is a complete recovery likely and, if so, when?
- (iv) How long the employee has worked for the Trust.
- (v) The additional demands the absence has generated for other employees of the Trust
- (vi) Whether alternative employment or a transfer is available, suitable and acceptable (with salary protection considered on a case-by-case basis)
- (vii) Whether ill-health retirement has been explored
- (viii) Whether other reasonable adjustments or flexible working have been considered
- (ix) Whether other reasonable adjustments have been made and, if so, whether they were effective.

In a case where your employment is terminated, the meeting Chair will recommend to the Trust that your employment is terminated in accordance with your contract of employment. The Trust will ratify that decision in accordance with the Trust Scheme of Delegation and then take appropriate steps to terminate your employment. Please note that the Board will not review the Final Absence Reviewer's decision in order to ensure that a Directors' Appeal Panel can be convened if necessary. Appropriate alternatives to dismissal will always be considered by the Final Absence Reviewer and discussed with you.

In the event that your employment is terminated, the following may apply:

- a) If your contract of employment contains a garden leave clause the Trust may exercise that clause so that you are not required to attend the Trust during your notice period but remain employed and so bound by the terms of your contract of employment until the expiry of the notice period; or
- b) If your contract of employment contains a payment in lieu of notice clause the Trust may exercise that clause to bring your contract to an end with immediate effect. However, this needs to be very carefully considered in the context of timeframes for the application of IHR

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25. Appeals

You may appeal against a decision at any stage of the formal process by writing to the individual identified in your outcome letter within 5 Working Days of the date of the relevant letter.

Any appeal letter lodged must set out the grounds of your appeal in detail. When preparing your appeal letter, you may wish to consider the following grounds:

- a) that the action taken was unfair;
- b) that this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure was applied defectively or unfairly;
- c) that new evidence has come to light which was not available when the relevant decision was made by the Absence Reviewer or the Capability hearing chair;
- d) that the sanction was overly harsh in all the circumstances.

The fact of the appeal will not delay the commencement of any period of time covered by an Absence Letter or of any notice period.

Any appeal will normally be heard within 20 Working Days of receiving your appeal letter. You will be given at least 10 Working Days' notice of an appeal meeting and you should provide any evidence you wish to present at your appeal at least 2 Working Days prior to the Appeal Meeting.

Written or oral evidence can be presented at an Appeal Meeting. If written evidence is to be relied upon, you will be provided with it at least 5 Working Days prior to the Appeal Meeting and you will be given a reasonable opportunity to comment on it during the Appeal Meeting.

If oral evidence is heard, you will be given a reasonable opportunity to comment on it during the Appeal Meeting. The Appeal Manager will consider all of the evidence provided in order to determine whether the relevant decision was fair and reasonable.

The Appeal Manager will confirm the outcome of the Appeal Meeting in writing to you within 10 Working Days of the date of the Appeal Meeting. The decision of the Appeal Manager is final and there will be no further right of appeal. The potential outcomes of the Appeal Meeting are that:

- (a) the Appeal Manager may uphold the decision of the Absence Reviewer or Capability Chair (as appropriate) and any sanction imposed by the Absence Reviewer or Capability Chair will be upheld; or
- (b) the Appeal Manager may uphold the employee's appeal and impose a lesser sanction to that imposed by the Absence Reviewer or Capability Chair (as appropriate); or
- (c) the Appeal Manager may uphold the employee's appeal and conclude that any sanction imposed by the Absence Reviewer or Capability Chair (as appropriate) should be

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withdrawn and that no further action should be taken pursuant to this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure for the absences subject to the appeal.

Should an appeal against dismissal be successful, you will be reinstated with no break in your continuous service.

26. Directors Panels

Directors' Absence and Appeal Panels shall comprise three non-staff Directors not previously involved in the matter and shall not comprise the Chair or Vice-Chair unless there are insufficient numbers of non-staff Directors not previously involved in the matter, in which case the Chair and/or Vice-Chair may be appointed to a Directors' Absence or Appeal Panel but only if they have not previously been involved in the matter.

In the exceptional event that there are insufficient numbers of Directors available to participate in a Directors' Absence or Appeal Panel, the Trust may appoint associate members solely to participate in the appropriate Directors' Absence or Appeal Panel on the recommendation of the Diocesan Schools Commission.

27. Companion

You may be accompanied by a Companion at any formal stage of this policy by a Trade Union representative or work colleague. The employee may wish to bring a support person with them to the informal stage of this process as a reasonable adjustment to help support their attendance at the meeting. This will be accommodated where possible as long as this doesn't cause any undue delay to the process.

You must let the relevant Reviewer or Manager know who your Companion will be at least one Working Day before the relevant meeting.

If you have any particular reasonable need, for example, because you have a disability, you can also be accompanied by a suitable helper.

Your Companion can address the meeting in order to:

- (a) put your case;
- (b) sum up your case;
- (c) respond on your behalf to any view expressed at the meeting; and
- (d) ask questions on your behalf.
- (e) your Companion can also confer with you during the meeting.

Your Companion has no right to:

- (a) answer questions on your behalf;

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- (b) address the meeting if you do not wish it; or
- (c) prevent you from explaining your case.

Where you have identified your Companion and they have confirmed in writing to the relevant Reviewer or Manager that they cannot attend the date or time set for the meeting, the relevant meeting will be postponed for a period not in excess of five Working Days from the date set by the Trust to a date and time agreed with your Companion. Should your Companion subsequently be unable to attend the rearranged Meeting, it may be held in their absence or written representations will be accepted.

28. Timing of meetings

The aim is that meetings under this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure will be held at mutually convenient times, but depending on the circumstances, meetings may:

- (a) need to be held when you were timetabled to teach (if that is appropriate to your role);
- (b) exceptionally be held during planning, preparation and administration time if this does not impact on lesson preparation (if that is appropriate to your role);
- (c) exceptionally be held after the end of the working day;
- (d) not be held on days on which you would not ordinarily work;
- (e) be extended by agreement between the parties if the time limits cannot be met for any justifiable reason.

Where an employee is persistently unable or unwilling to attend a meeting without good cause, the relevant manager will make a decision on the evidence available.

29. Venue and conduct of meetings

The relevant Reviewer or Manager can hold the meeting off site to minimise any distress to the employee. Any reasonable request to do so will not be unreasonably refused. If the employee is unable to attend a meeting in person due to illness alternative arrangements will be made where this is possible.

30. Assistance

In all cases involving the Headteacher or a person on the Leadership Spine, or the potential or actual dismissal of any other member of staff, the Diocesan Schools Commission may send a representative to advise the Absence Reviewer, the Final Absence Reviewer or the Appeal Manager.

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31. Misconduct related to employee absence

Unauthorised absence will be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and could result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

The provision of any false information will be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and could result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

Any patterns of absence should be discussed with the employee at the first opportunity. Any unexplained patterns of absence should be investigated under the disciplinary policy. An example of a pattern of absence would be when an individual is regularly sick on a Friday and this isn't justified by medical evidence.

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APPENDIX

1. Absence notification procedure

Table to be updated with specific contact details for the school/team.

Day 1	On or before the first working day of sickness absence, you must contact the (add job title e.g. School Office Manager) on (add number). For teachers, contact must be made before 7.30am to ensure that the school has time to arrange cover. Support staff must contact the school no later than one hour before their scheduled time of work. If for any reason the phone is not answered, the employee must email (add email address) and copy in their Line Manager. The Line Manager will contact the employee if any further information needed. If the headteacher is unable to attend work because of illness or injury, they should contact the Mater Christi Director of School Improvement or Chief Executive Officer ASAP. During this absence notification call, the following details will be requested and will be captured securely: ▪ Name and contact details ▪ Nature of the illness ▪ Date illness commenced ▪ The date the employee expects to RTW (if known). ▪ If the absence is attributed to an injury at work (in these cases the Headteacher/Business Manager must be informed ASAP). ▪ Any immediate support needed If the reason for absence is sensitive, the employee can state that they are sick and that the reason for absence will be shared directly with their Line Manager. Once the absence is recorded, the employee may be contacted by their Line Manager or nominated deputy for further information if required.
Day 4	If the employee is still unfit for work after 3 days they must contact the (add role) on the 4th day of absence to provide an update.

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Week 1	If the employee is still unfit for work after 1 week they must contact the (add role) again to provide an update.
8 days	Employees must give their employer a fit note if they've been ill for more than 7 days in a row and have taken sick leave. This includes non-working days, such as weekends and bank holidays. This must be sent to (each school/team to amend)*
Consecutive weeks	If the absence goes beyond one week, then it is important that the employee keeps in touch with their Line Manager or nominated contact on a regular basis (weekly is recommended). The employee is expected to give an update on the progress of their recovery so appropriate support can be provided. It is the employee's responsibility to maintain contact with their Line Manager during their absence. See section 7 sickness notification procedure for more information.
Prior to Fit note expiry	Prior to the expiry of the employees Fit Note, they should contact (add role) to inform them whether they will returning to work following the end date of the Fit Note or whether they anticipate a further period of sick leave.
Return date	Teaching staff should notify the school by 2.00pm on the day before they are likely to return to work.

*if there is any difficulty obtaining a medical appointment for a fit note within the timescale provided, the Line Manager must be notified and the date for the scheduled appointment should be given to the Line Manager.

2. Notice of meetings

A. Short term Absence

Stage	Notice of meeting
Absence review meetings (stages 1 to 3)	5 working days
Absence review appeals (stages 1 to 3)	Employee has 5 working days to appeal following receipt of the outcome letter. Employee has 10 working days' notice of any scheduled appeal hearing.
Formal Capability hearing	10 working days written notice
Capability hearing appeal	Employee has 5 working days to appeal following receipt of the outcome letter. Employee has 10 working days' notice of any scheduled appeal hearing.

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B. Long term absence

Stage	Notice of meeting
Long term absence support meeting	5 working days
Case Conference/s	5 working days
Formal Capability Hearing	10 working days
Capability hearing appeal	Employee has 5 working days to appeal following receipt of the outcome letter. Employee has 10 working days' notice of any scheduled appeal hearing.

3. Phased return to work

There may be occasions where an employee requires a phased return to work to support their return to the workplace and the Line Manager must take special consideration of the support measures required to enable an employee to return to work after a long term absence. In this instance, guidance must be obtained from medical professionals or the occupational health service.

It is recommended that the line manager discusses the return to work plan with the employee in detail prior to their date of return, to reassure the employee of the support available.

A phased return will normally last between 1 to 4 weeks depending on the nature of the absence. If reduced hours are recommended by Occupational Health, the employee will be paid full hours for a period of 4 weeks if the reduced hours can be reasonably accommodated. If a phased return goes beyond 4 weeks then the employee must be notified that they will only be paid for the hours worked after the 4th week. Any phased return going beyond four weeks must be discussed with the Mater Christi HR Team.

In exceptional circumstances and only when supported by medical evidence, consideration can be given to extend the period of paid rehabilitation to a maximum of 6 weeks. This decision can only be authorised by the Trust COO or CEO.

The phased return to work should be reviewed weekly to ensure that the employee is supported and to consider if any adjustments are needed to the return plan.

If the employee had pre booked annual leave during a phased return to work programme, the phased return arrangement will be reviewed on the employees return from annual leave and may be extended by a period equal to the period of annual leave.

For term time only employees or teachers, phased returns will take consideration of school holiday periods.

If sickness absence occurs during a phased return to work programme, sick pay entitlements will be triggered. On the employee's return to work, the phased return arrangement will be reviewed and either continued, extended or ended as appropriate.

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4. Reasonable adjustments

The Line Manager has a responsibility to consider all reasonable adjustments and accommodate these where possible. It is the Line Managers responsibility to determine whether an adjustment is reasonable, by considering the impact the adjustment will have on the team/school/trust.

Consideration must be given to the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees and pupils, not just the employee for which the adjustment is being recommended. If the adjustment is not reasonable, then the Trust is under no obligation to offer it. However, it is recommended that the Line Manager seeks advice from the Trust HR team and Occupational Health when considering reasonable adjustments.

Employees who believe that they have a disability or medical condition that affects their ability to work should inform their line manager, so that all reasonable adjustments and support can be explored. This is particularly important in the context of sickness absence, as timely adjustments can help prevent prolonged absences, support employees in managing their health, and enable them to return to work more effectively. Ensuring appropriate accommodations not only promotes the well-being of the employee but also helps maintain a productive and supportive workplace for all.

5. Exclusion from Occupational Sick Pay

In the following circumstances, a decision may be made to exclude an employee from the Occupational Sick Pay scheme:

- Where there is evidence of a potential abuse of the Occupational sick pay scheme, this will be investigated under the MAT disciplinary policy and sick pay will be suspended. The MAT reserves the right to reclaim any sick pay already paid for the duration of the period of absence.
- If the absence has been caused by the employees' misconduct or neglect.
- If the employee's absence is due to active participation in professional sport.
- If the employee is injured while working for private gain or for another employer.

6. Sickness whilst at work

If an employee is taken ill whilst at work, they should notify their Line Manager or a member of the school leadership team prior to leaving.

The employee should be asked if they are safe to travel home. Alternative travel arrangements should be made where necessary to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the employee concerned.

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7. Sickness during annual leave and school closure periods

For year-round staff

If an employee falls ill during a period of annual leave, they will be required to provide the appropriate certification (self-certification or fit note if the absence is over 7 days), as required to cover the period of sickness absence. Sickness absence will then be substituted for annual leave from the date of the fit note.

For term time only staff

If an employee falls ill during a period of annual leave, they will be required to provide the appropriate certification (self-certification or fit note if the absence is over 7 days), as required to cover the period of sickness absence. Sickness absence will be recorded from the first day of sickness absence. Should that affect the employee's ability to take all their annual leave entitlement during the school holiday periods that fall within their holiday year, time off for the remaining holiday will be arranged at a time agreed by the Line Manager outside the normal school holiday periods.

For teachers

Teachers absent due to sickness continue to receive full or half pay, as appropriate, through weekends, half-term breaks, bank holidays and the Christmas, Easter and Summer breaks. These periods do not count against their sick leave entitlements, only the 195 working days are counted. Teachers whose sick leave extends into the school holiday must continue to submit medical certificates, as required, even though the school is closed.

8. Sickness absence caused by a third party

If an employee's absence has been caused by another party who is legally liable to pay damages, the employee must notify their Line Manager of this and of any legal claim they are pursuing. The Trust will seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to recover any compensation paid to the employee relating to lost earnings.

If requested by the Trust, the employee must take part in any legal proceedings to recover damages.

9. Accident at work

If the employee states that the illness or injury is due to an accident at work, then an investigation must be carried out in line with the school's health and safety procedures. This investigation must be carried out by a suitably qualified person, especially in the event of an accident reportable under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)

An accident form must be completed, and the individual must be referred to Occupational Health where appropriate to determine if the illness or injury is wholly work related.

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The absence reason should be recorded as an accident at work and may not be counted towards absence review points and sick pay entitlements, depending on the outcome of the investigation.

The Trust's Industrial Injury policy must be referred to in the event of an accident at work.

10. Pregnancy-related absence

Pregnancy-related sickness absence will not be counted when reviewing an employee's attendance record.

If the employee is off work because of a pregnancy-related illness within 4 weeks of the due date, maternity leave begins automatically. This is unless the employee and the Trust agree together to delay it. The employee's wellbeing should take priority. Once maternity leave starts, the employee is paid maternity pay instead of sick pay.

11. Medical and dental appointments

Medical and dental appointments should be arranged according to the guidelines in the Leave of Absence policy. However, if an individual becomes unwell after a medical appointment or has a period of recovery following a medical appointment, this period of recovery or illness is classed as sickness absence and managed under this policy.

12. Counselling

Counselling is a recognised and often highly effective method of supporting an employee in their recovery, especially when suffering from stress and/or anxiety. If recommended by Occupational health, the school/setting is encouraged to explore the provision of counselling with the employee. The employee should be made aware of the Trust Employee Assistance Program, through Education Mutual, which provides free and confidential support, including counselling and access to GP and Nurse services. Education Mutual can be contacted on the following number:

Education Mutual: 0333 1100074

13. Medical suspension

Medical Suspension is a temporary suspension from duties due to concerns over a staff member's fitness to work due to health and safety issues with working with:

- Dangerous chemicals
- Lead
- Radiation

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For example, medical suspension may be considered if an employee has a serious allergic reaction to a chemical they use at work and it is not immediately possible to source an alternative chemical, offer alternative duties, or provide additional PPE [personal protective equipment].

Medical Suspension will be considered where all other options for relocation or alternative work or systems of work have been exhausted. An employer must review the employees risk assessment before suspending them. Medical Suspension is temporary measure which may be taken whilst awaiting further medical advice or the implementation of reasonable adjustments. The decision to suspend on medical grounds must be authorised by the Trust COO or CEO and should only be made after consultation with OH and HR. Additional considerations need to be made for medical suspensions relating to pregnancy and it is recommended that additional guidance is sought from HR in these instances.

The employee will be informed of the decision to place them on medical suspension in writing, and the terms of the suspension will be clearly communicated. Medical suspensions will be reviewed regularly, typically every 4 weeks to assess whether the employee can be safely accommodated at work.

If the suspension period has the potential to extend to a period of 6 months or more, or the employer is unable to accommodate a safe return to work, the employee will be invited to attend a capability meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss a formal decision regarding their ability to return to work, including the possibility of ill-health retirement or dismissal on the grounds of capability.

The employee has the right to normal pay for up to 26 weeks whilst on medical suspension, as long as they've been in their job for a month or more. Employees will not have the right to pay if they:

- Are an independent contractor or agency worker.
- Refuse other suitable work from their employer without a good reason
- Are not available when needed for suitable alternative work

Whilst on medical suspension, an employees absence will not be subject to the short term absence review process as outlined in this policy.

Additional information on medical suspension can be found on:

[Suspensions from work for medical reasons - GOV.UK](#)

[Medical suspension from work - Acas](#)

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14. Terminal Illness

1. Overview

The Trust is committed to supporting individuals with a terminal illness with dignity and compassion. When supporting individuals with a terminal illness the Line Manager must take full consideration of their individual needs.

2. Terminal illness, confidentiality and communication

It is important that the individual feels able to discuss serious health issues such as terminal illness in confidence and seek the support that they need. No sensitive information should be shared without the individual's consent. There will be practical arrangements to manage within the setting such as cover and medical appointments, so there should be a discussion as to whether it is appropriate to inform certain key individuals within the setting with the employee's authorisation. If close colleagues are aware and it is handled sensitively then the individual can benefit from their support.

3. Working arrangements and adjustments

It is important to take the lead from the employee and advice from Occupational health in regards to working arrangements for an individual with a terminal diagnosis. The individual may or may not want to continue to work after receiving their diagnosis and the Line Manager must be sensitive to their preferences and accommodate where possible.

It is essential to have sensitive, supportive and informed conversations with employees about reasonable adjustments and these should be considered in relation to the specific individual needs and their role. Occupational health advice is important here, to guide the line manager as to what is appropriate for the individual.

In the event of a terminal illness, the absence review points outlined in this policy do not apply. The Line Manager must work with Occupational Health and the individual to identify what level of attendance can reasonably be expected and accommodated based on the individual's diagnosis and symptoms.

Should the employee become permanently unfit for work, then they should be advised to seek advice from their pensions provider. The employee should be given information on Ill health retirement benefits (IHR) so that they can make an informed decision as to whether to apply for this provision. Information on IHR can be found at [Ill health • Local Pensions Partnership Administration \(lppapensions.co.uk\)](#) and [Ill Health Retirement | Types of retirement | Planning Retirement | Teachers' Pensions \(teacherspensions.co.uk\)](#)

Further advice can be found in the Mater Christi Leave of Absence policy, which covers leave arrangements not related to sickness.

4. Employee wellbeing and support

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The school/setting must be sensitive to the impact the diagnosis will have to the individual and those around them, the below are charities and support services which can provide advice and guidance in regards to terminal illness.

Organisation	Contact
Marie Curie	Marie Curie Community Care & support through terminal illness.
Samaritans	www.samaritans.org
Cruse	Home - Cruse Bereavement Support
Hospice UK	Dying Matters Resources Hospice UK
Dying to work	The Dying to Work Campaign Dying to Work

5. Death in service

For information about death in service payment and the financial arrangements relating to the employees pension scheme, please visit for LGPS [Frequently asked questions :: LGPS \(lgpsmember.org\)](#) for TPS please visit [FAQs | Teachers' Pensions \(teacherspensions.co.uk\)](#)

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