



The Circle Trust Document: **Staff Absence Management Policy**

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Approver:	Trustees
Owner:	Finance Trustees
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Changes History:

Version	Date	Amended by:	Substantive changes:	Purpose
1.0	26.5.18	Exec Head	New Document	First release
1.1				
1.2				
1.3				

1. Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1. The Circle Trust aims to secure the attendance of all employees in order to maintain high standards of education. Absences should be kept to a minimum through effective Management and employees will be treated in line with good employment practice.
- 1.2. This procedure is applicable to all employees of The Circle Trust, it applies to all employees both teaching and support staff.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. A certain amount of sickness absence may be inevitable and justifiable absence will be treated sympathetically.
- 2.2. Absence Management is a process by which employers aim to achieve better employee attendance at work. Central to this is effective communication with employees, greater awareness of employee's absences and the adoption of a proactive approach to managing sickness absence.
- 2.3. The Circle Trust recognises the need to manage employee absences sensitively, to ensure that the Trust and its schools carry out their functions efficiently and effectively to meet operational requirements.
- 2.4. The Trust is committed to promoting the health and well-being of its employees and supporting them through periods of ill health.
- 2.5. Since absence can result in reduced job performance and /or misconduct issues relating to repeated short term absences, this policy should be read in conjunction with [The Circle Trust's Capability Policy](#) and [The Circle Trust's Discipline Policy](#)
- 2.6. The responsibility for the monitoring and controlling of absence in a school will rest with a Headteacher.

3. The Aims and Objectives of the Staff Absence Management Policy

- 3.1. To ensure that staff absence is kept to a minimum through effective and proactive staff absence management
- 3.2. To ensure that all employees are treated fairly and consistently in line with good employment practice
- 3.3. To assist the employee's return to work, where appropriate, through a rehabilitation programme agreed with the Occupational Health Adviser.

4. The Management of the Staff Absence Management Policy

- 4.1. The Trustees have a fundamental role to:
 - 4.1.1. Review this policy to approve changes
 - 4.1.2. Be satisfied that any Absence Management procedure is followed as set out in this policy and understood by Headteachers/school leaders and employees
 - 4.1.3. Only in the case of Absence in respect of the Executive Headteacher; form a Absence Management Hearing Committee and Appeals Panel if required (made up of three Trustees, one of whom will be appointed as Chair)
- 4.2. The Executive Headteacher will:
 - 4.2.1. Implement this policy
 - 4.2.2. Promote and ensure that all Headteachers/school leaders understand and follow the Staff Absence Management procedures as set out in this policy
 - 4.2.3. Seek and follow advice from The Circle Trust HR providers at all stages of any formal Absence Management process
- 4.3. The Local Advisors have a fundamental role to:
 - 4.3.1. Be satisfied that any Absence Management procedure is followed as set out in this policy and understood by the Headteacher/school leaders and employees
 - 4.3.2. To form an Absence Management Hearing Committee and Appeals if required (made up of three Local Advisors, one of whom will be appointed as Chair)
- 4.4. A Headteacher/School Leader with the oversight of Local Advisors will:
 - 4.4.1. Follow this policy when dealing with matters relating to Staff Absence Management
 - 4.4.2. Promote and ensure that all school leaders and employees understand and follow the Staff Absence Management procedures as set out in this policy
 - 4.4.3. Seek and follow advice from The Circle Trust HR providers at all stages of any Staff Absence Management process.
 - 4.4.4. Advise and promote to staff the time by which they must report absences as set out in 5.1.1 of this policy
 - 4.4.5. Monitor levels of staff sickness

5. Absence Management Procedure – general

- 5.1. Employees who are absent from work are required to follow the reporting procedure set out below:

- 5.1.1. The employee must normally telephone or email his/her Headteacher /nominated officer to give details of his absence by an agreed time or as early as possible on the first day of absence. The agreed time may vary from school to school in the Trust Headteachers for each school will ensure that the agreed time is clearly advised and widely advertised
- 5.1.2. If the employee is the Headteacher he/she should notify the Deputy Headteacher or other suitable person to assume responsibility for the discharge of duties during their absence. If the absence is likely to be protracted in excess of 3 days or of a serious nature then the Executive Headteacher must be informed.
- 5.1.3. If an employee is absent from work due to **SICKNESS** for a period of between 1 and 7 consecutive days he/she must complete a self-certificate and return it to the Headteacher.
- 5.1.4. If the sickness absence lasts for more than 7 days the employee must obtain a 'fit note' from their GP and forward that to the Headteacher.
- 5.1.5. If an individual employee has been absent for 20 continuous days in a 12 month period due to sickness, or has had frequent short term absences the Headteacher (as set out in 6.3.1 of this policy) should arrange via the HR Advisor an appointment with the Occupational Health nurse or physician.
- 5.2. The Headteacher or their nominated officer may hold return to work interviews with employees after a period of absence. The return to work interview is the most influential element in ensuring absence is not treated casually. If an employee knows that they will be interviewed on return and it will not just be the formality of signing a Self-Certification Form, they are less likely to take time off without good reason.
- 5.3. The purpose of the return to work interview is:
 - 5.3.1. To show the employee that the Headteacher/or their nominated officer has noted their absence
 - 5.3.2. To complete the self-certification form
 - 5.3.3. To give the Headteacher/or their nominated officer an opportunity to enquire what was wrong and possibly explore any other problems (e.g. domestic, work) which may have contributed to the absence
 - 5.3.4. To discuss the effect the absence had on work related matters
- 5.4. It is not intended that after every sickness absence the employee should be given a return to work meeting. The contact may be anything from a short meeting to a more detailed review (particularly if formal review meetings on absence levels have already taken place, or if the illness was very severe).

6. Types of staff absence from work

6.1. Categories of absence which require to be managed are:

6.1.1. **Unauthorised absence;**

6.1.2. **Frequent short term spells of absence;**

6.1.3. **Long-term sickness absence.**

6.2. Unauthorised Absence

6.2.1. Unauthorised absence is defined as: any absence where the employee is absent from work without prior permission or as a result of sickness which is not covered by medical or self-certification.

6.3. Frequent Short Term Absences

6.3.1. Frequent short term absences will normally be defined as:

- Three occasions of absence due to mainly minor illness (either uncertified or self-certified) in any four month period or term.
- Total absence exceeding 5 working days in a four-month period/term, unless the absence is due to infectious diseases, injury or surgery.

6.4. Long Term Sickness Absence

6.4.1. Long term absence is defined as: a continuous period of absence, due to sickness which exceeds 20 working days.

7. Procedure for dealing with unauthorised absence

7.1. Where an employee is absent from work and has not reported that he/she is sick, the Headteacher/nominated officer will attempt to contact the employee to establish the reason for the employees absence and failure to inform the Headteacher/nominated officer of his/her sickness.

7.2. Unless a satisfactory explanation is given or if the absence is due to illness, the Headteacher/nominated officer will meet the employee on his/her return to work and warn the employee that disciplinary action may be taken against him/her at the next occurrence.

7.3. Where no satisfactory explanation and with advice from a HR Advisor the Disciplinary [The Circle Trust's Staff Discipline Policy](#) may be invoked.

8. Procedure for dealing with frequent and/or persistent short term absences

- 8.1. When the Headteacher/nominated officer identifies that an employee's absence qualifies as short - term absence they will personally interview the employee on the first day the employee returns to work or at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.2. The Headteacher/nominated officer will discuss with the employee his/her attendance record and the detrimental effect of their absence on the delivery of teaching or other functions in the school.
- 8.3. The Headteacher/nominated officer will state the acceptable standard of attendance required and, where appropriate, offer assistance and agree a course of action.
- 8.4. In all cases, the employee must be informed in writing of the improvement that is expected and the likely consequences if this does not happen.
- 8.5. If the employee refers to a medical problem the Headteacher/nominated officer will inform the employee that they will arrange with Human Resources a referral to the Occupational Health Adviser to establish whether medical action is necessary, and whether there is an underlying medical reason for the absence. The Occupational Health Adviser will liaise with the employee's GP if necessary.
- 8.6. The employee will be consulted about the medical report. The employee's capability for carrying out the duties of the post will be considered before any decision is taken. In the light of the report the Headteacher, in consultation with a HR Advisor, will decide whether to:
 - 8.6.1. Provide more time for improvement;
 - 8.6.2. Consider suitable alternative employment, where appropriate;
 - 8.6.3. Terminate the contract of employment on grounds of ill health.
- 8.7. If after investigation it appears that there is no good reason for the absence then the Disciplinary Procedure should be invoked which could lead to a formal warning and ultimately dismissal.

9. Procedure for dealing with long-term sickness absence

- 9.1. Where the employee is absent from work due to long term sickness the Headteacher/nominated officer will maintain contact with the employee and offer any assistance, which may be appropriate.
- 9.2. Where long term sickness absence is for a clearly defined period due to infectious disease, injury, surgery, or chronic illness, and it is anticipated that the employee will return to work within a reasonable period, the employee will not normally be referred for medical examination.

- 9.3. Where the employee's recovery period is uncertain or the absence is likely to continue significantly beyond 20 working days, then the Headteacher/nominated officer will advise the employee that he/she will be referred to the Occupational Health Adviser for a medical opinion. The purpose of the medical report is to provide management with information about the likely duration of the absence and the long-term implications for the employee's fitness for work.
- 9.4. The Headteacher will, in consultation with a HR Advisor, arrange for the employee to be referred to the Occupational Health Adviser and will inform the employee about this action.
- 9.5. Following the referral to the Occupational Health Adviser and on receipt of their report, the Headteacher, in consultation with a HR Advisor, will determine a strategy for monitoring and managing the absence.
- 9.6. Where further appointments with the Occupational Health Adviser are arranged, regular discussion between the Headteacher and a HR Advisor should take place when each report is received.
- 9.7. Where an absence has been monitored and has lasted for one term, the Headteacher, with support from a HR Advisor should arrange to meet the employee to discuss the situation.
- 9.8. During that meeting the following areas of concern should be discussed:
 - 9.8.1. When the employee considers they will be fit to return to work, and if an Occupational Health fitness to work appointment is necessary;
 - 9.8.2. Where they will be fit do they need any adjustments in working arrangements for a short period to assist their return to work;
 - 9.8.3. Where the employee is unfit to perform his/her current duties but is capable of carrying out other work, suitable alternative employment will be considered. This may be either lighter or part-time work. However, the school will be under no obligation to create a job for the employee;
 - 9.8.4. Where the employee is unfit to work and, or, there is no suitable alternative work, the employee may be either;
 - Retired on grounds of ill health in accordance with the appropriate pension scheme; or
 - Informed that the procedure for dismissal on the grounds of ill Health capability may be invoked
- 9.9. After the meeting with the member of staff, they should be written to advising them of details of the discussion and the actions that were agreed.
- 9.10. Where an employee is terminally ill, no action will be taken by the Headteacher other than maintaining contact with the employee, if appropriate. The employee will normally continue to receive sick pay until the end of the sickness pay entitlement in accordance with the appropriate conditions of service.

- 9.11. Where an employee is on long-term sickness it should be remembered that they have an individual sick pay entitlement that is related to their length of absence. This sick pay entitlement should not be seen as a right to an amount of paid sickness absence.
- 9.12. If the decision is made, that on the basis of medical evidence a member of staff is unlikely to be returning to work within an acceptable timescale, they will be dealt with under the arrangements set out in [The Circle Trust Discipline Policy](#)