



**West Norfolk
Academies Trust**

Policy and Procedure for the Management of Sickness Absence

Reviewed by: Trustees

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1. Terms of Reference

- “Executive Headteacher” also refers to any other title used to identify the Executive Headteacher, where appropriate, or other senior manager delegated to deal with the matter by the Executive Headteacher.
- “Headteacher” also refers to any other title used to identify the Headteacher, where appropriate, or other senior member of the leadership team (SLT) delegated to deal with the matter by the Headteacher.
- “Companion” refers to a person chosen by the employee to accompany them at a formal meeting, who shall be a trade union representative or a workplace colleague. A companion is entitled to speak to the employee during any meeting, and confer privately, but may not answer questions on the employee’s behalf.
- “WNAT” and “the Trust” refers to West Norfolk Academies Trust.

2. Introduction

- 2.1** The Trustees recognise their responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of staff. This Sickness Absence Policy sets out procedures for reporting sickness absence and for the management of sickness absence in a fair and consistent way. This policy places emphasis on proactive support for staff in the event of ill health difficulties. This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. Procedures set out in this policy, including any time limits, may be varied as appropriate in any case.
- 2.2** It is the responsibility of management to monitor sickness absence and to respond effectively to actual and potential problems. The Trust has standards for attendance for staff as it does for pupils. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and all levels of management to ensure these standards are achieved and to raise awareness of the effect of sickness absence levels on the quality and continuity of teaching and learning and other aspects of the effectiveness of the work of the Trust. In addition, managers have a clear obligation placed on them to identify and address problems in the work environment and/or job factors that may be contributing to staff absence.
- 2.3** Sickness absence can vary from short intermittent periods of ill-health to a continuous period of long-term absence and have a number of different causes (for example, injuries, recurring conditions, or a serious illness requiring lengthy treatment).
- 2.4** Trust School Headteachers are responsible for monitoring the implementation of this procedure, to ensure that this procedure is communicated to employees and that it is applied consistently. Levels of sickness absence will be monitored on an individual employee basis. Levels of absence may also be analysed on a broader, basis to identify areas where the work of the Trust, in particular the continuity of teaching and learning, is being affected by absence levels. The information may be reported to Trustees. Where data is reported to Trustees, any identifying information regarding individual staff members will be removed. This procedure sets out the steps, which the Headteacher and line managers will normally follow when staff sickness absence occurs.
- 2.5** Sickness absence may result from a disability under the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments to this procedure may be considered in appropriate cases, depending on the specific circumstances. HR advice should be obtained where the line manager considers the employee is likely to have a disability.
- 2.6** No action will be taken under the formal part of this Sickness Absence Policy against a trade union representative without prior discussion with an appropriate trade union officer.

- 2.7** In normal circumstances, any employee with Line Management responsibility for one or more staff members has the authority to hold Return to Work discussions.
- 2.8** In normal circumstances, any employee with Line Management responsibility for one or more staff members has the authority to hold Informal Sickness Absence Meetings.
- 2.9** All Senior Management staff have the authority to hold Stage 1 Meetings (and review other Senior Manager's Stage 1 decisions at appeal) with permission from the relevant school Headteacher.
- 2.10** Headteachers, with permission from the Executive Headteacher considered on a case-by-case basis, have the authority to hold a Stage 2 meeting. In the event that the Headteacher has held the Stage 1 meeting then Stage 2 may be considered by the Executive Headteacher.
- 2.11** This policy operates in conjunction with the Stress Management Policy available on the Trust's website. A copy of the Work Related Stress Risk Assessment is included at Appendix A of this policy to support the aim of the Trust and its line managers to try to create a working environment that avoids or reduces potential stressors.

3. Employees' Responsibilities

- 3.1** Employees must attend work when fit to do so.
- 3.2** Employees must follow their school procedure for notifying sickness absence when unfit to attend work. This procedure will be made clear to the employee on their school induction and if clarification of the correct procedure is required, the employee must seek this clarification from their line manager.
- 3.2.1** An employee who is prevented by illness or injury from reporting for duty must personally follow the relevant school procedure by telephoning the appropriate person as early as possible on the first day of absence. Employees must ensure that they are aware of the relevant absence line number, which will be provided to them on their school induction. The employee must seek clarification of this telephone number as necessary with their line manager if they are unsure of the details following their induction. The following details should be provided by the employee:
- The nature of the employee's illness/injury.
 - The expected length of absence from work.
 - Current contact details.
 - Any outstanding or urgent work that requires attention.
- 3.3** If an employee does not report for work, and has not explained the reason for absence, then the employee should expect to be contacted by telephone, email or text during the period of absence by the employee's line manager, who will want to enquire after the employee's health and be advised, if possible, as to the employee's expected return date. If contact cannot be made then the line manager may contact the employee's emergency contacts to ensure the health and wellbeing of the employee. A letter may be sent as a last resort if all other contact attempts fail. These contact attempts must not be treated as a substitute for reporting sickness absence. Absence that has not been notified in accordance with the sickness absence reporting procedure will be treated as unauthorised absence and may be unpaid. Prior to making a determination on whether the absence is paid or unpaid, the employee will have the opportunity to explain their position.

- 3.4** All employees must complete a self-certification form detailing the reason for absence for any period of sickness absence up to seven days. The self-certification form can be found at Appendix B of this policy and must be completed immediately on return to duty and returned to your Line Manager.
- 3.5** A medical certificate (a 'Statement of Fitness for Work' hereinafter called a 'Fit Note') must be provided from the eighth day of absence (including Saturdays and Sundays). This should be provided to the line manager as soon as possible and, if absence continues further, Fit Notes should be provided to cover the whole period of absence. Failure to do so may result in non-payment of sick pay (where applicable) and/or disciplinary action if appropriate.
- 3.6** Employees must continue to submit Fit Notes during the Trust's closure periods.
- 3.7** The School or Trust may take a copy of the Fit Note for their records and return the original copy to the employee.
- 3.8** An employee shall, if required at any time, attend an Occupational Health (OH) or other medical appointment/examination by a registered medical practitioner nominated by the Trust.

4. Reimbursement of Cost of Doctors' Statements.

- 4.1** Where the Headteacher requires a medical certificate ('Fit Note') from an employee, the employer shall, on provision of a receipt, reimburse the employee if a charge is made for the Fit Note.

5. Illness or Injury Arising from Work.

- 5.1** Any accident arising out of, or in the course of, employment with WNAT must be reported and recorded in accordance with the required procedures. The accident may be subject to investigation and reported by an employee authorised for this purpose by the Trust.
- 5.2** Where an employee seeks medical advice about an illness that is suspected or alleged to result from the nature of his or her employment, the employee must report relevant information to the Headteacher or Senior Manager at the first opportunity.
- 5.3** In the case of the first, and any subsequent, absence due to industrial disease or accident an employee shall agree, at any time during such absence, if so required by the employer, to a medical examination by a registered medical practitioner nominated by the Trust.

6. General Return to Work Arrangements

6.1 Phased Returns

- 6.1.1** Where an employee returns to work on a part time basis following long-term sickness absence, with the expectation that they will be able to work their full contractual hours (or other such amended contractual hours as agreed) within a reasonable period of time, then, in accordance with medical advice provided by the Occupational Health doctor or the Fit for Work service, the following arrangements will normally be made in relation to pay:

- Where the employee has exhausted their sick pay entitlement, the salary payment made will be based on the number of hours worked during the phased return.
- Where the employee has not exhausted their sick pay entitlement, the employee will be paid in accordance with the number of hours worked, or the occupational sick pay entitlement that would be payable if the employee remained off work due to sickness absence, whichever is the greater amount.

- 6.1.2** The usual maximum duration of a paid phased return will be six weeks. Headteachers can use their discretion to extend this period on medical advice, but where a phased return exceeds six weeks, consideration should be given to a temporary reduction in paid contractual hours.
- 6.2** If the employee returns to work with a Fit Note that states 'may be fit for work', the employee should notify their manager immediately. The advice on the note will be discussed together with any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate the employee's return to work, taking into account the doctor's advice. Consideration will be given as to how the advice impacts the employee, the job, the workplace, service delivery, pupils and colleagues. The doctor's comments, any of the return to work tick boxes and any other action that could facilitate a return to work will be considered with due regard to the Equality Act 2010. Options may include:
- phased return to work;
 - altered hours;
 - amended duties;
 - consideration of redeployment;
 - workplace adaptations;
 - other reasonable adjustments.
- 6.3** If a return to work is possible, the agreed action plan will be documented and implemented. If it is not possible to provide the support suggested by the doctor, the employee will remain on sick leave and will not normally need to return to their doctor to obtain a revised Fit Note unless this is required in the circumstances. A review date will be set.
- 6.4** Consideration will be given as to whether a risk assessment is required to ensure the health and safety of the employee in light of the reason for their ill health, for example, a stress, ergonomic or more general risk assessment may be required. The general risk assessment to be used in these situations is available at Appendix C.
- 6.5** The employee may return to work before the expiry of a Fit Note without going back to see their doctor, even if their G.P has indicated that they need to assess them again. This will not breach WNAT's Employer's Liability Compulsory Insurance, providing a suitable risk assessment has taken place if required. This return will only be considered where the Headteacher is satisfied that allowing a return to work will not exacerbate the employee's illness, or put other employees at risk. Any agreement regarding an early return to work will be recorded. Where it is unclear whether it is appropriate to accept an employee's request to return to work prior to the expiry of a Fit Note, the Headteacher may request that the employee seek further medical advice related to a return to work and any suggested adjustments to their duties, hours or workplace.

7. Probationary Periods for Support Staff

- 7.1** All new support staff employees are subject to a probationary period. Sickness absence issues that arise during a support staff employee's probationary period may be taken into account in determining whether or not the probationary period is completed satisfactorily and this procedure (save for the sickness absence reporting procedure) will not normally apply.

8. Unauthorised Absence/False Information

8.1 Unauthorised absence will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure and could result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

8.2 The provision of any false information will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and could result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

9. Attendance at Meetings

9.1 The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend absence meetings. Failure to do so without good reason may be treated as misconduct. Employees will not be entitled to attend informal meetings under this policy with a trade union representative or work place colleague. At all formal meetings employees may be accompanied by a Companion (see Terms of Reference). If the employee (and/or their companion) is unable to attend at the time specified, the employee should immediately inform the meeting chair, who will normally seek to agree an alternative time. Meetings will not normally be postponed beyond 5 days. Depending on the circumstances, if an employee indicates that they are too unwell to attend a formal or informal meeting, they will be given the option to:

- meet in another venue or at their home; or
- attend via telephone conference; or
- send a Companion to represent them, providing appropriate written consent (though this will not normally apply in the case of informal meetings or discussions); or
- provide a written submission; or
- request that the meeting takes place in their absence.

9.2 If an employee fails to communicate their wishes with regard to the above, the meeting may take place in their absence with the outcome communicated to them in writing. Meetings will not, in normal circumstances, be postponed beyond 5 days unless there is medical evidence that the employee is not medically fit to take part by any of the means described in clause 9.1 and, even if this is the case, the Trust reserves the right to proceed with any necessary steps required to manage the specific case including holding meetings notwithstanding, as appropriate.

9.3 Any senior manager visiting an employee's home will be accompanied by another manager, or HR representative.

9.4 A meeting may be adjourned if the employee's line manager is awaiting receipt of information, needs to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at a previous meeting. The employee will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the meeting is reconvened.

10. Informal Procedure

10.1 Return to Work Discussion

10.1.1 The line manager will normally have a discussion with the employee on their return from a period of sickness absence. The purpose of this discussion is to determine the reason for the absence and, where appropriate, offer assistance and support. It is also an opportunity to identify any difficulties that the employee is experiencing in carrying out the duties of the post and gives the employee an opportunity to raise any concerns or questions and bring any matters to the manager's attention.

The return to work discussion should be held in private as soon as possible after a period of sickness absence, though it need not be long. A copy of the Return to Work form is included in this policy at Appendix D. A copy of this form will be filed in the employee's staff file and a copy will be provided to the employee where there are noted action points, or if the employee wishes to receive a copy for their records.

10.2 Informal Sickness Absence Meetings

10.2.1 Informal sickness absence meetings may be arranged with employees whenever it is considered necessary including, for example, if the employee has:

- a score of 200 or higher on the Bradford Factor (information regarding the Bradford Factor is available at www.bradfordfactorcalculator.com)
- unacceptable patterns of absence, or a single, long-term absence (normally 28 days or more)

In preparation for the meeting, the line manager may, when appropriate:

- consider the Trust's statistical data on levels and types of sickness absence for all staff to ensure consistency;
- confirm that an unsatisfactory level of attendance has been reached, depending on the circumstances, or that the record shows a pattern of absence or some other factual data which identifies the cause for concern;
- consider the job description and the impact of the absences on all affected – e.g. on the work of the school and the Trust and on any specific work group or department.

The purpose of the meeting is to agree a way forward, any action that will be taken and a timescale for review and/or a further meeting under the sickness absence procedure, if this is required.

10.2.2 The line manager will, in normal circumstances, use the Informal Sickness Absence Meeting Proforma at Appendix E as the agenda for the meeting and will record salient points. The employee will be given a completed signed copy after the meeting.

There is no entitlement for the employee to be accompanied by a Companion at an informal sickness absence meeting. A note taker may be present but that will not normally be necessary.

10.3 Monitoring Period following Informal Sickness Absence Meeting

10.3.1 After conducting an informal sickness absence meeting, the line manager will review or monitor the employee's attendance for a further period, normally this will be for a period of not less than one month and no longer than three months. Further meetings may take place during the monitoring period if there are further instances of sickness absence.

10.3.2 During this review period the line manager will:

- assess the employee's absence record and its impact;
- attempt to establish reasons for any on-going absence(s);
- offer any assistance to the employee (e.g. Occupational Health, Counselling);
- consider what, if any, measures might improve the employee's health and/or attendance with a view to supporting the employee and improving the employee's attendance record.

10.3.3 During the monitoring period the line manager may require that any period of absence be covered by a medical certificate (Fit Note). If the employee has a fit note that states 'may be fit for work', the process in 6.2 will also be followed. If the suggested support cannot be reasonably accommodated in order to facilitate the employee's return to work, a decision may be made to move to the formal part of the procedure.

10.4 Where the line manager is of the view that the employee's attendance has not improved to an acceptable level after the review period, the line manager should inform the employee that the issue will:

- be referred to Stage 1 of the formal procedure. A letter requiring attendance at a Stage 1 meeting will be sent to the employee; or
- if there are exceptional circumstances and it is appropriate to do so, extend the review period.

11. Formal Procedure

11.1 Stages in the Process

11.1.1 There are two stages in the formal process. The type of case (i.e. short or long-term absence) will determine the need to move either through the stages (short-term absence), or, in some circumstances, directly to Stage 2 (long-term absence). The possible pathways through this process are shown in the flowchart at Appendix F. The procedure can end at any point in the process if there is sustained improvement. If further unacceptable periods of absence arise within 12 months of a Stage 1 meeting being held, the procedure may resume at Stage 2.

11.2 Preparation for Stage 1 Formal Meeting

11.2.1 The delegated senior manager will arrange a formal meeting with the employee and give them a minimum notice period of 5 working days, in writing, of:

- the reason for the meeting, outlining the concerns about the employee's attendance;
- the time, date and location of the meeting;
- who will be conducting the meeting and who else will be present;
- copies of any documents to be referred to including any previous action plans;
- the employee's right to be accompanied by a Companion and to refer to any documents/other parties if they wish; and
- the requirement for the employee to provide, at least 2 days prior to the meeting:
 - the name of their representative (if applicable); and
 - copies of any papers to be referred to and other parties to be called (if applicable).

11.3 Stage 1 Meeting

11.3.1 At the Stage 1 meeting the senior manager will explain the purpose of the meeting.

11.3.2 The following points may be covered at the meeting, these are included here by way of guidance only. The senior manager may:

- discuss the reasons, including any underlying causes for the employee's absence;
- explain how the employee's attendance has been assessed as unacceptable and the effect on teaching and learning, service delivery and colleagues;
- review the results of the informal procedure, including any measures taken to support the employee so far. This may include note of any reasonable adjustments made if appropriate, any work related issues and may consider the content of any medical reports and advice received;
- discuss the likelihood of further absences, if absent on a number of occasions, or how long the absence is likely to last if absent on long-term sickness absence;
- seek agreement from the employee for a referral to Occupational Health if this is required and appropriate in the circumstances;
- consider the employee's ability to return to/remain in their job in view both of their capabilities and the School and Trust needs and any adjustments that can reasonably be made, if appropriate, to their job to enable them to do so;
- consider possible redeployment opportunities and whether any appropriate adjustments can reasonably be made to assist in redeploying the employee;
- discuss and seek agreement regarding a return to work programme in circumstances where the employee is able to return from long-term sick leave - whether to their job, or a redeployed job if possible;
- give the employee and/or any Companion the opportunity to explain any mitigating circumstances;
- if appropriate, inform the employee that they may wish to consult their pension scheme provider with regard to ill health benefits;
- discuss the way forward and determine an action plan that clearly identifies:
 - the improvements necessary to achieve satisfactory levels of attendance, including:
 - the timescale for improvement;
 - how attendance will be measured/monitored;
 - any additional support/training to be provided; and
 - the review period, (normally one month and no more than three months);

11.3.3 The senior manager will write to the employee, normally within 5 working days of the Formal Stage 1 Meeting, to:

- confirm the action plan in writing; and
- advise the employee that if they fail to achieve the improvements in the review period then, unless the circumstances otherwise require, a Stage 2 meeting will be arranged where dismissal will be considered;

- confirm the employee's right to ask that another Senior Manager or Trustee (as appropriate) reviews the decision at an appeal meeting. Any appeal should be made in writing to the senior manager within 5 days of the date on which the decision was sent to the employee.

11.4 Stage 1 Review Period

11.4.1 The senior manager will ensure that during the review period the employee's attendance is closely and objectively monitored. Normally, if practicably possible, weekly supervision meetings will be held between the employee and the senior manager to ensure:

- effective monitoring;
- appropriate support is given to the employee;
- positive feedback is given where possible; and
- discussion of reasons behind any further periods of non-attendance, where applicable.

11.4.2 Notes of the monitoring process will normally be kept by the senior manager and a copy provided to the employee. The notes may be referred to at Stage 2 of the procedure.

11.5 Stage 1 Review Period Evaluation

11.5.1 If, at the end of the review period, the employee's level of attendance has improved to acceptable standards, no further action will be taken under this procedure, unless an acceptable level of attendance is not sustained during the next 12 months.

11.5.2 The decision to take no further action will be confirmed by the senior manager in writing, normally within 5 working days of the end of the review period. This letter will also confirm that the improved attendance must be sustained consistently during the next 12 months and explain that if there are further unacceptable periods of absence the Sickness Absence Procedure may be invoked at Stage 2. A copy of this letter will be kept on the employee's personnel file for 12 months.

11.5.3 If, at the end of the review period, the employee's attendance has not improved to acceptable standards then:

- the issue will be referred to the relevant school Headteacher, or the Executive Headteacher, under Stage 2 of the procedure; or
- in exceptional circumstances, if appropriate, the review period will be extended.
- Where the employee is in a Pension Scheme, it may be appropriate to explore eligibility for an ill health pension award prior to convening a Stage 2 Meeting.

11.6 Preparation for a Stage 2 Meeting

11.6.1 The senior manager will hold a formal meeting with the employee in preparation for the Stage 2 meeting. The information from this meeting will also be provided to the employee in writing. The following information will be covered:

- the reason for the Stage 2 meeting, including an outline of the outstanding concerns about the employee's level of attendance due to ill-health;
- the time, date and location of the meeting – a minimum of 5 working days' notice must be given;
- who will be conducting the meeting and who else will be present;

- any documents to be referred to, which may include, as appropriate, previous action plans, notes of the monitoring process, copies of reports received from Occupational Health or other medical specialists;
- the employee's right to be accompanied by a companion as above, to call other parties and to refer to any documents they wish, copies of which should be sent to the senior manager at least 2 days in advance of the meeting; and
- the possible consequences of the meeting, i.e. that it may result in the employee's dismissal, if appropriate.

11.7 Stage 2 Meeting

11.7.1 At the meeting the Headteacher, or Executive Headteacher, may (with advice from an HR Adviser where necessary) and by way of guidance only:

- explain the purpose of the Stage 2 meeting
- ask the senior manager to outline:
 - the ways in which the employee has been assessed as not meeting the expected levels of attendance due to ill-health;
 - the process so far under the sickness absence procedure;
 - any opportunities for return or redeployment that have been identified and where identified, the outcome of discussions with the employee
- review, as appropriate:
 - levels of attendance expected;
 - notes of the formal Sickness Absence meetings, records of home visits or other meetings plus any other information relating to the informal action taken;
 - the previous monitoring of attendance and steps taken under any appropriate action plans;
 - medical advice received from Occupational Health or other medical specialists; and
 - any applicable measures taken by management to support the employee, e.g. reasonable adjustments.
- discuss with the employee and their companion whether the employee has been assessed as achieving the required improvements in attendance;
- review the effect of the unsatisfactory level of attendance on teaching and learning, service delivery and work colleagues;
- explore, as appropriate, the potential for the employee to achieve a sustained improvement in attendance;
- give the employee and/or their companion opportunity to answer the points made and to give an explanation or put forward any mitigating circumstances.

11.7.2 In circumstances where the Headteacher has assumed the role of the senior manager at an earlier stage, the Executive Headteacher will assume the role of the Headteacher as set out above.

11.8 Stage 2 Decision

11.8.1 Following the discussions the Headteacher will adjourn the meeting to consider the options available including, without limit and for guidance only:

- to take no further action under the procedure;
- to set a further/final review period to allow for additional monitoring and/or additional management support. A further Formal Stage 2 meeting may be held at the end of this review period. If attendance is not satisfactory by that time then the employee may be dismissed;
- to dismiss the employee for lack of capability due to ill-health, ensuring that alternative work options have already been explored or will be explored during the employee's notice period, that there is no prospect of their return within a reasonable timeframe, or that they will be able to achieve or sustain their attendance.

11.9 Dismissal

11.9.1 If the decision at the Stage 2 (or a deferred Stage 2 meeting if applicable) is to dismiss the employee, the Headteacher will inform the employee and their Companion, that the employee is dismissed, with the required contractual or statutory notice.

11.9.2 The Headteacher will confirm in writing, to the employee within 5 working days, or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter:

- that the employee has been dismissed;
- the grounds for dismissal and the reasons;
- the required contractual or statutory notice due (or payment in lieu of notice where applicable) and the date the dismissal will be effective;
- the employee's right of appeal against the dismissal to an Appeal Committee of the Governing Body.

11.9.3 Termination will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice. In some cases, it may not be appropriate for the employee to work during their notice period. Further, the contract may provide that the employee remain at home on 'garden leave' or this may be agreed between the parties. A Fit Note must be provided that covers the employee's notice period.

11.10 Appeal

11.10.1 An employee has the right to appeal against a dismissal decision. The appeal should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Trustees, stating the grounds for appeal in full, within 5 working days of the date of the written decision.

Any appeal must be submitted within 10 days of receipt of the letter confirming the dismissal, and must clearly state the grounds for appeal. All appeals against dismissal will be heard by the Appeal Committee of the Trustees. The purpose of an appeal hearing is to review the decision made to dismiss the employee and to decide if this decision was reasonable in all the circumstances. The appeal hearing will be held as soon as practicable, and the employee will have the right to representation at the hearing by a Companion.

11.10.2 The Appeal Committee of the Trustees has the authority to:

- uphold the appeal (i.e. to reinstate the employee);

and/or

- issue a lesser level of management action, e.g. to:
 - drop the formal process;
 - refer to a lower stage in the formal process; and/or
 - reduce standards of attendance or targets set in the action plan;

or

- dismiss the appeal, i.e. the decision to dismiss remains in force.

11.10.3 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. The decision of the Appeal Committee of the Trustees is final. The employee has no further right of appeal.

Appendix A. Work Related Stress Risk Assessment



Employee Stress Risk Assessment

The following Employee Stress Risk Assessment can be used when considering an employee who is displaying possible symptoms of stress, or returning from sickness absence relating to stress.

The Outline Employee Stress Risk Assessment is broken down into the 6 HSE (Health and Safety Executive) Management Standards and includes examples of cause and possible intervention. The assessment is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive, but it should be used as a guide to assist those conducting the assessment in looking at the possible causes of stress and remedies.

Who Should Conduct the Stress Risk Assessment?

In most instances, the Line Manager is in the best position to undertake the assessment. This is because they have the ability to alter or control a number of the factors that may be causing stress (workload, target dates, etc.).

However, there may be occasions when it is inappropriate for the Line Manager to undertake the assessment, such situations would include:

- Current dispute between the Manager and the employee
- At the request of the employee
- Where Senior Managers consider assessment by the Line Manager inadvisable.

In this case, consideration should be given to another Manager in the same work area or the Senior Manager to the Line Manager undertaking the stress assessment.

In complex cases, advice should be sought from your HR Adviser as soon as possible.

How to Conduct an Individual Stress Risk Assessment

Where possible, the person conducting the stress assessment should:

- Put the employee at ease by explaining the purpose of the assessment.
- Explain to the employee what stress is:
 1. Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. Stress is not an illness but, sustained over a period of time, it can lead to mental and/or physical illness.
 2. There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure and challenge are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enabling employees to meet their full potential and realise a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it results in stress.
 3. Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in stress. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.
 4. The School recognise that the capacity to deal with stress varies from person to person. Employees react to similar situations in different ways.
 5. The School has a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.

- Conduct the interview in a confidential manner, excluding others from hearing and avoiding interruption.
- Seek to achieve a relaxed, informal environment where the employee does not feel threatened.
- Ask 'lead questions' to establish where concerns exist; if no problems are indicated within a particular area then move on to the next. Where concerns are raised then follow-up with more detailed questions to identify the cause(s) of the employee's stress. Typical 'lead questions' are provided in the Outline Employee Stress Risk Assessment together with possible causal factors and intervention techniques.
- Do not use the Outline Employee Stress Risk Assessment as a questionnaire i.e. going through each question, but use it intuitively; listen to the reply and form your questions in an open format. This allows the employee to express their feelings and discourages yes/no replies.
- Discussing stressing factors can be emotive so Managers should introduce rest breaks within the assessment if necessary.
- Where possible suggest and agree adjustments. Those adjustments may include any of the following:
 1. A workload review, reallocation of work, monitoring of future workload or possible redeployment.
 2. Investigation under the School's Disciplinary and/or Grievance Procedures. This would be appropriate where the Manager had a concern about a colleague's conduct or an employee was raising a concern that was appropriate to consider as a grievance.
 3. Referral for medical advice, treatment and/or a medical report to be provided by your Occupational Health provider.
 4. If the employee is on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme.
- The agreement of adjustments can also be done at a later stage, if detail needs to be checked or other people's co-operation needs to be sought. Whilst possible interventions are included within the outline assessment, others may present themselves depending on the situation met and the employee concerned.
- At the end of the assessment, a summary sheet should be drafted. The sheet should record all of the identified key stressors and the appropriate interventions. This document then forms an individual action plan that should be agreed with the employee.

Taking Action on the Findings of the Stress Risk Assessment

Where specific stressors are identified, corrective action must be taken to address them. The action plan should be implemented within agreed time-scales and the plan reviewed on a regular basis with the employee to ensure it remains valid.

Outline Employee Stress Risk Assessment

1. Demands:

This includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.

The HSE standard is:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

Question

1.1. Do you find the quantity and level of work expected from you acceptable?

Cause	Possible intervention
Excessive demands	Tasks have to be adequate and achievable in relation to the agreed hours of work
Targets to meet	Review targets, agree realistic goals and time scales
Conflicting demands	Balance and review the work load
Limited demands	Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees Review level of responsibility
Monotony of work Repetitive nature of work	Review job design Review job weighting and workload, consider giving more complex work
Long hours	Employees encouraged to work within their contractual hours, to take their meal breaks Managers should set a good personal example – take breaks, etc. Ensure that there are sufficient resources to do the work

Question

1.2. Is the physical environment in which you work satisfactory (lighting, temperature, etc.)?

Cause	Possible intervention
Physical environment such as excessive noise, inadequate light, etc.	Employee's concerns about their work environment are addressed

Question

1.3. Do you experience any form of physical or verbal abuse or violence whilst at work?

Cause	Possible intervention
--------------	------------------------------

Psychosocial environment such as workplace violence and verbal abuse	Open communication so Managers know what the issues are Workers training to deal with situations Review the situation regularly
--	---

2. Control:

How much say the employee has in the way they do their work.

The HSE standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

Question

2.1. Do you feel that you have some say as to how you work and about how much work you are able to do?

Cause	Possible intervention
Excluded from decisions that affect job descriptions No say in how to do the work	Where appropriate, employee included in decisions about their job
Employee not being consulted on changes to their work patterns	Employee consulted over their work pattern
Inflexible working pattern Working patterns dictated to employee	Employee have a say over when breaks can be taken, subject to organisational requirements
No choice in what you do at work	Employee encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work

Question

2.2. Do you think that you are given sufficient opportunities to develop skills or career opportunities?

Cause	Possible intervention
-------	-----------------------

Lack of opportunities to develop their career Boring/repetitive job	Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work
Lack of training	The development of employees identified on their personal development plans and given training opportunities as appropriate

3. Support:

This includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

The HSE standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

Questions

- 3.1. Do you think that you receive sufficient information and support from your Manager and colleagues to enable you to work effectively?
- 3.2. Have you had sufficient training or development?

Cause	Possible intervention
Lack of support from Line Manager	Line Managers support employees Review lines of communication (meetings, informal chats, e-mails, etc.) Be approachable
Lack of support from colleagues	Encourage good team working, participation and discussion
Policies and procedures not known to employee	Ensure that policies and procedures are in place and discussed at team meetings or otherwise disseminated
Inadequate feed back	Use the reporting system effectively, have regular meetings with employees
No feedback on performance from Manager, feedback not constructive	Ensure feedback is given, both good and bad and that it is constructive and Line Manager takes ownership of it Draw up action plans to resolve any issues, monitor progress and review; keep good records of discussions

4. Relationships:

This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

The HSE standard is:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work.

- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

Questions

- 4.1. Are you subject to any form of bullying or harassment by Managers, colleagues, children, parents, etc. at work?
- 4.2. Are work relationships strained?

Cause	Possible intervention
Bullying/harassment	Create a positive culture where bullying/harassment is not tolerated
Conflict	Managers promote positive behaviours to avoid conflict. If it cannot be resolved, try to work around it
Employees do not know policy, re Bullying, etc.	Disseminate policy appropriately; treat employees equally and fairly in line with current policy
Misuse of power or position	Ensure employees are aware of the avenues they can take when subjected to unacceptable behaviour
Continual criticism, humiliation, undermining an employee's professional ability	Encourage open two-way communication Seek advice from HR where necessary Respect employees' diversity Encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour
Isolation	Employees share information relevant to their work

5. Role:

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

The HSE standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

Questions

- 5.1. Do you understand where your work fits in with the overall aim of the organisation?
- 5.2. Are you clear on what you should be doing and when?

Cause	Possible intervention
Unclear aims and objectives	
Expectations conflicting and/or unreasonable	Discuss the issues and agree reasonable expectations
Receiving work and instructions from more than one source	Agree with the post holder how tasks are issued and from whom
Being asked to perform duties outside of their normal job	Ensure that tasks given are within the normal duties or give reasons why if they are outside of the normal duties
Role developing and changing	Training provided to carry out new tasks Try to match work to skills
A newly created post	Agree a clearly defined role and document employee's agreement Review the post after a short period to verify role, work and training needs
No clear lines of communication	Put in place clear lines of communication
No system to raise concerns about uncertainties or conflicts in their role & responsibility	Ensure workers know that they can raise concerns in a confidential manner 2 way communication at the reporting meetings Provide SMART objectives
Responsibility without the authority	Responsibility and authority should match
Level of authority unclear within the team	Ensure responsibilities and authorities are clear within the team

6. Change:

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The HSE standard is that:

- Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concern.

Questions

6.1. Do you think that you are kept up to date about significant changes in the work place?

6.2. Do you have sufficient opportunity to question Managers about changes in the work place?

Cause	Possible intervention
Insufficient information of change provided to enable workers to understand the reasons for proposed changes	Keep workers informed of change and the reason why, especially if it affects them directly
Speculation and rumours False expectations	Keeping workers informed will prevent rumours Be honest with workers about change
No consultation with workers on changes	Consult with workers when possible to provide an opportunity for workers to influence proposals
Unsure how change will impact upon them	Workers are kept informed of the probable impact change may have on their role and provide support
Not knowing when change will take place	Workers aware of timetables for changes Workers have access to relevant support during changes

Employee Stress Assessment


Name (of employee being assessed):	
Job Title:	
Assessing Manager:	
Job Title:	
Date of Assessment:	
Review Date:	

Hazard or risk factor perceived by employee:	Control measures (possible solutions) to be considered:	By who and when:	Monitoring/review by who/when:
Demands of the job			
Personal control over work			
Support, training or specific individual needs			
Relationships at work			
Perception of role			
Change at work			

School Name:	Date of risk assessment: Next assessment due:
Employee Name: Risk assessment performed by:	Department:

Appendix B. Self-Certification Form

Appendix C. Risk Assessment Pro-Forma.

SCHOOL NAME.....	 West Norfolk Academies Trust																
SELF CERTIFICATION STAFF SICKNESS/EMERGENCY ABSENCE FORM TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL STAFF ON RETURN TO WORK AND RETURNED WITHIN 3 DAYS																	
As soon as you return to work after sickness, you must complete the self-certification form covering the first seven days of absence. Your entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay will depend on the evidence of sickness you provide below. The Period of Sickness' dates must be the first and last days of your actual sickness, even if these occurred on rest days, public holidays or other days you would not normally work.																	
FORENAME.....SURNAME.....																	
1. DATE OF ABSENCE I was sick/absent from (includes days which you would not normally work)																	
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PLEASE TICK ALL DAY OR AM/PM from	PLEASE TICK ALL DAY OR AM/PM from	RETURNED TO WORK ON - DATE															
a total of working days																	
Notification of absence given to (Name)																	
2. REASON Please tick Illness <input type="checkbox"/> Accident sustained at work <input type="checkbox"/> Accident not sustained at work <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> e.g. Doctor's Appointment, funeral - please state reason																	
3. DETAILS Give details of illness (simply stating 'illness' is not sufficient) or describe the injury caused by the accident																	
4. DOCTOR/HOSPITAL Did you consult a doctor or go to hospital Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If YES state treatment prescribed: If NO state what steps you took to aid your recovery:																	
Declaration: I certify that the above is a complete and accurate record of my sickness/absence. I understand that if I provide inaccurate or false information about my absence, with intention to mislead, this will result in disciplinary action and will affect my entitlement to sick pay.																	
STAFF MEMBER SIGNATURE Date.....																	
For completion by SLT Member:																	
Has a Return to Work interview been held? Yes No																	
Signature..... Date.....																	

Return to Work Risk Assessment

Special Considerations for Return to Work Risk Assessments

This risk assessment will be unique to the employee returning to work. It is important that a risk assessment is carried out to ensure that the employee is supported and to protect the Trust from additional costs, lost productivity, increased absenteeism and reputational damage. If an employee has been absent from work long-term due to a medical condition, please consider whether Occupational Health advice is needed to ensure a medical opinion is sought about possible reasonable adjustments. If the employee is encountering work related stress, please complete a stress risk assessment. For all other conditions please use the below template.

Hazard (<i>i.e. lifting, navigating the workplace, using a computer, handling workload</i>)	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to control this risk?	Action by whom? <i>(Initials)</i>	Action by when? <i>(Date)</i>	Completed <i>(Date)</i>

Absence – Return to Work Interview

SECTION 1 – INDIVIDUAL DETAILS	
Employee Name:	Date of Meeting:
Employee Role:	
Line Manager Name:	
Interviewing Manager Name:	

SECTION 2 – ABSENCE INFORMATION	
From Day & Date:	To Day & Date:
	Number of Working Days absent:
Reason for Absence:	
Did employee use correct procedure to report absence: Yes/No	
Number of Working Days Absent in the last 12 months:	
Bradford Score:	

DELETE AS APPLICABLE:			
Is the employee fit to work?	Y/N*	Is there a concern regarding the employee’s sickness absence levels (i.e. 200+ on Bradford, unreported absence or unacceptable absence pattern?)	*Y/N
Is the absence related to a work issue?	*Y/N	Is the absence related to either pregnancy or disability?	*Y/N
If the absence was work related, have any preventative actions been identified?	*Y/N	Is the employee to be referred for an Informal Sickness Absence meeting?	Y/N
Does the employee require any support	*Y/N	Has there been a previous OH referral?	*Y/N

or adaptations to return to work?			
Are any adaptations/phased or reduced hours supported by a medical certificate?	Y/N	Is there a need to place a new OH referral?	*Y/N
Did the employee self-certificate? (up to 7 days)	Y/N	Is the employee aware of WNAT's Sickness Absence Policy?	Y/N*
Did the employee have a Fit Note from the Doctor to cover the absence? (8 days or more)	Y/N		

Please provide additional comments on any area marked with * above:

Employee Comments:

Key Actions to be completed:

ACTION	BY WHOM	WHEN

SECTION 3 – VALIDATION

I agree that the above notes reflect the contents of the return to work interview:

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Manager Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E. Informal Sickness Absence Meeting Form



Strictly Confidential Sickness Absence Interview Record

This is the management record of a meeting held under paragraph 10 of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure. It is strictly confidential. It will be held on the employee's personnel file until such time as the employee's attendance is wholly satisfactory and for 12 months thereafter. At that time it will be securely destroyed. The record may be accessed and referred to by those with authority to manage the informal and formal stages of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure. A Sickness Absence Interview is not part of the formal procedure and there is no entitlement for the employee to be accompanied or represented. The meeting will be held in private.

Employee:	Date of Meeting:
Length of service:	
Interviewing Manager :	

Details of Sickness Absence

Period of Absence:	Number of Days Absent:
Reason(s) for Absence:	
Is absence related to a disability under the Equality Act? No Yes <i>if yes – details of medical evidence must be attached.</i>	

Details of Meeting

Key points discussed Welcome and update, if necessary, on work events and changes.
Reasons for absence – underlying medical condition?

The value of your contribution. The impact of absence on teaching and learning, service delivery and colleagues.
The impact of your absence and how your work has been covered in your absence.

Are you fully recovered and able to resume full duties? Yes No
If your view is "no" then action plan must consider
Referral to OH
Temporary adjustments

Action Plan

The objective is that attendance will be 100%. Is there anything we can do to improve your attendance, e.g. OH referral, counselling, a review of risk assessment, temporary adjustments, training?

Is your absence in any way related to work?

Are you doing all you can to improve your attendance?
e.g. Act on medical advice, lifestyle choices, attention to work life balance, non-medical support e.g. counselling.

<p>Fit note required for any period of absence during the monitoring period? (see paras 3.5 – 6, 10.9.3 and 11.9.3)</p> <p>Yes No</p>	
<p>Review</p> <p>Attendance will be reviewed in 1 month 2 months 3 months Date of review: _____</p> <p>Please note that further absence during this period may mean that the review is held under Stage 1 of the formal procedure.</p>	
<p>Copy of Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure has been provided and process explained.</p> <p>Yes Date _____ No <i>(must be provided and explained prior to a formal meeting)</i></p>	
<p>Signature of Manager.....</p> <p>Signature of Employee.....</p>	<p>Date</p> <p>Date</p>

Appendix F. Sickness Absence Procedures Flowchart

Sickness Absence Procedures Flowchart

