

STAFF ABSENCE POLICY

Statement of Policy

It is recognised by The Iona School that from time to time staff may require to be absent from their place of work due to illness. The length of time lost by employees through illness must However be monitored to ensure that each member of staff is able to do their job, effectively and without putting themselves or others at risk. It is not the intention of The Iona School to penalise the genuinely sick, however it must be recognised that an employee who is medically unfit to carry out his/her contractual duties may not be able continue in that employment.

Managers will consider cases of sickness absence on an individual basis and ensure the provision of appropriate support, advice and input where appropriate. However, it is recognised that in some cases, patterns/levels of absence will be unacceptable and formal management action will be required.

Employees who become aware that they have an illness problem are encouraged to inform their manager at the earliest opportunity. All such requests will be dealt with as speedily and compassionately as possible.

Key Principles

1. This procedure enables managers to address absence issues, both short- and long-term, in a fair, consistent and equitable manner. It is recognised however that all cases must be dealt with on an individual basis because of differing circumstances therefore this procedure gives an outline of the principles to be observed.
2. This procedure will be invoked where management has cause for concern regarding an employee's short-term persistent or long-term absence.
3. The Iona School recognises that everybody is sick or subject to emergencies from time to time, however, regular attendance at work is a contractual requirement.
4. Short-term absenteeism refers to a series of illnesses that are often unconnected which result in frequent, short periods of absence.
5. It is acknowledged that occasions do arise when people are away from work on a long-term basis as a result of chronic or acute ill health. Although each case will be dealt with on an individual basis this policy outlines certain principles that will always be observed. Long-term absence would normally be classed as at least six weeks continuous absence.
6. This procedure applies to ALL staff within The Iona School except for employees currently in their probationary period.
7. Advice should be taken from The Human Resources advisor at all formal stages of this procedure to ensure the consistent application of this procedure throughout The Iona School.
8. In accordance with The Iona School Equality Policy, this procedure will not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds age, disability, gender reassignment,

marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation trade union membership, or any other personal characteristics.

9. The policy and procedure will be reviewed periodically giving due consideration to any legislative changes.

General Points

The Iona School procedure for managing absence MUST be followed. It is the responsibility of every employee to report any absence and only in exceptional cases should this procedure be carried out by someone else on their behalf.

If an employee knowingly gives any false information or makes false statements about their sickness it may be treated as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken. In proven cases of gross misconduct it could lead to dismissal (e.g. absent on sick leave and working elsewhere).

The Iona School reserves the right to request a Doctor's Certificate for periods of absence of less than seven days in cases of short-term persistent absence. Where a cost is incurred, this will be reimbursed by The Iona School.

Any employee who unreasonably fails to comply with The Iona School's Absence Management policy and procedure may have their Occupational Sick Pay withheld.

The Iona School has the right to dismiss employees whilst they are receiving sick pay entitlement. Any decision to dismiss will be supported by medical advice. Employees who are dismissed are entitled to receive the full amount that would be equivalent to their occupational sick pay entitlement, plus the relevant notice and leave entitlement.

Section 1

Employee Responsibilities

Reporting Absence

All employees must contact the Business Manager as early as possible on the first day of absence. The employee must make this call. The only exception is where it is clearly not possible for employees to ring personally – such as admission to Hospital.

Employees must talk directly to the Business Manager and not leave messages with anybody else. If the Business Manager is unavailable a message must be left and the call will be returned.

If an employee does not have a telephone at home alternative arrangements for reporting sickness must be made.

When reporting absence employees must give the following information:

- the reason for the absence
- the expected length of absence

In cases of continued absence, employees must contact the Business Manager again on the fourth day of absence to provide them with up to date information.

Sickness Certification

If an absence lasts for seven calendar days or less, on the first day back at work, employees will be required to complete a Sickness Self-Certificate giving the reasons for absence. The Certificate will be countersigned by the Business Manager and subsequently will be kept in the individual's personnel file.

If an absence exceeds seven calendar days a doctor's statement of fitness to work certificate must be submitted to the Business Manager, no later than the tenth day of absence, covering the absence from the eighth day.

If an absence continues beyond the period covered by the initial medical certificate, further medical certificates must be submitted to give continuous cover for the period of absence. On eventual return to work employees must complete The Iona School's Sickness Self-Certificate in respect of the first seven days or less not covered by a doctor's medical certificate.

OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURAL STAGES

On return from absence all employees must be interviewed by the Business Manager. At this interview the employee and the Business Manager must complete a 'Return to work interview' form agreeing the reason for the absence, the period of absence and, where appropriate, what course of action is required as a result of the absence. This form must be signed by both parties before being forwarded to the employees personnel file

Stage 1

In situations where an employee's sickness record is giving some cause for concern, then the Business Manager will discuss those concerns with the employee, providing support where appropriate. It is essential that any message conveyed in this manner is clear and unambiguous.

Stage 2

If there is no obvious improvement in the health of the employee or any sign of patterns emerging in an employee's absence then the Business Manager would arrange for the employee to meet an appropriate colleague who would 'formally' review the employee's case. At this formal stage the employee must be offered the opportunity for appropriate representation by a work colleague or trade union official.

The employee must be given the outcome of this meeting in writing and where appropriate they must be given notice that their level of absence is unacceptable and a period of time to improve.

Stage 3

If the employee fails to improve in the given time scale then a formal second Review must be undertaken. If possible, a more senior manager should chair this meeting. The employee must be offered the opportunity for appropriate representation by a work colleague or trade union official at this time.

Prior to the Meeting the employee must be seen by the Occupational Health / Company Approved Doctor who will give his opinion on the employee's health. The employee must be given the results of this meeting in writing. Where appropriate they must be given notice that their level of absence is unacceptable and that they are given a period of time during which to reduce their level of absence. The employee must also be informed at this stage if any further absences may result in their employment being terminated due to incapacity.

Stage 4

If there is still no improvement within the laid down time scale a Review will be held with the appropriate senior person in the chair. The employee must be offered the opportunity for appropriate representation by a work colleague or a trade union official at this meeting. The senior person will review all the available evidence including the Doctor's report.

If there are no special circumstances the employee will be dismissed on the grounds of incapacity and their inability to meet the acceptable standards of attendance required by The Iona School.

Section 2

Monitoring And Consultation

The Iona School operates an accurate method of recording and monitoring levels of absence. If the amount of time being taken off for illness is giving cause for concern, this will be discussed with employees at the return to work interview.

Long-Term Absence

Consultation and Discussion

In cases of long-term absence the Business Manager must arrange to conduct regular 'care and concern' interviews to discuss possible courses of action should the absence continue (these interviews should be recorded and notes sent to the employee concerned). Employees may choose to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative. The Business Manager may also choose to be accompanied, normally by a Human Resources Adviser or another colleague.

If employees are too ill to travel, the Business Manager may choose to conduct a home visit at a mutually convenient time.

Medical Advice

In cases of long-term absence, regular medical assessments must be sought.

Where there is doubt regarding an employee's ability to return to work on a permanent basis advice must be sought from The Iona School Doctor / Occupational Health Service Provider.

Employees must make themselves available to attend medical referrals.

Returning To Work

Wherever possible, The Iona School will aid a return to work on a permanent basis. To establish the most effective way of doing this The Iona School may seek further medical advice.

This may include making reasonable adjustments to the employee's job, allowing a phased return to work, or by allowing the employee to return to work on a reduced or alternative hours basis.

Where a phased return to work is recommended through the medical assessment, the employee will be able to return to work on a part-time basis and receive their full pay. This will be for a maximum period of four weeks, after that the employee must substitute their annual leave for days not worked or receive payment only for the hours worked.

Where an employee requests a phased return to work themselves, annual leave should be taken for days not worked or they may opt to receive payment only for the hours worked.

Redeployment

If medical opinion is that an employee is unfit to return to their former employment, the possibility of alternative employment will be considered. However, depending on the availability of alternative posts, this may not be possible.

Ill-Health Retirement

Should the medical opinion indicate that an employee is permanently unfit, employees may have the option for applying for early retirement on the grounds of ill health, in line with the provisions of their pension scheme. This option should be discussed with individuals in full at the appropriate time.

Resignation

At any time during this process an employee may choose to resign from their employment. They are required to give their contractual notice and any outstanding accrued holiday entitlement will be paid in lieu.

Payment in lieu of notice may be agreed by the Trustees.

Dismissal On The Grounds Of Incapacity

Should the dismissal of an employee be identified during the final care and concern meeting as the only appropriate option (i.e. all other options as outlined above have been investigated and found to be inappropriate) a formal incapacity review meeting must be held with the employee in question and the Business Manager to fully consider the situation again.

At this meeting the employee has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union Representative.

Following the meeting if the employee is dismissed, they will be given a letter confirming the reason for dismissal, the date of dismissal, their right to appeal, any payment in lieu of contractual notice and any other outstanding payments to which they are entitled e.g. annual leave.

Sick Pay Regulations

The sick pay regulations are financial provisions and indicate an entitlement to sick pay and in no way indicate the amount of sickness absence to which an employee is entitled.

Data Protection

All information relating to an individual's absence will be handled in line with Data Protection principles and will be used purely to carry out the management of their employment.

Section 3

APPEALS

Every employee has the right to appeal against the outcome of any formal review stage of the absence procedure. The basis of an appeal should normally relate to one of the following areas:

- (i) that the Policy had not been followed correctly.
- (ii) that the resulting action was inappropriate.
- (iii) that the need for action was not warranted.

Appeals against the formal stages of the Absence Procedure

An appeal should be put in writing to the appropriate senior person. The letter of appeal may be constructed by the employee or their representative. The letter should contain the grounds for appeal and should be lodged within 7 days of receipt of the issue of a formal letter. An appeal hearing should be arranged within 7 days of receipt of the appeal letter. An appeal against Dismissal will be considered in the same way, but should be heard by a senior person who has not previously been involved in the case.

Section 4

PROCEDURES CHECK LIST

Stage 1

Return to Work Interview

This is an informal part of the Procedure, however in order to give the process credibility the following rules should be followed :-

- Every employee should complete a 'Return to work interview' form with the Business Manager.
- Interviews should be carried out in an area where there will be no interruptions and where both parties may feel at ease.
- The employee should always be informed of the reason for the meeting.
- The meeting should be prefaced by an indication of concern for the employee as well as the need for the Business Manager to be aware of the health of his/her employees.
- The employee should be encouraged to discuss any problems they may be having with their health and to actively contribute to the solution to the problem.
- Any apparent problem or patterns of absence should be brought to the employees attention.
- All relevant absence documentation **must** be recorded on the employees personnel file.

Stage 2

- Prior to calling a hearing, full details of absence record along with reasons should be made available to all participants.
- The employee should be made aware of the date and location of the Review and the reasons for it.
- In addition they should be informed of the right to be represented at the Review.
- The employee should be given the opportunity to explain absence records and present any evidence required.
- If there are medical problems it may be necessary to adjourn the Meeting for medical advice.
- The Business Manager should set out clearly the improvements expected and the time scale over which these improvements must be achieved.

- The employee should be informed in writing of the requirements and the time scale and advised if the warning is to be recorded on his record.
- Any warning letter should be copied to the Trade Union Representative if present at the hearing. The employee must be informed of their right to appeal against this decision.
- Any warnings issued will remain on the record for 12 months.

Stage 3

- If there has been no improvement in the absence record in the period set at the first Review or there has been a further breach of policy during the lifetime of a written warning then the employee must be informed and asked to attend a Second Review. In addition they should be informed of the right to be represented at the Review.
- Medical reports must be sought prior to the date of the Meeting and results made available to both parties.
- The employee should be given the right to present any evidence in mitigation.
- The employee should be informed of the need to improve their record and the possibility of dismissal if they do not do so. The employee must be informed of their right to appeal against this decision. (see Appeals). This should be confirmed in writing to the employee and held on their personnel file for 18 months.


Stage 4

- The employee must be given full details of the case and the possible consequences prior to attendance. The employee must also be informed of their right to representation at this meeting.
- All medical evidence should be taken and considered before a final decision is taken.
- If the decision is taken to dismiss the employee then this should be done by giving full entitlement to notice (even if sick pay is exhausted).
- The employee must be informed of their right to appeal against this decision. (see appeals).
- **Issue date**
- This policy takes effect from the below date
- **Related Policies/documents**
- Equality and diversity policy
- Staff code of conduct
- Staff contract

- **Review date**
- This policy will be reviewed and revised by the school manager on an annual basis.
- **Endorsement**
- Full endorsement to this policy is given by:

Name: Mr Martin Taylor

Position: Iona School Trustee

Signed: 

Date: 06.21

Appendix A

Trigger Points - Irregular Attendance

Trigger points are agreed levels of sickness absence which, when reached, will trigger management action.

Where someone is approaching a trigger point, it may be an early indication of a problem and line managers should informally discuss an employee's attendance record with him/her, including reminding him/her of the standards expected and of the support available to help his/her attendance improve, including early interventions.

Trigger points are used to remind managers that the amount of sick leave being taken may be a problem and that it should be addressed.

Before considering action line managers should consider each case on its merits and take account of:

- Isolated illnesses/accidents which should not lead to formal action in an otherwise good attendance record
- Staff who are disabled, where special consideration may have to be given to a higher level of absence.
- Whether the absence has resulted from an industrial injury or illness, in these circumstances further action may not be appropriate.
- Whether the absence is related to pregnancy or an assault in connection with their duties, in which case no further action should be taken

Trigger Points

Line managers should consider taking formal action when:

- Self-certificated absences in any 12 month period exceed 14 days;
- Absences exceed 7 days in a 6 month period or less, although one isolated absence of 7 days would not necessarily require action
- Absences fall regularly on specific days, e.g. a Friday and/or Monday
- Eight or more spells of sickness absence are taken in a 12 month period, or four or more spells are taken in a six month period or less, irrespective of the length of the absences
- Absences for frequent and unrelated non-specific illnesses, e.g. headache, stomach ache, back trouble, especially where these are self- certificated.

Appendix B**The Iona School and Nursery****RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW FORM**

Name	
Job Title	Department
First Day of Absence	Last Day of Absence
Total number of days absent	Total number of days off work
Was absence reported correctly? YES/NO	
Is absence due to an injury at work? YES/ NO	
Have you seen a doctor? YES/ NO	
If so was medication prescribed? YES/No	
Name of medication:	
Reason for absence(Please give a brief description of the illness or other reason for absence)	
Are you fit to return to work? YES/NO	
Action Taken(please give a brief description of any action taken to date)	
Proposed Course of Action	
ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE – TRIGGER POINTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-certificated absences in any 12 month period exceed 14 days; • Absences exceed 7 days in a 6 month period or less, although one isolated absence of 7 days would not necessarily require action • Absences fall regularly on specific days, e.g. a Friday and/or Monday • Eight or more spells of sickness absence are taken in a 12 month period, or four or more spells are taken in a six month period or less, irrespective of the length of the absences • Absences for frequent and unrelated non-specific illnesses, e.g. headache, stomach ache, back trouble, especially where these are self- certificated. 	
Has a trigger point been reached? YES/NO	
I understand that if I knowingly provide inaccurate or false information regarding my absence it may result in disciplinary action	
Employees Signature	Date
Managers Signature	Date