



ABSENCE

General Aims

- To encourage and maintain maximum levels of attendance by all members of staff. The nature and demands of the school's activities require punctual and reliable attendance by all members of staff. Poor attendance means increased workloads and lower morale.
- To monitor sickness absences and to identify members of staff with genuine health problems, who may need help and support, and to identify individuals with unjustified poor attendance patterns, that put an undue burden on other members of staff.

The Governors of Frank Wise School have adopted Oxfordshire County Council's model Procedures for Managing Sickness Absence in Schools, a copy of which can be found on the Local Authority Intranet. This can be briefly summarised as follows :-

GENERAL

- It is vital that any decisions regarding action to be taken in individual cases must be made on an objective basis. In order to ensure consistency, the levels of absence set out in the following procedure will automatically trigger consideration of further action but individual circumstances will be taken into account before any such action is taken.
- An individual member of staff can contact Occupational Health (OH) or Staff Care Service directly if they wish to do so via the Intranet and such self-referrals will be dealt with in total confidence.
- When a member of staff is unable to attend work because of sickness s/he will notify school in accordance with the school's adopted procedure (see Staff Handbook). Where the employee has found it necessary to leave a voicemail, a member of the Admin team will contact them during the day to find out more details about the nature of their ill health and their likely return to work. This will assist with the planning of cover as appropriate.
- The school will operate an accurate and confidential system for recording all sickness absences, in accordance with LA and legal requirements.
- When an employee returns to work from any absence they will have a return to work meeting with the Line Manager or a member of the SLT. The purpose of this meeting is primarily to establish that the employee is indeed fit to return to work but also to review the reason for the absence and if any support can be offered by the school. The Line Manager will calculate the employee's total absence for the last 12 months and notify him/her if the level of attendance is becoming unacceptable. The employee will complete a self-certification form and any actions arising from the return to work meeting will also be recorded.
- Annual attendance records will be kept in each employee's personnel file along with any health related papers.
- Attendance records will be available to Performance Management Team Leaders to support discussion of progress towards targets.

LONG TERM ABSENCE

- If a single sickness absence exceeds **15 days** the Head will meet with the member of staff to discuss reasons for absence and whether any aspect of the work is affecting their health and whether practical steps can be taken to remove or minimise the risk and / or improve health and wellbeing.
- If sickness absence exceeds a single period of **three months** the member of staff will be referred to OH. The employee will be notified that they have entered **Stage 1** of the Absence Procedure.
- There then follows **Stage 2 & Stage 3** (for full details see OCC Procedure). Please note if the member of staff has fewer than 200 days entitlement to paid sickness leave, the Stage 3 Review and subsequent action may be brought forward.

SHORT TERM ABSENCES

- Short, unplanned absences are disruptive and have a significant impact on consistency and educational progress in the classroom. For that reason, the school has adopted a range of tools to use to manage attendance and to help gain a clearer understanding of any health concerns enabling us to intervene and support if appropriate. The Return to Work Interview is an important method to gain this understanding and to help the employee understand what effect their absence has on the school. Another important aspect of absence management is identifying what levels of absence will trigger a formal review and being transparent about this. Frank Wise School has adopted the Bradford Factor¹ to calculate a trigger point for the Headteacher to meet formally with the employee to discuss reasons for absence and whether any aspect of the work is affecting their health and what practical steps can be taken to remove or minimise the risk and /or improve health and wellbeing. The Bradford Factor is a widely recognised tool and ensures that a fair and consistent approach is adopted for all employees. The formula is $B = E^2 \times D$, where E refers to the number of episodes of absence, and D represents the number of days absence. The data used refers to any rolling 12 month period. A score above 600 (i.e. 'B' in the formula) is a cause for concern that will act as the trigger for discussion with the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- When the trigger is reached the Headteacher or a member of the SLT will meet with the member of staff and her/his representative if desired, to consider:
 - whether any aspect of the job may be affecting the employee's health
 - the frequency and duration of the absences
 - the reasons for absence
 - the total amounts of absence
 - the nature of duties undertaken
 - the effects of the absence on service provision
 - the outcome of any previous reviews and any previous action taken
 - any other relevant considerations, particularly those put forward by the employee.
- The Headteacher or SLT will discuss with the member of staff what help might be available to assist with a return to full health and fitness and to improve the level of attendance. A record of the discussion will be kept on file and a copy sent to the employee.

¹ Bradford Factor replaces the trigger detailed in the OCC Procedure in section 29

- The Headteacher or SLT will refer the employee to OH if the absence record indicates that there is a persistent short term absence problem or long term health issue. The OH doctor will be asked to give advice on any measures which may be taken by the school or the employee to help the employee improve and maintain a satisfactory attendance.
- In all cases where referral to OH is not indicated, the member of staff will be informed in writing that their level of absence is considered to be unsatisfactory, that further monitoring of absence levels will take place over a specified period and that further action may result.
- In all cases covered above, the employee will be notified that they have entered Stage I of the absence policy. Progressive review meetings will be held and the member of staff's attendance record will be considered at each stage. If this record has improved sufficiently, at any stage, the employee will be informed that no further action will be taken at this time.
- If the member of staff's attendance record continues to cause concern and the Stage 3 Review Meeting is reached, the meeting will be conducted by a panel of the governing body. The member of staff will be invited to attend and to bring a union representative or work colleague. Notice of at least 5 working days will be given. If dismissal is likely, the representative of the Director for Children's Services will also be invited to attend, however, if not in attendance, this does not prejudice the ability to proceed with the meeting and to confirm that the employee has been dismissed. The outcome of the meeting will be one or more of the following :
 1. No further action
 2. A further warning
 3. Further support to encourage attendance, including possible adaptations to the job
 4. Redeployment to another suitable post within the school (if available)
 5. Dismissal with notice
 6. A request to the LA that redeployment elsewhere within OCC be considered.

DISPUTE

- Where it is suspected that a staff member has fraudulently claimed their absence from work is due to sickness incapacity this will be investigated by the Headteacher and if reasonable belief is established then the school reserves the right to remove any benefit to sickness payments whether statutory or otherwise and the absence will be treated as unauthorised.
- Where an OH or GP report or certificate gives advice about any assistance that the school might provide to facilitate a return to work the Headteacher or SLT will conduct a risk assessment and the school's decision will prevail. Where it is regarded that light duties or amended hours are not appropriate, the staff member will continue to remain on sick leave.
- Where a staff member is absent from work yet the Headteacher believes that he or she may benefit from, and can facilitate, some work, he will seek consent from the staff member to communicate with the GP or OH to establish if a return to work is possible with some adjustments. Staff are expected to participate in such situations with a common aim of minimising absence whilst ensuring the safety and welfare of all staff and pupils.
- In the event that there is any ambiguity between the OCC procedure for Managing Sickness Absence of School Employees and the FWS Absence Policy, the FWS Policy wording will prevail.
- The School does not intend to deny any staff member from receiving their full entitlement to sick pay. However, where it is clear that the staff member will not be able to return to work in any capacity in the foreseeable future the School reserves the right to dismiss on the grounds of capability before the sick pay period has been exhausted.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure its continued effectiveness. In particular, the Headteacher and Governing Body aim to reduce sickness absence to below the national average and will reduce the Bradford Factor Score Trigger over a period of time to achieve this.

REPORTING

The Headteacher will report absence statistics at the staff meetings and Governing Body meetings but will ensure anonymity is maintained in all public documents and only demographic statistics are published.

OTHER LEAVE

Staff sickness absence is confined to the incapacity of the member of staff only and not the ill health of family members or dependants. Please refer to Appendix A for entitlement to other emergency time off.

Reviewed by: Lara Hughes

Date: July 2014

Approved by Governors:

Date: 22nd October 2014

Appendix A

Emergency & Special Leave : Summary

The FWS entitlement is presented on the basis of 'per academic year'.

	Legal Entitlement	Frank Wise Entitlement
Maternity/ Paternity leave	Please see current law	Same as legal entitlement
*Dependent gives birth	Unpaid for 1 or 2 days as necessary	Paid for 1 or 2 days as necessary
Death of *dependent	Unpaid for 1 or 2 days as necessary	Paid for 1 or 2 days as necessary
Attendance at funeral of *dependent	Unpaid for 1 or 2 days as necessary	Paid for 1 day
Finalising affairs of *dependent	Unpaid for 1 or 2 days as necessary	Paid for 1 day
Attendance at funeral of other relative or friend	None	Unpaid for 1 day
Sickness of *dependent	Unpaid for a few days as necessary	Paid for 1st day of any period of sickness, for up to 6 separate occasions
Unexpected incident involving *independent child during school hours/trip	Unpaid for 1 or 2 days as necessary	Paid for 1 day
Sickness of other close relative	None	Unpaid for 1 day
Breakdown in care arrangements for *dependent	Unpaid for 1 or 2 days as necessary	Paid for 1 day
Moving house Wedding of relative/friend Religious festivals Playing representative sport	None	Unpaid for 1 day (one incident per year)
Study and exams for qualification	None	Paid (exams only)
Interview for educational course or new job	Not listed	Paid for 1 or 2 days as necessary

* Dependent is defined as:

1. your spouse, child or parent
2. someone living in the same household (other than a tenant or lodger)
3. any other person who relies on you for help as a Registered Carer

Please note:

For the enhanced FWS entitlement, Dependent is restricted to only 1 & 2 above.

Entitlement to unpaid leave (beyond what is shown in the table above) is at the discretion of the Headteacher.