



Managing Staff Attendance Policy and Procedure

Managing Staff Attendance Policy

1 **Aim**

To provide clear guidelines on managing staff attendance and absence.

2 **Context**

Horsforth School and its employees are responsible for ensuring that good attendance is maintained. Horsforth School operates within guidance and procedures set out by the Department for Education (DfE).

3 **Evaluation**

This policy will be evaluated every three years by Trustee Board to ensure it is still fit for purpose. Circumstances may require more frequent modifications.

4 **Author**

This policy has been updated by LVR in October 2018.

5 **Procedures**

Procedures to support this

Appendix A - Procedures to support the Staff Attendance Policy.

Appendix B - Procedural flowchart for managing repeated short-term absence.

Appendix C - Procedural flowchart for managing long-term absence.

Appendix A: Procedures to Support the Staff Attendance Policy

I. The Policy

I.1 Introduction

The policy sets out the procedure for reporting sickness absence and for the management of sickness absence in a fair and consistent way. This policy will apply to all school based employees where the Trustee Board has agreed its adoption.

The School and its employees are responsible for ensuring that good attendance is maintained. Where absence levels become unacceptable the procedures set out in this policy should be followed, alongside recommendations from the accompanying guidance.

The underlying principle of the policy is a recognition that the majority of employees have excellent attendance records, and will take time off only where absolutely necessary. It recognises that from time to time employees may be prevented from attending work due to ill health and that the vast majority of sickness absence is genuine. It is also important that the policy must recognise that the School has a duty to deliver teaching and learning and to minimise the disruption these absences may cause.

The policy is intended to be used in cases involving absence from work due to sickness and is designed to ensure that all employees are dealt with compassionately and equitably avoiding discrimination.

It also recognises that employees have responsibilities in managing attendance; these responsibilities are outlined in this policy. The policy is supported by Guidance and where additional support is needed Horsforth School will where necessary seek further expert advice from, for example, Occupational Health.

The policy applies to all employees including those with disabilities. Additional safeguards have been built into the policy to ensure that specialist advice is sought and reasonable adjustments are considered in respect of disabled employees.

I.2 Key Principles

Sickness absence from work is always assumed to be genuine. It is recognised that most employees have minimal sickness absence and that they make every possible attempt to attend work. Whilst there is an understanding that there will inevitably be some absence amongst employees; this must be balanced with the needs of the School and individual.

Headteacher is responsible for applying this policy. The Director of HR is responsible for monitoring absence levels. In the case of a Headteacher's absence, the Chair of Trustees will appoint a nominated person to apply the principles of this policy.

Where the Headteacher has nominated a person to undertake absence management, that person must keep the Headteacher up to date regarding the employee's absence. They are also responsible for arranging home visits, contact and support as appropriate. Initial contact will be of an informal nature; formal contact will be agreed in long term absence cases when a continuous period of absence exceeds or is likely to exceed **4 weeks**.

When an employee's long term absence exceeds or is likely to exceed four weeks a referral will be made to the new government 'Fit for Work' advice line. Employees will be consulted and asked to provide consent at all stages of the assessment process.

'Fit for Work' helps to manage sickness absence in the work place. 'Fit for Work' provides advice through a website and telephone line to help with absence prevention. They also provide a free referral for an occupational health assessment for employees who have reached or whose GP expects them to reach, four weeks of sickness absence. The aim of this service is to help employees to return to work sooner.

Employees will only be referred if they fit into the following criteria:

Still employed

Have been absent from work for four weeks or more

Have a reasonable likelihood of making at least a phased return to work

Have not been referred for a Fit for Work assessment already within the last 12 months and have not received a Return to Work Plan

Have provided consent to be referred

Where employees have frequent short-term absences or a long term absence, medical advice will be sought and counselling offered where appropriate.

All employees dealing with colleagues who have been absent due to sickness and have access to absence records will have regard to the need for confidentiality and the Access to Medical Reports Act, 1988.

Responsibilities: Headteacher and Director of HR

- Ensure and promote safe and healthy work conditions and policies.
- Ensure employees are aware of the importance of good attendance, the support available to help them and the impact of absence on learning productivity and colleagues.
- Ensure all employees have an awareness and understanding of the Managing Attendance Policy.
- Ensure employees understand and follow the policy regarding notification procedures.
- Seek further advice and support where appropriate from 'Fit for Work' and Occupational Health, for example for absences related to mental health and muscular-skeletal disorders.
- Maintain and agree an appropriate level of contact with employees who are absent from work due to ill health.
- Where possible, conduct a return to work meeting with employees promptly after every period of sickness absence.
- Explore with employees who are absent whether there are any work related or other issues affecting their attendance with a view to determining an agreed way forward.
- Follow the policy for managing sickness absence and ensure that the employee is aware of their responsibilities and the implications for their continued employment.
- At each stage of the procedure check whether the employee has any work related or other problems affecting their attendance and provide support or seek further advice.

Responsibilities: All School Employees

- Take responsibility for looking after their own health and safety and advise the School as early as possible of any work or health related issues. This is especially important if suffering from stress related illness as the School may be able to provide support and/or expert help at an early stage.

- Familiarise themselves with the policy and if they do not understand anything ask their manager.
- Notify the School of their sickness absence in accordance with the procedure.
- Agree how/when regular contact will be made with Headteacher/Director of HR during the absence.
- Follow any medical advice and avoid any activities that may hinder or delay a return to work.
- Do not undertake any other employment without the Headteacher's knowledge during the absence.
- Respond to the Headteacher/Director of HR during any period of absence and fully participate in return to work meetings or meetings arranged during absence.
- Work with the Headteacher/Director of HR to take action to improve their attendance.
- Attend appointments (telephone or face to face) with Occupational Health when requested.
- Ensure that the Headteacher/Director of HR is kept up to date and informed of the expected return to work date.

1.3 Sickness Absence Records and Pay

The Director of HR should ensure that all instances of sickness absence are documented appropriately and countersigned as necessary. In conjunction with payroll services, individual sickness records will be kept for every employee. These will show details of each absence; the reason, whether they are self-certified or medically certified and the duration. Individual records should be updated after each absence and reviewed on a regular basis. By maintaining accurate records the scope for dispute when dealing with sickness absence cases under the policy will be minimised.

Employees, when absent from work, will be entitled to **a) Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** provided relevant regulations are satisfied; and **b) Occupational Sick Pay** in accordance with employment terms and conditions, provided that an employee complies with the following points as detailed below;

- Contact the School in accordance with the School's sickness absence notification procedure.
- Provide doctor's statement of fitness notes at the appropriate times.
- Maintain an appropriate level of contact as agreed with the Director of HR.
- Make every effort to attend Occupational Health appointments and meetings when requested.

Failure to comply with the above requirements will be viewed as a serious matter and could result in Occupational Sick Pay being withheld and/or disciplinary action being taken.

It is important to note that under this policy should an employee refuse or fail to attend Occupational Health appointments or meetings arranged under this policy by the School without good reason it may result in decisions being taken without the benefit of up to date medical advice.

The sick pay scheme is intended to supplement Statutory Sick Pay and incapacity benefit so to maintain normal pay during defined periods of absence. Further details of this entitlement can be found within each employee's contract of employment.

1.4 Working Days

For the purposes of giving notice for formal meetings/hearings arranged under this policy a working day shall exclude Saturday, Sunday, Public and Statutory Holidays, school holidays for teachers and term time only employees and any extra Statutory Holidays or additional days granted by the Trustee Board or the Secretary of State for Education.

1.5 Maintaining Contact

It is important that regular contact is maintained with employees who are absent due to sickness.

Any contact with an employee should be handled sensitively and should not be intrusive or carried out in a manner that could be seen as harassment. In cases of stress/anxiety related absence or where disciplinary action may/has been taken, or in particularly complex situations, advice should be sought from the HR Director before contact is made. Contact should be through the Director of HR or a nominated person who is familiar with the employee.

Contact may be made by telephoning the employee at home, sending a card, arranging for them to visit the School or an alternative venue with agreement. The purpose of such contact is to:

- provide support;
- demonstrate the School's interest/concern;
- ensure reporting policies are followed so there is no loss of pay or benefits; and
- to help the Headteacher assess the possible length of absence to plan cover.

1.6 Sickness Absence and Disability

Sickness absence may result from a disability. At each stage of the procedure particular consideration must be given to whether there are any reasonable adjustments that could be made to the requirements of a job or other aspects of working arrangements that will provide support at work to improve attendance and/or assist a return to work.

Should an employee consider that he/she is affected by a disability or any medical condition which affects their ability to undertake a return to work or ability to undertake their job role fully the Headteacher or Director of HR should be informed.

Disabled employees should not be treated less favourably than other employees. The Guidance to this procedure provides further advice on this and the School will also have regard to current legislation and relevant case law.

2. Notification And Certification Of Sickness Absence

All employees who are unable to attend work as a result of sickness must comply with the following to avoid loss of pay:

2.1 First Full Day of Absence

All employees must notify the school on the first day of absence, this should be done by a phone call to the Director of HR by 7:30am A person nominated by the employee may contact the School if illness prevents the employee from doing so.

All employees will be required to provide the following information:-

- a) the nature of the illness;
- b) the date on which the employee is expected to be fit for work if known;
- c) present home address or contact address;
- d) whether the absence is a result of an injury at work;
- e) any outstanding or urgent work which requires attention.

Horsforth School will keep in contact with employees who are absent from work due to ill health. If for any reason an employee should be away from the named contact address during a period of sick leave it is the employee's responsibility to inform the Headteacher/Director of HR in writing. Colleagues must ensure that they contact the Director of HR on each day of their absence.

The School should ensure that:

- a) any sickness absence that is notified is recorded and payroll informed
- b) arrangements are made, where necessary, to cover work and to inform colleagues and clients (while maintaining confidentiality).

2.2 Absence Up To and Including Seven Calendar Days

Absences of up to seven calendar days do not normally require a doctor's statement of fitness note. If the return date is unknown, the employee must contact the school on **each day of the absence**. **In some circumstances less frequent contact may be agreed.**

Contact should be made to either confirm a return to work date as previously notified, or that the absence will continue and that an appointment will be made to see a doctor with a view to obtaining a Statement of Fitness note.

2.3 Absence of More Than Seven Calendar Days (Statement of Fitness notes)

For absences of more than seven calendar days a statement of fitness note is required. It should be received by the School by no later than the eighth day of absence. Doctor's statement of fitness notes will only be accepted for sick pay purposes from the date that they have been signed by the Doctor.

Employees must ensure that there are no gaps between their statement of fitness notes. Continuation of statement of fitness note must be received by the School within **three working days** of the expiry of the previous note to ensure that payment of occupational sick pay is not affected. Only in exceptional circumstances will discretion be applied.

If a statement of fitness note is produced to cover a period that has been authorised as annual leave, the employee will be regarded as being on sick leave from the date of signing of the statement of fitness note.

The statement of fitness note will normally advise that the employee is either:

- a) not fit for work where the medical opinion is that the employee should refrain from undertaking their duties.
- b) that the employee may be fit to work taking into account their advice which may include recommendations as follows;
 - therapeutic/phased Return,
 - altered hours,
 - amended duties,
 - workplace adaptations.

These recommendations are considered to be temporary measures and where possible should be accommodated. If it is not possible to accommodate them the statement should be treated as if the doctor had advised the employee was **'not fit to work'**.

Where an employee requests a return to work before the statement of fitness expires there is **no requirement for an employee to get confirmation that they are fit to be in the workplace from their Doctor**. In principle an employee can request a return to work before their statement expires subject to the approval of the School. Where such a request is received, consideration should be with regards to whether a work place assessment should be carried out. If there are any other concerns about an employee returning to work Occupational Health advice should be sought.

Where there is a concern about the reason for absence, or frequent short term absence, a statement of fitness note for each absence regardless of duration may be required. In such circumstances, any costs incurred in obtaining such medical evidence for absences of 7 working days or less will be reimbursed on production of a doctor's invoice.

2.4 Returning to Work

It is good practice that a meeting should always be held with an employee on their return to work from sickness absence at the earliest opportunity to check that they are fit to be at work. At this meeting the Director of HR should;

- a) explore any support that may be needed,
- b) update as necessary,
- c) to emphasise their importance to the school and subsequent effect of their absence,
- d) inform that they will require formal monitoring if appropriate,
- e) identify if an individual work place risk assessment needs to take place.

When an employee is returning following long-term sickness, it will usually be appropriate for the Director of HR to meet with them prior to their expected date of return to establish a return to work support plan to facilitate effective rehabilitation back into the workplace.

2.5 Common Medical Conditions including Mental Health, Stress and Muscular/Skeletal Issues

Advice should be sought from the Director of HR as soon as possible for absences relating to any of the above for example in cases of back injuries, arthritis, rheumatism, upper limb disorder, stress, anxiety and depression. If appropriate the following support should be identified and offered to the employee as soon as possible:

- counselling through Care First
- a workplace risk assessment
- a referral to Occupational Health to help identify quickly measures to support the employee.

2.6 Pregnancy Related Absence

The Guidance to this policy provides further advice on the procedure to be followed in respect of pregnancy related illness. Please speak to the Director of HR in the first instance.

2.7 Work related Ill Health or Injury

The School aims to provide a safe and healthy work environment. Any incident that is or could be related to ill health or injury sustained in the workplace should be investigated and consideration given to trigger levels. Further advice can be sought from the Director of HR.

2.8 Further Guidance

Anyone using this policy and procedure should have regard to the further guidance. Where appropriate this policy and guidance document will direct the reader to other relevant school policies and procedures.

Advice and support can be obtained from the Director of HR and Occupational Health at any stage.

3. Procedure For Managing Short Term Sickness Absence

Occasional spells of short term absence are to be expected. It is important when dealing with short term absence that a sensitive and flexible approach is taken in each case. There may be underlying domestic, personal or work related issues, which need to be taken into account. A negative approach may have a detrimental effect on morale and will not achieve the desired effect, which is to improve attendance.

3.1 Trigger Points

Formal intervention is necessary if an employee meets one or more of the following trigger points during a **rolling 12 month period** because of the impact this level of absence has on the School:

- **Where the employee has had four separate absences within a rolling twelve month period,**
- **Where the employee has had twelve days of absence within a twelve month rolling period** (this will be proportionate for employees with a working pattern that does not cover every day of the standard school working week),
- **Where any unacceptable trend of absence is identified** (e.g. repeated absences linked to weekends or other breaks).

3.2 Stage I

If an employee meets one or more of the trigger points the Director of HR should first review the employee's sickness absence records with a view to holding a meeting with the employee. The Director of HR will then arrange a meeting with the employee to inform them that their absence is a cause for concern and to discuss the absence.

The employee must be given **three working days** notification of the meeting and must be **advised of their right to be accompanied to the meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative.**

The Director of HR person should consider:

- aiming to improve the level of attendance through monitoring and reviewing the situation after a reasonable period e.g. 3 months or 12 working weeks or any other appropriate period depending on the circumstances;

- attempting to resolve any working difficulties or welfare problems identified during the meeting;
- advising the employee to consult his/her doctor;
- reasonable adjustments in line with the reasonable adjustments toolkit;
- referring to Occupational Health.
- referring the matter to the Headteacher, if they are not already involved, and to consider redeploying the employee to another post within the school. (This option should only be considered where it is felt that the employee's sickness absence record is specifically attributable to workplace/occupational factors or disability, and where a suitable alternative vacant post is available);
- requiring the employee to certify any future absences by a medical statement of fitness note; (Where this option is pursued there may be a charge; this will need to be met by the School.)

The outcome of any meeting will normally be confirmed in writing within five working days or as soon as possible. This written confirmation should include details of any improvements required of the employee, any actions to be undertaken and any review period.

If an employee prefers not to discuss his/her medical condition with the Director of HR, because it is of a sensitive or personal nature, the School will arrange, if possible and at the employee's request, for the employee to meet with someone of the same sex.

In cases where the Headteacher's sickness absence meets one of the trigger points then the Chair of the Trustee Board should contact the Director of HR who will provide advice on how to proceed.

3.3 Reviewing Stage 1 Attendance

As detailed above, a period of monitoring and a review date should be agreed at the Stage 1 meeting. If there has been a satisfactory improvement in attendance during the review period the Director of HR can remove the employee from the procedure.

However, if there has not been a satisfactory improvement within the review period the Director of HR should address the issues raised at the previous meetings, and any new issues that may have arisen or come to light, and should consider:

- moving the employee to Stage 2 of the procedure (see below for further detail of what should be discussed); or
- agreeing to extend the review period under Stage 1 of the policy; or
- referring the employee to Occupational Health.

A review meeting should be brought forward in cases where it becomes apparent that the employee's attendance has fallen below the expected standard before the end of any agreed review period.

3.4 Stage 2

Where a decision is taken to move an employee to Stage 2, a meeting will be arranged following the same approach as used for stage 1, including the same rights to representation. In addition the following actions should be taken:

1. Director of HR should explain to the employee that Stage 2 of the review is a final opportunity to improve attendance and, unless the targets for improvement are met, the next stage of the procedure could lead to their dismissal;
2. The employee will be referred, if they have not already, for an assessment with Occupational Health.

Unless any valid objection is raised a separate Stage 2 meeting does not have to be convened and can form part of the same meeting as the Stage 1 review.

As per Stage 1 meetings, the outcome of any Stage 2 meeting will normally be confirmed in writing within five working days or as soon as possible, and should include details of any improvements required of the employee, any actions to be undertaken and any review period.

3.5 Reviewing Stage 2 Attendance

Reviewing attendance at Stage 2 should follow the same approach as in Stage 1.

If there has not been a satisfactory improvement within the agreed Stage 2 review period the Director of HR should consider the following options at the review meeting:

- extend the review period under Stage 2;
- where there are serious concerns, refer to a Stage 3 Ill Health Capability Hearing; or
- where the employee's attendance record is deemed to be acceptable the procedure will end. If at any time within the twelve month period immediately following the date of the review meeting, the employee's attendance again falls below an acceptable level the Director of HR may reintroduce the formal procedure and commence the procedure at a point which is appropriate in the light of previous action.

As at Stage 1, a review meeting should be brought forward in cases where it becomes apparent that the employee's attendance has fallen below the expected standard before the end of any agreed review period.

3.6 Stage 3 - Ill Health Capability Hearing

Where an employee's attendance record has not improved as required at Stage 2 of the procedure then the employee should be told, as described above, that a hearing will be called where their employment may be terminated on the grounds of ill health.

4. Procedure For Managing Long Term Sickness Absence Procedure

Long term sickness is a continuous absence of **four weeks or more**.

4.1 Meeting the Employee

Regular contact should be maintained during the absence as appropriate.

The Director of HR will normally arrange to meet with the employee after the **fourth week of absence**. However, in cases where earlier intervention would benefit the employee, a meeting will be arranged before the 4 week point, for example where the absence is linked to stress or depression.

Consideration should be given to arranging appropriate therapeutic interventions as early as possible, such as counselling and Occupational Health, before a meeting takes place.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- establish the medical condition and, if necessary, seek advice from Occupational Health;
- discuss a possible date for return to work if appropriate;
- discuss any adjustments necessary to facilitate a return to work.

The employee will be advised of their right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative at the meeting.

Consideration will be given to the location of the meeting depending on the nature of absence.

4.2 Summary of Options/Actions Available to the School

Where an employee is absent from school due to ill health for a long period of time the following options need to be considered on an ongoing basis by the school:

- a) establish the nature and likely duration of any medical condition using the diagnosis from the Occupational Health Service/Medical Practitioner;
- b) establish the support needs of the employee, in relation to medical conditions, but also with regards to any work related and/or personal or emotional issues. Consideration should be given to any reasonable adjustments that could be made to enable the employee to return to work;
- c) establish whether there is a need for alternative employment. If, after consultation with the Occupational Health Service and/or seeking independent medical advice, it becomes apparent that the employee is either permanently unfit to return to his/her existing post, or there is no prospect of return within a reasonable timescale, then consideration should be given to finding suitable alternative employment within school;
- d) consider the possibility of **ill health retirement**. Employees who are certified as permanently unfit by their own doctor or an independent doctor nominated may be able to retire from employment. The School has a general duty of care to provide and maintain a safe working environment for employees and other persons using their premises. Therefore when an employee is diagnosed as being permanently unfit for their current duties and no suitable alternative work is available or appropriate, steps should be taken to seek medical retirement and under no circumstances should employees be allowed to return to work. Where an employee is not prepared to accept retirement on health grounds a formal hearing before Trustees should be arranged to consider their dismissal on health grounds;
- e) consider a phased return to work where the employee is fit to return. In some cases a phased return may help to facilitate an earlier return to work than would otherwise have been the case. It may be appropriate to seek guidance via the Director of HR and the Occupational Health Service on whether or not a phased return to work will be beneficial, but in all cases this should only be agreed where the employee is fit to return to work.

During any period of phased return, unworked hours should be regarded as authorised absence rather than sick leave. Employees will receive normal pay during the first four weeks of a phased return to work. Where it is agreed to extend a phased return beyond this period separate payment arrangements will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

If, after all the above options have been fully exhausted and there is no prospect of a return to work in the foreseeable future the Headteacher should advise the employee that a formal ill health capability hearing will be held where consideration will be given to their future employment. The school will normally confirm this, in writing, to the employee within five working days.

5. Ill Health Suspension

It may be necessary to temporarily suspend an employee from work if on the grounds of ill health in the following circumstances:

- in the opinion of the Occupational Health the employee is unfit for work, but is declaring themselves fit or being declared fit by their own Doctor,
- if the individual is deemed to be a risk to themselves or to others because of their medical condition,
- if any adjustments or adaptations are not operating or in place.

Ill health suspension is the Headteacher's decision. Any medical suspension will be at the normal rate of pay; it is not a disciplinary suspension. Advice should be sought prior to making a decision to suspend an employee from Occupational Health

6. Referrals To Occupational Health Service/Medical Practitioner

In some cases it may be appropriate to refer the employee to the Occupational Health Service or to a medical practitioner, who may be the employee's own Doctor, to obtain a diagnosis and to identify any appropriate support measures.

In determining whether this sort of referral is an appropriate course of action the Director of HR should have regard to a number of factors including:

- the overall sickness absence record;
- any medical evidence available;
- any mitigating factors or explanations presented by the employee;
- the degree of disruption caused by the absence;
- the likelihood of an improvement.

To ensure that a relevant referral report is prepared, the Director of HR should provide as much background information as possible (e.g. current duties, job description, special characteristics of the post and sickness record) together with a clear indication of the advice required.

Where a referral is made to Occupational Health the employee may be asked to sign a consent form for their medical records to be released to the Occupational Health Service. The requirements of any relevant legislation must be taken into account when making such a request.

7. Procedure For A Hearing On The Grounds Of Ill Health Capability

The Trustee Board will appoint a panel of three Trustees to hear cases in accordance with this policy and, where required, a separate panel of three Trustees to hear any subsequent appeal.

7.1 Notification of a Formal Hearing

At the Headteacher the Director of HR will assist in the arrangements for convening a hearing to consider the employees future employment.

The employee will be given written notice of the hearing at **least seven clear working days** before the date of the hearing. The letter of notice must include the following:

- details of the date, time and place of the hearing;
- an explanation of the purpose of the hearing, which is to consider the employee's attendance record;
- advice to the employee of his/her right to be accompanied by a representative or work colleague;
- notice to the employee that dismissal is a possibility at the conclusion of the hearing;
- enclosed copies of any documentation to be considered at the hearing;
- details of any witnesses to be called at the hearing; and
- an enclosed copy of the Managing Attendance Policy and procedure.

If the employee wishes to present documentary evidence to the hearing, or to call any witnesses, they should provide details of these to the named person supporting the hearing at **least three working days** in advance of the hearing.

The hearing will be before a Panel of Trustees who will be advised by the Director of HR or a senior colleague from another school and will follow the format detailed below. Detailed notes of the hearing will be taken.

7.2 Persons Involved in the Hearing

The Panel –	As stated above, a panel of three Trustees will be appointed to decide the appropriate action.
The Nominated Person -	This person presents information about the employee's attendance and health record to the panel. The nominated person could be the person who has been involved in the stages leading up to the hearing, a line manager, the Headteacher, or the Director of HR. They may be supported by a colleague.
The Employee -	The employee and his/her representative will be present.
Witnesses –	Where appropriate either party may call witnesses to present relevant information. If either party intends to call witnesses it is their individual responsibility to make the arrangements and to inform the other party of their intention.

7.3 Conduct of the Hearing

The Nominated Person will present the case for the School. To do this the Nominated Person may call witnesses and/or refer to documentation if appropriate.

The employee or his/her representative may question any witnesses called.

The Nominated Person may re-examine the witnesses.

The Panel may ask questions of the witnesses.

The employee or his/her representative will then respond, calling witnesses and referring to documentation if appropriate.

Witnesses may be questioned by the Nominated Person, re-examined by the employee or his/her representative and questioned by the panel.

The Nominated Person, then the employee or his/her representative, will then make a concluding statement.

Both parties will withdraw while the Panel considers what action should be taken. In the event that further information or clarification is required by the panel then all parties should return to the meeting whilst such information is obtained. An opportunity should be given to each party to question or comment on this additional information.

Parties are recalled to hear the decision. Employees should be informed of their right of appeal and that they will receive this in writing in **three working days**.

7.4 Action available to the Trustees Panel

In deciding what action to take the Trustee Panel will take account of:

- the overall sickness absence record;
- all records of discussions with Nominated Person and whether the procedure has been followed;
- the likelihood of a change in the attendance record;
- the availability of suitable alternative work within the School;
- whether any reasonable adjustments could be made which would enable the employee to return to work
- the degree of disruption caused by the absence;
- any medical evidence available;
- any mitigating circumstances.

In the light of the evidence available and the above considerations the Panel may decide on one of the following options:

- a) To take no action but to keep the record under review for a specified period.
- b) To take any other action as may be appropriate in the circumstances.
- c) To withdraw the facility for the employee to self-certify subsequent absences and thereby require production of a doctor's statement of fitness note to cover all subsequent periods of sickness absence (if this option is chosen they will be reimbursed the cost of the private doctor's note). Where this option is chosen the Panel should specify for how long this facility will be withdrawn and when the situation will be reviewed, this should not normally be a period in excess of six months. Failure to provide a doctor's statement of fitness note in these circumstances will result in loss of pay for any days of uncertified absence.
- d) To defer a decision pending further investigations/medical report.
- e) To consider redeployment to another post within the School.
(This option should only be chosen where it is felt that their sickness absence record is specifically attributable to workplace/occupational factors or disability and a suitable alternative vacant post is available).
Where a post offered is on a lower grade there will be no entitlement to protection of earnings or other conditions of employment. It will be necessary to secure the employees consent before implementing this course of action
- f) To dismiss the employee on the grounds of ill health.

The outcome of the meeting will be **confirmed in writing normally within five working days**.

If it is decided to terminate the employee will be paid their contractual period of notice (this may be paid in lieu of notice). The letter should state the reason for termination, i.e. as a consequence of the employee's unacceptably high incidence of sickness absence, which renders them incapable of fulfilling the contract of employment.

7.5 Right of Appeal

Any appeal must be made to the named person within **ten working days** of receipt of written notification of the Panel's decision.

The appeal hearing will be held **within 20 working days** of receipt of the letter of appeal, but at **least five working days notice** of the appeal will be given.

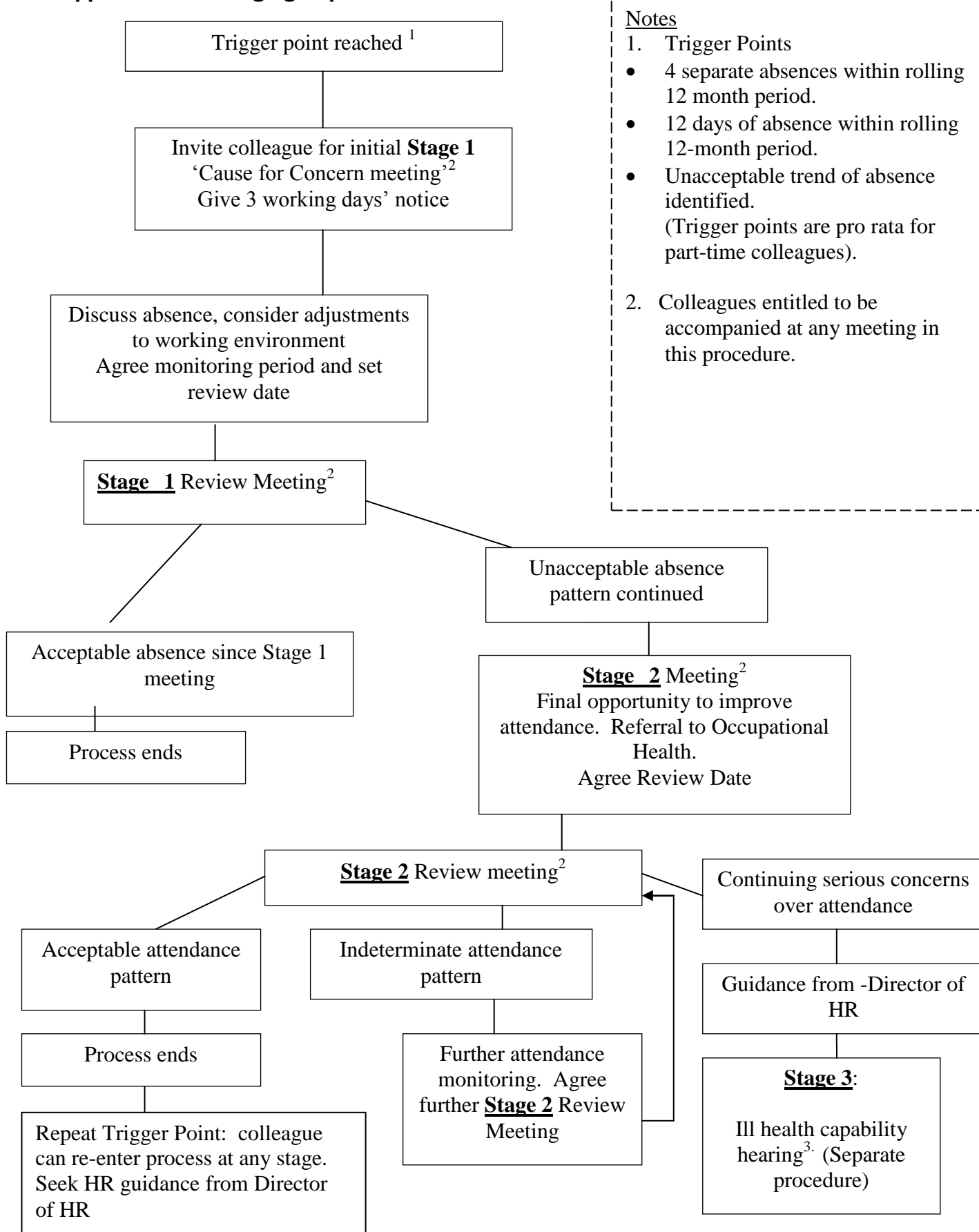
The appeal hearing will take place before a panel of three Trustees (none of whom sat on the hearing panel) and will follow the same format as used in the formal hearing.

In the light of the facts and evidence presented the Appeal Panel may:

- a) confirm the original decision
- b) uphold the appeal and take no further action
- c) in the case of dismissal uphold the appeal and take some other course of action as might be deemed appropriate in the circumstances
- d) take any other course of action as may be appropriate in the circumstances; but without increasing the penalty

The decision of the Appeals Panel will be conveyed to the employee in writing **within five working days** of the appeal hearing. This is the final stage of the Policy.

Appendix B : Managing Repeated Short-term Absence



Appendix C: Managing Long-term Absence (Long term absence is a continuous absence of 4 weeks or more)

