



MANAGING STAFF SICKNESS POLICY

for ACT and the following Academies:

Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School
Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
St George's Catholic Primary School
St Helen's Catholic Primary School
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
St Teresa's Catholic Primary School
St Thomas More High School

Assisi Catholic Trust Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire the children in our care and that our schools place Christ and the teaching of the Catholic Church at the centre of all we do. We believe that every child has a right to educational excellence and we will strive together in partnership to ensure this happens.

Motto

'Start doing what is necessary, then do what's possible and suddenly you are doing the impossible'

Commitment to Equality:

We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed several key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

Managing Staff Sickness policy has been approved and adopted by Assisi Catholic Trust Standards Committee in March 2025 and will be reviewed annually in February 2026.

1. Statement of intent

This policy can only be properly understood within the context of Assisi Catholic Trust's Mission Statement. Our aim at all schools in Assisi Catholic Trust is to provide each pupil with the best possible education. To this end pupils are best served by a healthy and productive work force. We aim to achieve this by providing a safe and healthy working environment and by implementing procedures that will maintain contact with absent employees and assist them in returning to work. Assisi Catholic Trust is committed to maintaining the health, safety and welfare of its staff. We seek to provide a positive and healthy working environment and recognise the value of our employees' work-life balance. Regular attendance at work is an integral part of each employee's contract of employment; however, we recognise that employees will, on occasion, have genuine and acceptable reasons to be absent from work. On those occasions, we will aim to support an employee during the period of absence, with the aim of assisting their return to work at the earliest opportunity.

This policy outlines the provisions for staff to follow when unable to attend work due to ill health, as well as information on how we support employees who are unable to attend work due to ill health. This policy also aims to provide a fair and consistent framework for managing attendance and informs all employees of their responsibilities regarding attendance at work.

Apart from having the direct affect on the quality of education provided, staff absences represent a significant cost to the resources of the school. These resources could otherwise be used to improve the quality of education.

The management of Assisi Catholic Trust as a good employer does not want its employees to attend work when they are too ill to do so. However, it does expect them to account for their absences and to meet their contractual obligations to work.

In accordance with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010, we will make all reasonable efforts to allow employees with a disability that affects their attendance at work to continue their employment.

Every effort will be made by management to ensure that good and fair practices are specified in this procedure and are carried out.

This policy is not contractual, and we may depart from its terms where reasonable and circumstances dictate.

2. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Working Time Regulations 1998
- Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government, etc.) (Modification) Order 1999
- The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE)
- Equality Act 2010
- The Employment Rights (Employment Particulars and Paid Annual Leave) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- The Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024

- The Carer's Leave Regulations 2024
- The Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave (General) Regulations 2020 (Jack's Law)
- ACAS (2010) 'Code of practice on time off for trade union duties and activities including guidance on time off for union learning representatives'
- Cabinet Office (2023) 'Report trade union facility time data'
- DfE (2014) 'Advice on trade union facility time'
- DfE (2021) 'Teachers' Standards'
- DfE (2023) 'School teachers' pay and conditions document 2024 and guidance on school teachers' pay and conditions' (STPCD)
- Department for Work and Pensions (2023) 'The fit note: guidance for patients and employees'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Trust and school policies:

- Staff Leave of Absence Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Records Management Policy
- Grievance Policy

3. Roles and responsibilities

The trust board will be responsible for:

- Reviewing this policy and ensuring it is adhered to across the schools.
- Ensuring that this policy is implemented fairly, consistently and in line with the board's equality duties.

The governing board will be responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is adhered to across the school.
- Ensuring that this policy is implemented fairly, consistently and in line with the board's equality duties.
- Signing off any special leave requested by the headteacher, e.g. bereavement leave.

The headteacher will be responsible for:

- Implementing this policy in line with their statutory duties.
- Informing all employees of attendance management procedures, including the conditions of the sick pay scheme.
- Recording all sickness absence upon notification.
- Monitoring and reviewing sickness absence across the school.
- Deciding if a stage one absence hearing with an employee is appropriate when their sickness absence level has reached a trigger point.
- Maintaining reasonable contact with employees during a period of absence.
- Ensuring a meeting with employees takes place on their return to work, following a staff member's absence for 2 continuous days or more from school/work due to illness.
- Implementing a special leave reporting structure for staff and reporting any requests to the governing board.

Line managers will be responsible for:

- Implementing this policy in line with their statutory duties.
- Briefing employees on the school's sickness absence procedures.
- Ensuring employees are supported throughout their period of sickness and being a point of contact for any queries or problems they may have.
- Recording all sickness absence on notification.

Staff will be responsible for:

- Attending work when fit to do so.
- Complying with the school's notification of sickness absence procedures.
- Maintaining reasonable contact with the school and meeting with the school when required during periods of absence of four weeks or longer ("long-term sickness absence").
- If requested to do so by the school, attending occupational health (and potentially other medical) appointments.
- Adhering to this policy at all times.

4. Sickness absence

Each school will make appropriate arrangements to minimise the impact of sickness absence, including arranging supply cover or longer-term arrangements if an employee is absent for a longer period of time. Any leave granted, whether paid or unpaid, will be subject to the availability of staff to cover the employee's period of absence.

Our school's expect staff to report absence using the following procedure:

- On the first day of sickness absence, staff will notify their line manager by no later than 8:00am.
- Staff will notify their line manager of the reason for their absence and the likely duration of their absence.
- Staff will maintain contact with the school for the duration of their absence.
- Unless and until staff are certified by a fit note from a healthcare professional, they will call their line manager by no later than 8:00am for each day of absence unless instructed otherwise.
- If a staff member is absent for longer than seven consecutive days (including weekends), then they will submit a fit note from a healthcare professional to the school.

Failure to follow this process could result in sick pay being withheld or the absence being treated as unauthorised.

School's will accept fit notes that are handwritten or computer generated as a printed out or digital copy. School's will only accept fit notes that include the issuer's name or signature, profession, and the address of the medical practice.

The school will accept fit notes from the following healthcare professionals that deliver NHS services:

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Occupational therapists
- Pharmacists
- Physiotherapists

Headteacher sickness absence

In the case of headteacher sickness absence, the absence management procedure will be managed by the governing board.

Long-term sickness absence

Where a staff member is or is reasonably expected to be absent from work for four weeks or more, including any period of holiday, or where the staff member has been unable to sustain regular and efficient attendance due to a long-term condition, they will fall within the scope of the long-term sickness absence management procedure.

School's will maintain regular and supportive contact with the staff member, which may include:

- Regular review meetings to discuss their continuing absence.
- When they may be able to return to work.
- Any reasonable adjustments that the school may be able to make to assist them in returning to work.

It is a contractual requirement that the employee cooperate with the school during such period of absence.

Occupational health

School's will refer staff to an occupational health advisor where necessary, having sought advice from the HR Manager. The advisor will outline:

- When the staff member will be able to return to their role.
- The staff member's ability to carry out their role.
- Whether any adjustments or modifications will be made to assist the staff member in carrying out their role.
- Whether the staff member is, or will soon be, unable to carry out their role or alternative duties within the school.
- Whether any adjustments or modifications could be made to assist the employee in carrying out such alternative duties.

The school will consider appropriate support options, including reasonable adjustments or phased returns to work.

For employees experiencing a psychological illness, e.g. stress, anxiety or depression, or a musculoskeletal complaint, e.g. a neck, shoulder or back condition, an immediate referral to occupational health will be made.

Ill-health retirement

Staff who are contributing to the Local Pensions or Teachers' Pensions (TP) will be considered for ill-health retirement where applicable.

5. Sick pay

Sick pay is based on length of service. For teachers, this is aggregated teaching service within any LA and any academy. For all other staff, it is continuous service within any public authority to which the Redundancy Payments Modification Order 1985 applies.

If the school is concerned that the reason given for staff absence is not genuine, it may commence action under the school's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. The school reserves the right to withhold sick pay in circumstances which are described in the relevant paragraphs of the conditions of service for teachers and support staff.

Staff who are absent from work on sickness absence must not participate in any other form of work, paid or unpaid, during or outside of their normal working hours without the prior written authorisation of school. Staff will notify the school if they are undertaking therapeutic work whilst off sick and will consult with the school's occupational health service as to the advisability of such activity. If staff are found to be carrying out other work within their contracted hours at the school, sick pay may be withheld.

Time off for surgery that is not for medical reasons will ordinarily not be paid by the school.

Statutory sick pay (SSP)

In order to qualify for statutory sick pay (SSP), staff must:

- Be sick for at least four or more days in a row, including weekends and bank holidays, as SSP is not payable for the first three days of any period of absence; and
- Earn an average of no less than the Lower Earnings Limit for National Insurance Contributions (NIC).

SSP is paid by the school for up to a maximum of 28 weeks.

6. Returning to work

Where a healthcare professional advises a staff member that they are not fit for work, the healthcare professional will state the period for which this will be the case and whether they will need to assess the staff member again. If the healthcare professional has not stated that they need to assess the staff member again, the school will ordinarily assume that the employee will return to work on expiry of the fit note.

The school may ask the staff member to seek further advice from their healthcare professional regarding a return to work or to seek advice from an occupational health advisor before the employee is allowed to return to work. Staff will attend any additional appointments as reasonably instructed by the school.

During any additional period of assessment, the staff member will remain entitled to sick pay in accordance with the SSP or the employee's terms and conditions of service.

Staff will take on board any advice given by their doctor on how to return to work. Advice may include:

- A phased return to work.
- Flexible working.
- Amended duties.
- Workplace adaptations.

The school will consider any recommendations made by the staff member's doctor and implement additional measures to support the staff member's return to work where possible.

On their return to work, staff will contact their line manager and complete a sickness notification form as directed.

Following a period of sickness absence, staff will be required to attend a return-to-work interview with their line manager or HR Manager within three days of their return. The interview will:

- Welcome the staff member back to work.
- Inform the staff member of any changes during their absence.
- Seek assurance that the staff member is well enough to be at work.

- Establish if the staff member requires any additional support.
- Assess whether the staff member needs to be referred to occupational health.

Reasons for persistent short-term absence should be explored as part of a return-to-work meeting so that the line manager can decide on the basis of the meeting and information given on what action would be appropriate to resolve the situation. This will include setting targets for improvement, if formal action is seen as appropriate, where continued absence may lead to dismissal.

Persistent Short-Term Absences, irrespective of whether they are uncertified or certified by a GP, can occur where there is no obvious evidence of a single medical condition (i.e. where the reasons for the absence appear unrelated). For example, this could be a cold, followed by stomach upset, followed by a throat infection.

As a guideline the following will normally be regarded as persistent short-term absences and will act as a trigger for the line manager to take action if they have not done so before.

- a) At total of 8 days absence (pro Rata for part time staff) in a twelve-month period. This will be determined from the first day of absence.
- b) Regular absence on certain days i.e. Mondays or Fridays, first and/or last day of term.
- c) Where a combination of odd days, longer periods and pattern of absence exists which cause the line manager concern (e.g. where sickness absence regularly follows school closure periods).

(Note: where a total of 8 days has been reached through one or two separate periods of absence e.g. two periods of three or four working days due to a viral infection, this would not normally be regarded as persistent short-term sickness and further action would not be necessary)

The above are only guidelines. Line managers should always monitor absence and speak to their Headteacher, HR Manager as soon as they believe there is a problem.

If the absence appears to be persistent and short term, an attendance review meeting should be arranged.

During the return to work interview, staff will be made aware of the following:

- Whether their absence may lead to a stage one absence meeting
- Any support the school will offer to avoid a stage one absence meeting
- Whether they have surpassed the trigger points for a stage one absence meeting and the implications of this, e.g. being invited to an absence meeting

If a staff member has already received an official warning over their attendance, they may be invited to a stage two or three absence meeting.

A record of a return-to-work interview will be signed by both the staff member and their line manager, and a copy will be kept and stored securely in line with the Records Management Policy.

Redeployment of staff

Staff who are fit to return to work, but not in their original role, will be transferred into an alternative role which they are able to undertake with or without reasonable adjustments or training.

If there is no suitable alternative post in their academy, staff may be redeployed within the trust. It will be the decision of the board of trustees as to whether a school employee will be redeployed.

7. Persistent Absences

If a staff member is persistently absent and their attendance levels have not improved to a satisfactory level following informal action through the return-to-work interviews, and having taken into consideration the trigger points, their line manager may choose to obtain medical advice from occupational health if appropriate or may proceed to a stage one absence meeting.

Where there is a history of formal absence warnings that result in a successful monitoring period which is then immediately followed by further absences, the school may not recommence the informal attendance monitoring process but move instead to the next stage in the formal procedure.

All sickness absence hearings relating to the headteacher's sickness absence will be conducted by a nominated governor and any subsequent appeal will be held by the chair of governors.

Stage one absence meeting

If a staff member's sickness absence levels have not improved despite being addressed in their return-to-work meetings, and the employee has reached the trigger points, the line manager will invite the staff member to a stage one absence meeting. The staff member's line manager will provide five working days' notice, in writing, of the stage one absence meeting. They will communicate the following to the staff member:

- The time, date and place of the meeting
- The reason for the meeting
- Any evidence to be discussed at the meeting
- The staff member's right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague not involved in the case

The line manager will prepare for the meeting by ensuring that they have identified the employee's sickness absence levels and the support that has been provided via the return-to-work meetings. Any medical evidence or documentation that the staff member wishes the line manager to consider will be submitted prior to the meeting.

In the stage one absence meeting the line manager will:

- Explain the concern about the absence level and reasons for that concern, such as operational difficulties caused.
- Listen to reasons and respond appropriately.
- Consider whether to refer the case to occupational health if they have not already done so.
- State that sustained improvement in attendance is expected and set an appropriate monitoring period and targets for improvement.
- Identify any support required.

The potential outcomes of this meeting include:

- Giving the staff member a stage one warning, to remain on file for 6 to 12 months, and explaining that continued failure to improve attendance to the specified level may lead to

a stage two absence meeting, which could lead to the staff member's employment being put at risk.

- An extension of informal monitoring.
- No further action.

Stage two absence meeting

If the staff member's attendance drops below the required level within the set monitoring period, their line manager will ask the employee to attend a stage two absence meeting. The line manager will provide five working days' notice of the stage two absence meeting in writing. They will communicate the following to the staff member:

- The time, date and place of the meeting
- The reason for the meeting
- Any evidence to be discussed at the meeting
- The staff member's right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague not involved in the case

In the stage two absence meeting, the line manager will:

- Explain the concern about the absence level and reasons for that concern, such as operational difficulties caused.
- Listen to reasons and respond appropriately.
- Consider whether to refer the case to occupational health if they have not already done so.
- State that sustained improvement in attendance is expected and set an appropriate monitoring period and targets for improvement.
- Identify any support required.

The potential outcomes of this meeting include:

- Give the employee a stage two warning, to remain on file for 9 to 12 months, and explaining that continued failure to improve attendance to the specified level will lead to a stage three absence hearing which could result in dismissal.
- An extension of monitoring and support within stage one of the formal process.
- No further action.

The staff member's line manager will fully record the details of the meeting and send a letter to the staff member confirming the details of this meeting.

If at any stage a staff member has reached a level of improvement acceptable to the school, monitoring will revert back to informal arrangements.

Stage three absence hearing

If the employee's attendance drops below the required level within the set monitoring period, their line manager will ask the staff member to attend a stage three absence meeting. The line manager will provide at least five working days' notice of the stage three absence meeting in writing. The notice will include:

- The purpose of the hearing.
- Details of the employee's attendance.

- The stage reached in the procedure.
- When and where the hearing will be conducted.
- The right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague not involved in the case.
- The requirement for the employee to provide, in at least two working days before the hearing, all documents that they intend to present at the hearing.

The stage three absence meeting will be conducted by the headteacher. Any medical evidence or documentation that the staff member wishes the headteacher to consider will be submitted at least two working days prior to the hearing.

The purpose of the stage three absence meeting will be to consider whether the staff member is capable of continuing employment with the school in the light of their health, their attendance and their ability to perform the role with reasonable effectiveness. The meeting will also consider whether the school can reasonably sustain the staff member's level of attendance.

The potential outcomes of this meeting include the following:

- An extension of monitoring and support within stage two of the formal process
- If the headteacher decides that the staff member's attendance is not acceptable and is unlikely to improve to an acceptable level, the employee may be dismissed with notice on the grounds of failure to sustain required levels of attendance

Prior to a decision to dismiss, consideration will be given to any alternative working arrangements or roles with the school. If the school decides to terminate the staff member's employment on the grounds of the above, the employee will be informed of the school's decision to dismiss in writing and the employee will be advised of their right of appeal.

Appeals

Any appeal arising as a result of a warning or dismissal will be made in writing to the clerk to governors within five working days of receiving the outcome of the hearing.

If the staff member submits an appeal, they will be invited to an appeal hearing where their case will be heard by a more senior manager. If a decision was taken by the headteacher, any appeal will be heard by the chair of governors. The outcome of the appeal hearing will be confirmed in writing to the employee. There is no further level of appeal.

An appeal following a stage three dismissal will be heard by a panel of up to three governors.

Medical suspension and capability

There are several circumstances where the school may medically suspend an employee. Reasons for such a decision include consideration for the protection of the person's own health, as well as the health and welfare of other staff and pupils who may be put at risk by the medical condition of an employee. Occupational health may recommend medical suspension to management.

Subject to LA arrangements, a referral to LADO may be recommended in cases where a staff member is suffering from or has suffered from suicidal thoughts. The school will undertake a full risk assessment on the risks posed to the employee or others before deciding on whether the employee is fit to be in work.

If, following advice from occupational health, it appears that the employee is likely to be unable to return to their role or to provide regular and efficient attendance within a reasonable period of time, the employee will be invited to attend a medical capability hearing.

Prior to a medical capability hearing, a preliminary meeting will be arranged in order to discuss the following:

- The history of the employee's absence, including the number of absences or duration of absences
- Any reasonable adjustments that have been made or considered
- If and when the employee may be able to return to work or to provide regular and efficient service
- Any redeployment options that have been considered within the school
- Up-to-date medical advice

The employee has the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a trade union representative or work colleague.

If, following the preliminary meeting, the staff member's line manager remains of the opinion that the employee is not able to return to work within a reasonable period of time and that their absence cannot be sustained or that the employee will not be able to provide regular and efficient service in accordance with their contract of employment, the employee will be invited to attend a medical capability hearing.

Medical capability hearing

The purpose of the medical capability hearing is to consider the viability of the employee's continuing employment. The employee will be given written notification of the meeting giving five working days' notice.

The medical capability hearing will be conducted by the headteacher. The headteacher will consider dismissal on the grounds of medical capability where having considered any medical advice and any representations by the employee the headteacher reasonably believes that:

- The employee is permanently unfit to work.
- They are unable to reasonably determine when the employee will be able to return to work or to provide regular and efficient service.
- The employee is unlikely to be able to provide regular and efficient service.

If an employee has failed to attend appointments with occupational health and, therefore, there is no medical evidence to consider, the headteacher may decide based on the information at the hearing. Where an employee fails to attend the hearing, it may go ahead in their absence.

The employee has the right to be accompanied at the medical capability hearing by a colleague or a trade union representative.

Any documentation that the employee wishes the headteacher to consider should be submitted at least two working days prior to the hearing. In certain situations where medical evidence from an employee conflict with the medical evidence from occupational health, the school will decide to obtain a further medical report or may prefer either report.

If the headteacher decides to terminate the employee's employment on the grounds of medical capability, the employee will be informed, in writing, of the decision to dismiss and their right of appeal.

Appeals against medical capability decisions

Any appeal arising because of a medical capability dismissal will be made in writing to the school within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome of the hearing.

If the member of staff submits an appeal, they will be invited to an appeal hearing where their case will be heard by the governing board. The employee and the school will provide additional medical information for consideration at the appeal hearing.

The outcome of the appeal hearing will be confirmed in writing to the employee. There is no further level of appeal.