



Whitley Chapel Church of England First School

Friendship, Community, Faith

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Whitley Chapel CE First School

ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE FRAMEWORK 2021

Date of Adoption by the Governing Body	December 2023
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Table of Contents

SECTION 1 - ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY	5
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	5
2.0 SCOPE.....	5
3.0 PRINCIPLES.....	6
4.0 CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION	6
5.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	7
5.1: THE GOVERNING BODY	7
5.2: EMPLOYEES	7
5.3: THE HEADTEACHER.....	7
6.0 SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES.....	8
6.1 MAINTAINING CONTACT	8
6.2 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRAL.....	8
6.3 RISK ASSESSMENTS	9
6.4 WELLNESS ACTION PLANS	9
7.0 DEFINITIONS OF ABSENCE	10
8.0 RETURN TO WORK WELLNESS MEETINGS	10
9.0 REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS.....	10
9.1 DISABILITY.....	10
9.2 PREGNANCY RELATED ABSENCE	11
9.3 MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS.....	11
10.0 FORMAL MEETINGS AND APPEALS.....	11
11.0 FAILURE TO COMPLY	11
12.0 TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT	12
13.0 SPECIFIC SITUATIONS.....	12
13.1 WORK RELATED INJURIES.....	12
13.2 ANNUAL LEAVE AND SICKNESS	13
SECTION 2 – ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE	13
14.0 NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE.....	13
15.0 CERTIFICATION.....	14
16.0 RETURN TO WORK WELLNESS MEETING	14
17.0 STANDARDS OF ATTENDANCE	15
18.0 INFORMAL ATTENDANCE SUPPORT MEETING.....	15
19.0 FORMAL PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING SHORT TERM ABSENCE.....	16
19.1 STAGE 1: SHORT TERM ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING	16
19.2 POSSIBLE OUTCOMES AT STAGE 1	17
19.3 STAGE 2 SHORT TERM ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING.....	18
19.4 POSSIBLE OUTCOMES AT STAGE 2	18
20.0 FORMAL PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING LONG TERM ABSENCE.....	19
20.1 STAGE 1: LONG TERM ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING	19
20.2 POSSIBLE OUTCOMES AT STAGE 1	20



20.3 STAGE 2: LONG TERM ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING	21
20.4 POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF STAGE 2	22
21.0 APPEAL PROCESS	22
APPENDIX A(I): SHORT TERM ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE	23
APPENDIX A(II): LONG TERM ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE.....	24
APPENDIX B: RETURN TO WORK WELLNESS MEETING FORM.....	25
APPENDIX C(I): WELLNESS ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE – SHORT TERM	1
APPENDIX C(II): WELLNESS ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE – LONG TERM	4
APPENDIX D: STAGE 2 ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING – SUGGESTED FORMAT	1

Section 1 - Attendance Management Policy

1.0 Introduction

As the Governing Body of Whitley Chapel CE First School we recognise that, as part of our work to raise standards of education for children, it is essential that the highest possible levels of employee attendance be maintained.

Through a duty of care towards employees, we recognise our responsibility to monitor absence levels, identify areas of high absence rates where they occur and develop systems to minimise such absence. This will include maintaining high standards of health and safety; effective induction and training of employees; effective communications with employees; the provision of a reasonable working environment; access to agreed leave of absence arrangements and a fair attendance management procedure.

This policy and accompanying procedure (see flowchart at appendix A) are based upon identified good practice for managing attendance and reaffirms our commitment, where necessary, to improving levels of attendance. It will ensure that attendance related problems are identified as soon as possible, managed with sensitivity and compassion and employees are provided with appropriate support where necessary.

2.0 Scope

This Policy applies to all our employees working under a contract of service or apprenticeship whether full time, part time, permanent or temporary. It does not apply to individuals based with us under a contract for service/third party arrangements or individuals employed by the Council whose employment relationship we do not directly manage.

Where an employee has joined our school, subject to TUPE, where it is recognised they have enhanced terms and conditions that impact on this policy & procedure, then these will continue to apply.

Where the Headteacher is the subject of concern regarding attendance management then this Policy and Procedure is the responsibility of the Chair of our Governing Body (or their designate), taking the role which otherwise would be performed by the Headteacher. Our HR Service Provider will provide advice as appropriate.

Separate procedures may be referred to in cases where the employee is subject to a probationary period.¹

¹ Note: Separate procedures are in place relating to probationary periods for support staff

3.0 Principles

We have determined that the application of this policy and procedure is governed by a set of key principles as outlined below:

- All matters relating to attendance will be conducted in a fair and equitable manner, with appropriate investigation of the circumstances, reasonable opportunity for the employee concerned to state their case and be concluded within a reasonable timeframe.
- We will try to resolve any attendance issues on an informal basis prior to taking formal action under the attendance procedure, however it is recognised that all situations will differ and therefore each individual circumstance will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Employees who are subject to this Attendance Management Policy and Procedure or those taking part in its application will, in accordance with this document, always maintain confidentiality. Any breach of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action being taken following investigation.
- It is expected that employees should be available for reasonable levels of communication inclusive of any meetings in accordance with this procedure throughout their period of absence. However, there may be times where alternative methods of communication may be more appropriate e.g., advice received from Occupational Health. In such instances we will liaise with the employee/representative over suitable alternatives.
- Employees who will be unavailable for 24 hours or more (e.g., leaving the country, a stay in hospital) should inform the Headteacher (or their designate) prior to the event and at the earliest opportunity.
- Employees have the right to be accompanied at any formal stage of the attendance procedure by a recognised trade union / professional association representative or a work colleague.
- Adjustments need to be considered and, if reasonable, put in place for employees where illness or disability prevents them from performing the full range of duties associated with their post. This includes consideration of redeployment to a suitable alternative post where the employee is fit to undertake it.

4.0 Confidentiality and Data Protection

When managing an employee's sickness absence, we will process personal data collected in accordance with our data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which an employee begins sickness absence is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing his/her absence or other formal process.

Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the school's data protection policy

immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedure.

5.0 Roles and responsibilities

5.1: The Governing Body

As the Governing Body we are responsible for ensuring a strategic overview of this policy and procedure, undertaking assessment of the impact of the policy on attendance levels and making amendments, following consultation, as necessary. We also accept our 'duty of care' to look after, as far as reasonably possible, our employees health, safety and welfare while at work.

5.2: Employees

All employees have a responsibility to comply with our attendance management policy and procedure and will be expected to:

- inform the headteacher (or their designate) of any medical condition or disability they have which may affect their attendance or performance at work, or which might endanger themselves or others.
- comply with our sickness reporting procedures and the provisions of the relevant occupational sick pay scheme.
- take reasonable care of their own health and safety, for example through relevant training.
- not undertake any form of paid alternative employment or self-employment if in receipt of sick pay, unless their doctor has deemed they are fit to continue with some form of employment.
- maintain confidentiality in relation to personal or medical information about their colleagues.
- be aware that advice and support is also available from their trade union.

5.3: The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for managing sickness absence, including

- conducting return to work meetings and any informal/formal meetings under this procedure. In doing so, they will seek to understand and address instances where sickness absence has become unacceptable, taking a fair, sensitive, and constructive approach in such matters.
- ensure that employees are aware of our absence reporting procedures.
- withholding occupational sick pay where an employee repeatedly fails to adhere to this policy and procedure
- commencement of formal proceedings that may lead to termination of employment on the grounds of capability due to ill health.
- monitoring of sickness absence and reporting to governors on the impact of this policy on staff attendance.

The Headteacher may delegate their responsibilities to another designated person.

6.0 Support for Employees

To enable employees to return to work as quickly as possible it may be necessary in some circumstances to consider additional support for the employee.

6.1 Maintaining Contact

We recognise that it is the responsibility of both ourselves and the employee to maintain reasonable contact during absence from work. When you are absent from work due to sickness it is therefore important that you and the Headteacher (or their designate) maintain contact with each other. As they will need to ensure your work is reallocated and appropriate cover arrangements are made, so they will need to know your progress and how quickly you are likely to recover.

It is also crucial that you don't feel isolated, vulnerable or out of touch. This is more likely during a period of long-term absence. You should therefore expect to keep in regular contact with the school throughout your sickness absence. The frequency of contact will depend on the circumstances and your manager will discuss with you how regularly they wish to maintain contact.

To achieve this, contact may be made through telephone calls or an alternative method, in addition to meetings, ensuring that reasonable levels of contact are maintained. All employees are expected to comply with our absence reporting procedures.

6.2 Occupational Health Referral

An Occupational Health referral can be considered appropriate at any time where it may assist in supporting the employee and in clarifying their ability to undertake the duties of their job description. In addition, it may also be considered where an employee has reached an attendance trigger point. Where this is the case, the employee will be informed of the referral and rationale.

Where we become aware that the absence of an employee may be stress related (via communication from the employee or a Dr "Fit note") then a referral may be made to Occupational Health for assessment, with a view to advising on support available to facilitate a successful return to work.

The purpose of the referral is to determine if there are any underlying factors which prevent regular attendance at work, identify when an employee will be fit to return to work, together with any support and adjustments that could be considered such as counselling or physiotherapy. Where necessary we may consider a direct request for counselling/physiotherapy where this may help facilitate a return to work.

The line manager will consult with the Headteacher, prior to a decision being taken to make a referral to Occupational Health. The Headteacher is responsible for all referrals and may consult with our HR Service Provider before any decision is taken. The employee should be advised of the referral and the rationale behind this decision.

6.3 Risk Assessments

Depending on the nature of the absence (i.e. stress related, muscular/skeletal, pregnancy) the line manager should refer to, or carry out, a risk assessment and where necessary seek advice from our HR Service Provider through provision of a copy of the risk assessment and the job description. This should be undertaken before the employee returns to work, where possible, so that any support / modifications identified can be considered. It is at our discretion whether a proposed adjustment is reasonable and can be accommodated, noting the need to be transparent with the rationale for any decision².

6.4 Wellness Action Plans

Where a wellness action plan is an outcome of any informal or formal meetings under this policy and procedure it will be of sufficient length to allow time for the employee to receive support identified and evidence a sustained improvement in their attendance. It will indicate expected attendance requirements, ensuring reasonable adjustments for any disability covered by the Equality Act.

In reviewing the success of the plan, the following should be considered:

- For short term absences, where there is no on-going medical condition identified by Occupational Health, there will be an expectation that employees will be available for work throughout the period of the wellness action plan.
- For short term absences, where a medical condition has been confirmed by Occupational Health as having an impact upon attendance this will be taken into account in developing the plan
- For Long term Absence, the plan should include an expectation of a return to work within the foreseeable future (this would normally be within 3 months).

The wellness action plan should be monitored by your line manager or headteacher and reviewed on a regular basis and may be extended³. Where absence occurs during the period of the wellness action plan consideration will be given to moving the next stage of this procedure and a rationale for this decision shared with the employee.

If the wellness action plan is completed successfully then absences will be monitored through the Return-to-Work wellness process. Where an employee has an absence

² In determining the reasonableness of any adjustment reference should be made to relevant legislative requirements e.g., Equality Act 2010. Advice may be sought from our HR Service Provider.

³ Where a wellness action plan is being proposed then the employee should be reminded that they may consider seeking advice from their trade union on identifying support for their wellness.

within 4 weeks of completing their wellness action plan, consideration will be given as to the nature of the absence and determine if it is appropriate to revisit the wellness action plan or move to the formal procedure if deemed necessary. A wellness action plan template can be found at appendix C.

7.0 Definitions of Absence

For the purpose of applying this policy and procedure we have defined short term and long-term absence as follows:

Short Term Absence - A short-term episode of sickness absence is defined as a single period away from the normal working environment due to illness for less than four weeks.

Long Term Absence - A long-term episode of sickness absence is defined as a single period away from the normal working environment due to illness for four weeks or more.

8.0 Return to Work Wellness Meetings

It is recognised good practice to conduct a return-to-work wellness meeting with employees after every sickness absence, regardless of the length of the absence, except where prior agreement has been made for such absence. This should be carried out on the same day as the return to work where possible, by the designated person⁴.

The purpose of this meeting will be primarily to discuss the reasons for the absence, assess standards of attendance, identify any underlying causes for absence and, in turn, offer additional support to the employee as necessary inclusive of a wellness action plan. This information and any outcomes should be recorded in writing for which a template can be found at appendix B

9.0 Reasonable Adjustments

9.1 Disability

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 we will ensure compliance with our duty to make reasonable adjustments where an aspect of working arrangements or premises places a disabled person at a disadvantage compared with other colleagues. We will therefore be proactive in taking reasonable steps to remove, reduce or prevent obstacles faced by an employee with a disability. Where applicable, we will also seek support from our HR Service Provider, inclusive of redeployment where a suitable vacancy exists.

⁴ An employee may request an alternative person to carry out the RTW meeting where matters to be discussed are of a sensitive nature and request a colleague or trade union attendance to support them.

9.2 Pregnancy Related Absence

Pregnancy related sickness absence will not count towards sickness absence triggers under this procedure; however, such absence will still be recorded for the purposes of an employee's attendance record. Return to work meetings will be carried out in the normal way. If a pregnant employee suffers from an illness which is not pregnancy related, then this will count towards sickness absence triggers and will be dealt with in accordance with this procedure.

Where an employee is absent from work due to pregnancy related illness after the beginning of the fourth week before the expected week of childbirth, then maternity leave will start automatically.

9.3 Medical Appointments

All employees should endeavour to make routine medical and dental appointments outside of their working hours, in their own time, wherever possible. For emergency appointments employees are required to inform their line manager beforehand to enable cover to be arranged. Employees will be required to produce evidence of their appointment upon request by the Headteacher (or their designate).

10.0 Formal Meetings and Appeals

Such persons or panel members as designated within our Standing Orders will carry out their official duties at all formal meetings and appeals under this policy & procedure and in accordance with relevant statutory requirements. Advice will be sought from the appropriate service providers, such as Governor Services or Human Resources as necessary, to ensure compliance with these requirements.

Employees will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union/professional association representative during all meetings/appeals held within the formal stages of the procedure. The Headteacher will seek advice from their HR Service Provider and may also request their attendance to support them in such circumstances.

It is acknowledged that the attendance management process can be difficult for employees; all parties being involved in the process at any stage are therefore required to act in accordance with the principles outlined within this document.

11.0 Failure to Comply

An employee who fails to comply with our Attendance Management Policy and Procedure or abuses our rules on sickness absence may following investigation be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. Examples might be an employee whom it is believed reports sick as an alternative to annual leave, an employee who

undertakes other paid employment during their contractual hours whilst reporting as sick, an employee who has failed to attend more than one OH appointment without just cause, or an employee whose behaviour away from work is incompatible with the reason for the absence.

10.1 Withholding Occupational Sickness Pay

Where, following assessment, the headteacher determines that the employee has failed to provide a good reason for non-compliance with the terms of this policy and procedure they may, following consultation with our HR Service Provider, determine that Occupational Sickness Pay is withheld. Situations where School may withhold payments could include:

- Failure to follow our attendance management policy and procedures.
- Deliberate conduct prejudicial to recovery.
- The employee's own misconduct or unreasonable disregard for their health or safety.
- Failure to provide a copy of a valid Fit Note as required under this policy
- Failure to attend a confirmed Occupational Health appointment

Where such action is determined this will be confirmed in writing to the employee by the Headteacher outlining the reason for this decision.

12.0 Termination of Employment

School will consider termination of employment only after reasonable adjustments and suitable available redeployment opportunities have been considered. Where this is under consideration school will inform the employee who may seek support and advice inform their Trade Union representative.

Where termination of employment is being considered, School will consult with our HR Service Provider prior to any decision to enter into a process that may lead to a termination of contract. Such an eventuality would be dealt with in accordance with the attendance management procedure.

13.0 Specific Situations

13.1 Work Related Injuries

An industrial injury is an injury (or prescribed disease) to an employee that occurs in connection with work. This would include any injury arising from an accident or violent incident which occurs whilst you are at work. Sickness absence resulting from an industrial injury will be treated in the same way as other sickness absence in the operation of this policy and procedure.

There is a statutory duty for managers to report major injuries and over seven day

injuries to the Health and Safety Executive. Any industrial injuries should also be reported on the appropriate accident or violent incident form. Consideration should also be given to taking additional steps to ensure that the employee is fit to resume normal duties and advice may be sought from Occupational Health.

13.2 Annual Leave and Sickness

Where cases of absence are prolonged and have the potential to cover more than one leave year we will need to seek advice from our HR Service Provider on managing the impact on annual leave entitlement.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher (or their designate) to monitor the employee's outstanding annual leave entitlement and, wherever possible, encourage the employee to take it in the leave year to which it applies. However, if an employee's sickness absence spans more than one annual leave year and he/she is unable to take their statutory entitlement in the leave year to which it applies, the employee will be able to carry over any statutory annual leave they have not taken at the end of the leave year into the new leave year.

There will be occasions when an employee who is absent from work proposes to take a holiday during the absence. If an employee is considering taking annual leave in such circumstances it must be discussed with the Headteacher (or their designate). In many cases, taking a holiday during sickness absence will not be inconsistent with the medical condition and may even be beneficial and recommended by your GP. However, if there is a concern it could impair recovery then medical opinion may be sought from occupational health.

Section 2 – Attendance Management Procedure

14.0 Notification of Absence

Staff are required to follow our procedure for notification of sickness absence and you must contact the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors on the first day of absence by telephone (not by text or e-mail). Please note if this designated person is not available, you should leave a message with another Teacher or the Office Manager and they will ring you back as soon as possible.

In exceptional circumstances if you are unable to telephone in person, you must arrange for someone to telephone on your behalf. You must make direct contact with the school as soon as possible afterwards.

This procedure will ensure that we are aware of your absence as soon as possible and will allow us to put alternative arrangements in place for cover. You will therefore be expected to provide as much information as possible during this initial contact

inclusive of:

- the reason and anticipated length of absence
- any critical or time specific work to be covered during your absence
- any medical advice you have obtained or intend to seek relating to your absence

Employees absent on sick leave should generally also be available for contact during a period of absence and they should not unreasonably resist or refuse attempts at communication. However, such communication should not be excessive or intrusive in nature.

15.0 Certification

Employees must provide a copy of a doctor's 'fit note' if they're off sick for more than 7 consecutive days (including non-working days). This should be then forwarded to the headteacher (or their designate) no later than 2 working days following the 8th day of absence, or no later than 2 working days following the expiry of subsequent medical certificates where this is applicable. It is the responsibility of the employee to contact the headteacher (or their designate) to agree alternative arrangements where the above expectations cannot be met.

Where no acceptable reason is given for medical certificates not being forwarded within the timeframe above or the employee refuses to enter into a dialogue regarding their sickness, then the absence may be classed as unauthorised. In this situation the Headteacher has the discretion within this policy to instigate appropriate action, including withholding sickness pay entitlements. The Headteacher will seek further advice from our HR Service Provider prior to withholding such payments.

The Headteacher may wish to require an employee to submit a medical certificate in respect of all sickness absences, including those of less than 8 days. This discretion may come into force where an employee has a significant amount of recurring short-term sickness absence, which cannot be attributed to an underlying cause, or where an employee has repeatedly failed to follow notification or certification procedures. When this requirement to submit a medical certificate is exercised School will reimburse the cost of providing a medical certificate to the employee.

Employees who wish to return to work whilst still under medical certification can only do so if School agree to such a request and a risk assessment is in place. In some cases, we may not be able to agree to an early return and if this is the case the employee will be required to stay off work until the end date on their fit note.

16.0 Return to Work Wellness meeting

Upon return, a "return to work" wellness meeting will take place between the

employee and their line manager⁵.

The purpose of the Return-to-Work wellness meeting is as follows:

- To discuss the employee's wellbeing and fitness to return to work.
- To allow the line manager to express an interest in the employees welfare and give the employee the opportunity to raise any health, welfare or work-related problems they may be having.
- To enable advice and support/adjustments/wellness plan to be offered.
- To discuss the employee's attendance record.

The line manager should arrange for this to be carried out on the same day as the return to work, wherever possible, except where prior agreement has been made for such absence. The line manager should complete the Return to Work Meeting Form, provide a copy to the employee and forward to the Designated Person for recording.

17.0 Standards of Attendance

We recognise the importance of managing sickness absence (both short and long term) effectively and consistently through accurate measuring, reporting and monitoring. The issue is not whether the absence is genuine but simply that poor attendance causes problems and disruption within School. We have therefore approved the following triggers for managing absence within this procedure.

These 'triggers' will normally operate⁶ under the following circumstances:

- three occasions or 20 working days or more in a rolling twelve month period
- a continuous absence of 20 working days or more
- where a pattern of absence can be identified that causes a concern.

Depending upon the seriousness of the attendance issue, the outcome of any Occupational Health referral, and after obtaining advice from our HR Service Provider, a decision may be made to hold an informal Attendance Support Meeting⁷.

18.0 Informal Attendance Support Meeting

Where an employee reaches one of the above trigger points or fails to follow the reporting procedures then a decision may be made to hold an informal 'Attendance Support Meeting'. This will normally be conducted by the relevant line manager, the

⁵ Or another designated person

⁶ We have discretion, when managing absence, to determine whether action under this policy is required or not when a trigger is reached.

⁷ Immediate referral to the formal procedure may be considered in exceptional circumstances after seeking advice from our HR Service Provider.

purpose of which is as follows:

- To discuss absences and any problems or underlying issues.
- To determine whether the causes of absence are work related.
- To discuss any medical advice that is available.
- To ascertain whether additional support or reasonable adjustments are required.
- To consider if it is necessary to refer the employee to the Occupational Health.

Possible outcomes of the meeting include one or more of:

- referral to Occupational Health to establish any underlying medical condition and identify advice or support that would improve attendance.
- help with physical rehabilitation or adaptations to the workplace.
- Put in place an informal Wellness Action Plan outlining support (inclusive of reasonable adjustments) to the employee in reducing their absence levels as well as options available where such a plan is not successful.

19.0 Formal Procedure for managing short term absence

Where the informal stage has not achieved its primary objective of improving attendance, or in cases where it is felt that the matter is too serious to be dealt with informally, the formal procedure will be used. Where there is an intention to move into the formal stage a referral to Occupational Health will be made, if this has not already taken place.

Where the attendance of an employee that is being managed through the short-term absence procedure subsequently reaches a long term trigger the manager may continue managing the case through the short-term procedure. However, where there is medical evidence that a return to work in the foreseeable future is not possible then consideration may also be given to following the long-term absence procedure.

19.1 Stage 1: Short Term Absence Review Meeting

The employee will be invited to attend a formal Stage 1 Absence Review Meeting with the Headteacher. The invite letter will outline the causes of concern, include any relevant documentation and a copy of this policy & procedure. The employee may be accompanied at this meeting by a recognised trade union/professional association representative or a work colleague of their choice. The meeting will be chaired by the Headteacher⁸, and a note taker may be in attendance.

The purpose of the meeting is as follows:

⁸ The Headteacher will seek advice from their HR service provider who may also attend formal meetings of this procedure.

- To confirm any medical condition and any up-to-date medical advice/opinions from relevant agencies i.e., Occupational Health/GP related to the short-term absence.
- Indicate the Headteacher's concern about the unsatisfactory level of attendance.
- A review of the Return-to-Work wellness meetings and any informal wellness action plan where available should be discussed.
- Try to establish the cause of the absence including frequency/pattern of the absences.
- Try to identify whether there are any environmental, external factors or underlying issues possibly contributing to the absences and if so, what action could be taken to remedy the situation.

19.2 Possible Outcomes at Stage 1

There are a number of possible outcomes of the meeting as follows:

- To consider adaptations to working practices/conditions/working patterns.
- To consider the use of special leave and unpaid leave arrangements.
- Consider reduction in hours of working where appropriate⁹
- To consider temporary redeployment.
- To put in place a wellness action plan.
- To amend and/or extend the review period of an existing wellness action plan
- To issue a formal Written Attendance Improvement Notice' which will remain live for up to 18 months. This will instigate a formal wellness action plan and a review period covering the length of the improvement notice, during which improved attendance is expected from the employee.
- To consider a combination of the above.

The outcome of the meeting must be confirmed to the employee in writing within 5 working days and include a summary of main points raised, any wellness action plan and formal review dates and, where issued, the length of any warning notice.

Where a formal Written 'Attendance Improvement Notice' has been issued the employee will be notified of their right to appeal. If the employee wishes to appeal, they must put this in writing, addressed to the Chair of Governors within 5 working days of receipt of the outcome letter

The formal wellness action plan should be monitored regularly. Where an employee completes the formal wellness action plan successfully then they will be notified that no further formal action will be taken; their attendance will be reviewed through the Return-to-Work wellness meetings. However, the Headteacher will have discretion to revisit Stage 1 of this procedure where an employee has any further sickness absence within 12 weeks of completing their formal wellness action plan.

⁹ Employees may wish to access the school flexible working policy via the school office.

The full review period does not have to be completed if it becomes apparent that the employee is unable to reach the targets within the wellness action plan. The options available to the Headteacher will then be:

- (a) put in place a further period of review; and/or
- (b) further amend the wellness action plan
- (c) move to stage 2 of the process and a hearing with Governors (see below)

19.3 Stage 2 Short Term Absence Review Meeting

The role of the Clerk of Governors at this stage is to organise and coordinate the stage 2 short term absence review meeting as per our Governing Body standing orders. The format of the meeting can be found at appendix D.

The employee will be invited to attend a formal Stage 2 Absence Review Meeting with a panel consisting of members of the Governing Body¹⁰. The invite letter will outline the causes of concern, include any relevant documentation and a copy of this policy & procedure. The employee may be accompanied at this meeting by a recognised trade union/professional association representative or a work colleague of their choice. The Headteacher (or designate) will also be in attendance to present the management case and a note taker. The purpose of the meeting is as follows:

- To review the employee's attendance record.
- To review details of previous meetings held.
- To review support provided.
- To consider the prospect of an improvement in attendance.
- To consider the medical evidence including the most recent opinion from the Occupational Health.
- Any relevant mitigating information from the employee and/or their representative.

19.4 Possible outcomes at stage 2

If it is felt that there are new mitigating circumstances and there is a good reason why these have not been raised by the employee at an earlier stage, then consideration may be given to extending the formal review period and/or amending any wellness action plan.

If no new mitigating circumstances are presented and the panel has fully considered the employee's length of service, attendance, the effect of their absences on School and possible redeployment within School, the employee's contract may be terminated.

The outcome of the meeting must be confirmed to the employee in writing within 5 working days. Where the outcome is either an extension of a formal attendance

¹⁰ Where this panel has been given delegated authority for dismissal as per our School standing orders. They may also request support and/or attendance from our HR Service provider

improvement notice or dismissal then the employee will be notified of their right to appeal. If the employee wishes to appeal (see section 21), they must put this in writing, addressed to the Chair of Governors within 5 working days of receipt of the outcome letter.

20.0 Formal Procedure for managing long term absence

Sickness absence will be considered as long-term if it continues for longer than four weeks continuous absence.

In cases where the absence is recognised as likely to be long-term from the outset due to recuperation from a serious illness, accident or surgical procedure, but where medical evidence can confidently provide an expected return to work within a reasonable timeframe, then an informal attendance support meeting¹¹ should take place prior to consideration of the formal long-term procedure.

Both the employee and headteacher ((or their designate) have a duty to keep in touch about the employee's health, their progress and major developments in the workplace (unless medical advice is that this would be detrimental to the employee's recovery). The regularity and method of maintaining contact should be agreed wherever possible and may depend on the circumstances of the case. Absent employees must be informed of significant developments in the workplace that may affect them, such as proposed redundancies, review of the school staffing structure or transfer to a different employer.

Where the informal stage has not achieved its objective, or in cases where it is felt that the matter is too serious to be dealt with informally, the formal procedure may be used¹². Where there is an intention to move into the formal stage a referral to Occupational Health will be made if this has not already taken place.

20.1 Stage 1: Long Term Absence Review Meeting

Formal meetings should be held throughout the long-term absence to discuss the prospects for the return to work of the employee. The content of these meetings should be informed by up-to-date medical advice.

The employee will be invited to attend a formal Stage 1 long term Absence Review Meeting with the Headteacher. The invite letter will outline the causes of concern, include any relevant documentation and a copy of this policy & procedure. The employee may be accompanied at this meeting by a recognised trade union/professional association representative or a work colleague of their choice. The meeting will be chaired by the Headteacher, and a note taker may be in attendance.

¹¹ The meeting will consider the timeframe concerned as to whether it can be accommodated and therefore considered as a reasonable adjustment. In exceptional circumstances an alternative meeting with the employee's trade union representative may be appropriate.

¹² In determining whether to enter the long-term formal procedure consideration should be given to expected recuperation periods following surgery/treatment where medical evidence can confirm a likely return to work date.

The purpose of the meeting is as follows:

- To discuss the nature of the medical condition and any up-to-date medical advice/opinions from appropriate agencies i.e., Occupational Health/GP.
- To review details of previous meetings held.
- To discuss the prospect of a return to work in the foreseeable future¹³.
- To discuss support or assistance which could be offered¹⁴
- To establish if the condition is work related.
- To establish if reasonable adjustments could be made to support a return to work.
- To explore the option of redeployment within School if possible.

20.2 Possible Outcomes at Stage 1

Possible outcomes of the meeting include the following:

- planning the employee's return to work including consideration of any comments by their doctor on their fit note about support needed.
- referring the employee back to Occupational Health for further medical advice as the employee's health or prospects for recovery have changed since the last appointment.
- making arrangements for reasonable adjustments to the employee's current job (for example, working hours, duties, working environment or equipment on a permanent or temporary basis) to remove barriers that prevent a disabled employee returning to work.
- A return to work
 - on a specified date agreed with the employee.
 - on a specified date set by School
 - on a specified date but redeployed into suitable alternative employment on a temporary or permanent basis where such employment can be identified.
 - on an unspecified date following a period of recuperation. Contact should be maintained, and recovery progress reviewed regularly. Further meetings may be required.
- A phased return to work on amended duties and/or reduced hours for a period of up to four weeks¹⁵. The aim is that the employee will return to their full hours in week 4. The phased return should be monitored and reviewed regularly during the initial timescales set, with consideration given in exceptional circumstances to extending the period of amended duties past the four-week period.
- Consideration given to supporting the employee in making an application for Ill

¹³ For guidance, foreseeable future may be considered to be a period up to 3 months.

¹⁴ This may include consideration to extending the period for recuperation beyond 3 months following surgery/treatment where medical evidence can confirm a likely return to work date.

¹⁵ In exceptional circumstances a period longer than 4 weeks could be considered.

Health Early Retirement¹⁶.

- Consideration given to moving to Stage 2 of the procedure where Ill Health Dismissal on grounds of capability will be contemplated.

The outcome of the meeting must be confirmed to the employee in writing within 5 working days.

If there is insufficient evidence to confirm that the employee is permanently unfit for work, or unfit for the foreseeable future, then the Headteacher should complete an assessment report regarding the impact of the employee's continuing absence and how much longer it can be accommodated in School. This should be completed prior to proceeding to Stage 2.

20.3 Stage 2: Long Term Absence Review Meeting

The role of the Clerk of Governors at this stage is to organise and coordinate the stage 2 long term absence review meeting as per our Governing Body standing orders. The format of the meeting can be found at appendix D.

In the event of the employee being unable to return to work in any capacity within the next 3-month period or failing to satisfactorily complete a supported/phased return to work or return on a specified date they will be requested to attend a Stage 2 Long Term Absence Review Meeting where dismissal will become a possible option. This option will be explored only as a last resort. Any decision to begin dismissal procedures on health grounds will be undertaken by the Headteacher following advice from our HR Service Provider.

The employee will be invited to attend a formal Stage 2 Long Term Absence Review Meeting with a panel consisting of members of the Governing Body¹⁷ as outlined in our standing orders. The employee may be accompanied at this meeting by a recognised trade union/professional association representative or a work colleague of their choice. The Headteacher will also be in attendance to present the management case in addition to a note taker.

The purpose of the meeting is as follows:

- To review the employee's attendance record.
- To review details of previous meetings held.
- To consider the medical evidence including the most recent opinion from Occupational Health.
- To review support provided.
- To review the Headteacher's assessment report (where required).
- Any relevant mitigating information from the employee and/or their representative inclusive of consideration being given to making an application

¹⁶ See appendix D for procedure relating to ill health retirement. The employee should also be encouraged to consider seeking support from their trade union.

¹⁷ Where this panel has been given delegated authority for dismissal as per School standing orders.

for Ill Health Early Retirement.

20.4 Possible Outcomes of Stage 2

Where the panel has fully considered the employee's length of service, attendance record, medical evidence, the effect of their absence(s) on School and possible redeployment within School, the employee's contract may be terminated.

The outcome of the meeting must be confirmed to the employee in writing within 5 working days and where dismissal is the outcome the employee will be notified of their right to appeal. If the employee wishes to appeal, they must put this in writing, addressed to the Clerk of Governors within 5 working days of receipt of the outcome letter.

21.0 Appeal Process

The role of the Clerk of Governors at this stage is to organise and coordinate the appeal. The appeal will be dealt with impartially members of the governing body as per our standing orders who have not been previously involved in the case¹⁸. Appeals can be made where a formal Written 'Attendance Improvement Notice' has been issued/extended or where the outcome of the Stage 2 meeting was dismissal.

At least 10 working days' written notice will be given and the notification will give details of the time and place of the appeal meeting. The employee may be accompanied at this meeting by a recognised trade union/professional association representative or a work colleague of their choice.

Options for the Appeal Panel to consider as an outcome arising from an appeal are as follows:

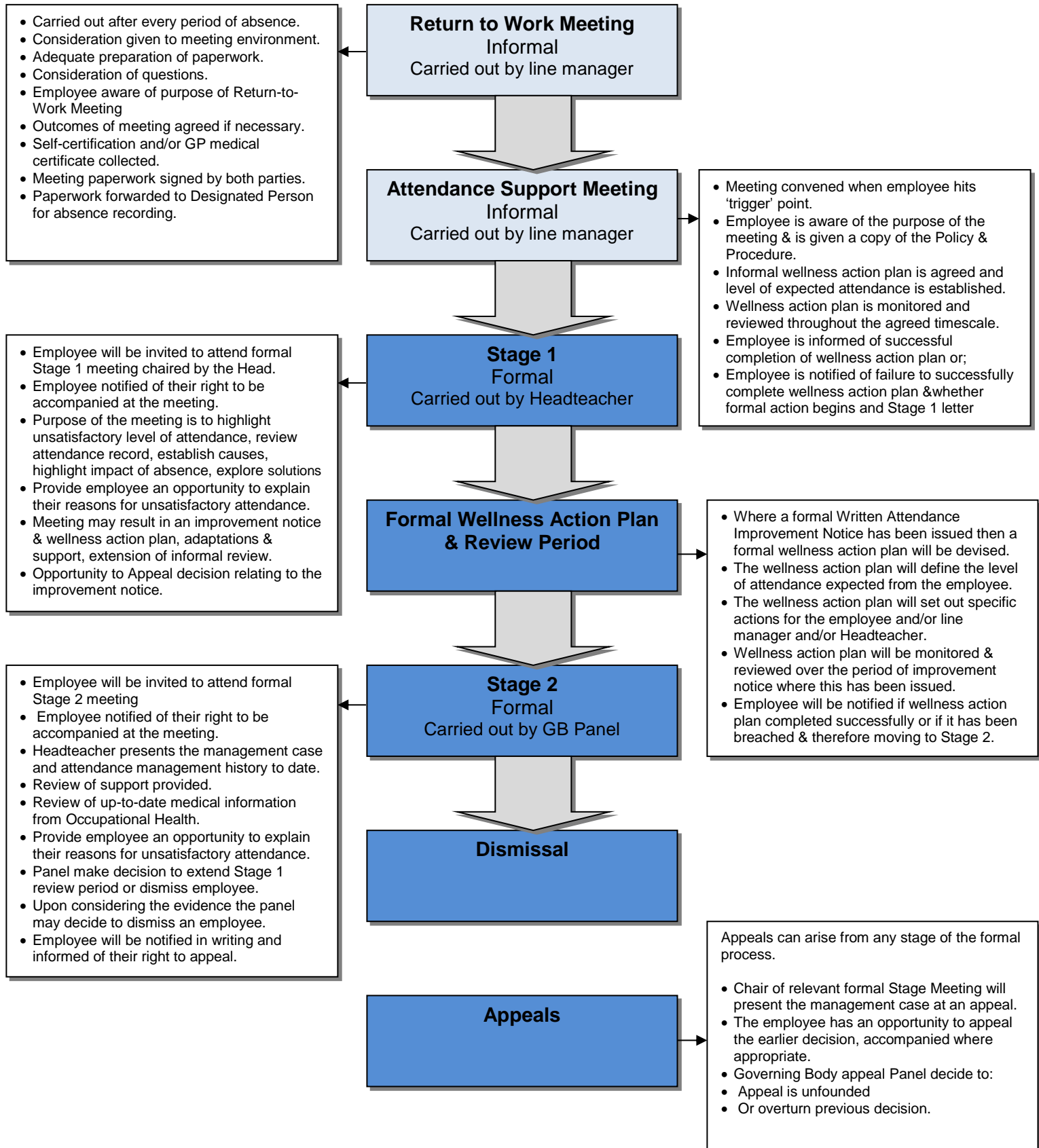
- Appeal not upheld - take no further action
- Appeal upheld/partially upheld - after thoroughly exploring the issues raised the Panel believe it is appropriate to change the previous decision¹⁹.

The employee will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing as soon as possible (within 5 working days) of the matters covered at this meeting and their outcome. The decision of the appeal panel is final.

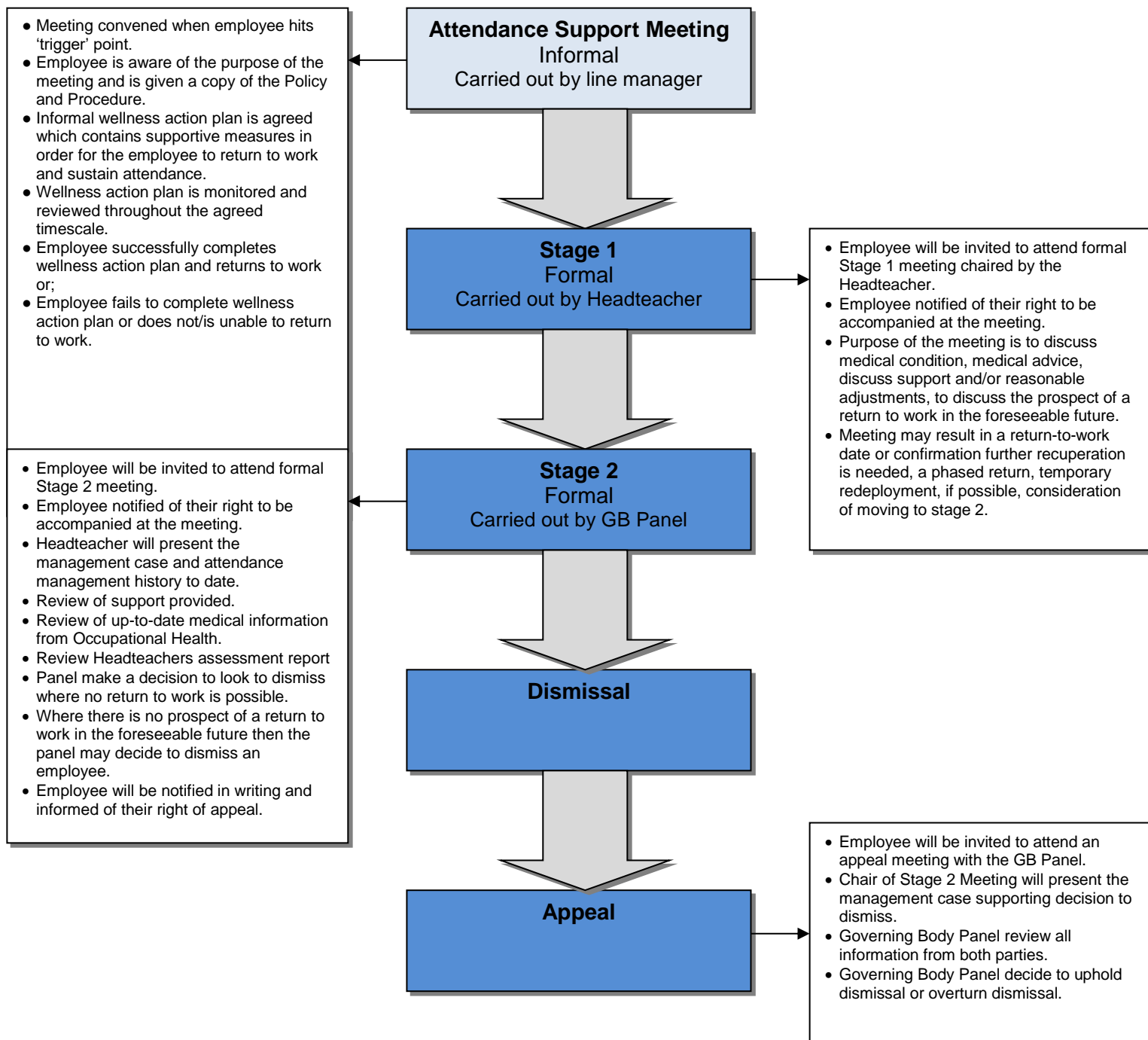
¹⁸ The number of Governors at the appeal stage MUST not be less than the number at hearing the case at stage 2 of the procedure.

¹⁹ In accordance with the principles of this policy the Appeal Panel do not have the authority to increase the sanction set at an earlier stage.

Appendix A(i): Short Term Attendance Management Procedure



Appendix A(ii): Long Term Attendance Management Procedure





Appendix B: Return to Work Wellness Meeting Form

Employee Name:			
First Day of Absence:	Last Day of Absence:	No. of Days Absent:	Return to Work Date:
Reason(s) for absence:			
Relevant information on fit note (for absences of more than 7 calendar days)			
How do you feel about returning to work? Is there any medical advice we need to consider? What can we do to support a successful return to work? What can you do to support a successful return to work? What would you like to be communicated regarding your return to work (if anything)?			
Action to be taken:			
Update on relevant issues (training or organisation changes and handover arrangements where relevant):			
Trigger Point Reached? Please Specify:		Attendance Support Meeting Arranged?	
Employee comments:			



Whitley Chapel Church of England First School

Friendship, Community, Faith

Leazes Lane, Steel, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 0HB

Telephone and Fax: 01434 673294

Email: Admin@whitleyfirst.northumberland.sch.uk

Headteacher: Mrs Karen North

Employee signature:	Date:
Line Manager/Headteacher signature:	Date:



Appendix C(i): Wellness Action Plan Template – Short Term

Employee: Employee number:

Manager: Date plan agreed:

Issue/Cause for Concern	Action(s) to be taken	Responsibility	Timeframe
What can you do to stay healthy at work? This can include for example making sure you take a lunch break, organising your work differently, accessing support from your manager or colleagues.			
Do you need any specific resources or equipment to improve how you work? This does not mean something expensive or complicated and could include simple things like having a quiet space to work.			
What can your manager do to support you to stay healthy and work? This could include organising training. It could also cover providing you with			



regular feedback, ensuring you understand what's going on in the in the school or empowering you to make your own decisions			
Triggers Are there any situations that trigger poor health for you? This could be at home or work but impacts on your work. What can you do to manage or mitigate these?			
Early warning signs and what to do Are there early warning signs that may be noticed when you start to feel unwell? What steps should you take if you start to feel unwell? What should your manager do if they notice you are feeling unwell?			
Would an Occupational Health referral help? If a referral has been made already what are the recommendations? If they have been implemented have they helped?			



<p>Any other support</p> <p>Is there any other support that would enable you to remain at work?</p> <p>Is there anything that needs to be shared with your colleagues?</p>			
<p>Attendance target</p> <p>What are current attendance levels?</p> <p>What is realistic to achieve going forward?</p> <p>Attendance targets must have a date for the target being achieved and a review date set.</p> <p>The impact of not meeting a target should be discussed.</p>			

Employee's signature:

Manager's signature:



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Headteacher: Mrs Karen North

Appendix C(ii): Wellness Action Plan Template – Long Term

Employee: Employee number:

Manager: Date plan agreed:

Issue/Cause for Concern	Action(s) to be taken	Responsibility	Timeframe
What can you do to stay healthy at work? This can include for example making sure you take a lunch break, organising your work differently, accessing support from your manager or colleagues.			
Do you need any specific resources or equipment to improve how you work? .			
What can your manager do to support you to stay healthy and work? This could include organising training for you. It could also cover providing you with regular feedback, ensuring you understand what's going on in the in the school or empowering you to			



make your own decisions			
Triggers Are there any situations that trigger poor health for you? This could be at home or work but impacts on your work. What can you do to manage or mitigate these?			
Early warning signs and what to do Are there early warning signs that may be noticed when you start to feel unwell? What steps should you take if you start to feel unwell? What should your manager do if they notice you are feeling unwell?			
Would an Occupational Health referral help? If a referral has been made already what are the recommendations? If they have been implemented have they helped?			
Any other support Is there any other support that would			



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enable you to remain at work?			
Communication Is there anything that needs to be shared with your colleagues?			
Attendance target What are current attendance levels? What is realistic to achieve going forward? Attendance targets must have a date for the target being achieved and a review date set. The impact of not meeting a target should be discussed.			

Employee's signature:

Manager's signature:



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Appendix D: Stage 2 Absence Review Meeting – Suggested Format

Introduction

The Chair of the Panel introduces all parties present and explains how the meeting will be conducted and what is being considered – including adjournments, refreshment breaks, expected behaviour, documentation, etc.

Presentation

By the Headteacher (or designate) from School (or Chair of Hearing Panel where it is an Appeal). They will outline the following as part of their statement.

- ☐ Outline of the Headteachers assessment report
- ☐ Provide a summary of the employees attendance record
- ☐ Provide details of previous meetings held
- ☐ Outline the medical evidence including the most recent opinion from Occupational Health,
- ☐ Provide a summary of the support and reasonable adjustments (where applicable) provided

Questions

The parties may ask questions relating to the presentation given by the Headteacher (or designate) from School (or Chair of the Hearing Panel where it is an Appeal) in the following order:

- Employee (or their work colleague or trade union/professional association representative)
- Panel Members

Presentation

By the Employee (or their work colleague or trade union/professional association representative).

The employee will outline any mitigating information where relevant.

Questions

The parties may ask questions relating to the presentation given by the Employee (or their work colleague or trade union/professional association representative) in the following order:

- Manager from the School (or Chair of the Hearing Panel where it is an Appeal)
- Panel Members

Final statements

Will be taken in the following order

- Headteacher (or designate) from the School (or Chair of the Hearing Panel where it is an Appeal)
- Employee (or their work colleague or trade union/professional association representative)

All parties then withdraw to allow the Panel to reach a decision. The supporting HR Link where in attendance will remain during this stage as will the minute/note taker.

The parties may be asked to remain available for either clarification or to be advised of the decision of the Panel.

Note: For appeal hearings – the order of actions undertaken by the chair of the hearing panel and the employee will be reversed from those set out above.