

Sickness Absence Policy

This is a Good Shepherd Trust Policy and all reference to ‘the Trust’ includes all Trust schools, the central team and subsidiary organisations.

Date adopted:	September 2024	Last reviewed:	September 2024
Review cycle:	Every 3 years or earlier	Is this policy statutory?	No
Approval:	CFOO	Author:	Head of HR
Next review Date:	September 2027		

Revision record

Minor revisions should be recorded here when the policy is amended in light of changes to legislation or to correct errors. Significant changes or at the point of review should be recorded below and approved at the level indicated above.

Revision No.	Date	Revised by	Approved date	Comments
1	12/08/22	D Bird	12/08/22	Combines Sickness Absence and Return to work policies
2	16/07/24	D Bird	12/09/24	Additional guidance from separate Trust documents added on phased returns to work. Policy split into sections for short term and long term absence.

1. Introduction and Policy Aims

- 1.1 Managing sickness absence is a sensitive matter and the Trust at all times aims to give due consideration to the welfare of staff, the needs of the Trust and the impact that absence has on the effective education of pupils.
- 1.2 The Trust is committed to:
- Ensuring that the procedure is conducted in a constructive and non-discriminatory manner, taking account of individual circumstances and respecting confidentiality;
 - Recording and monitoring absence effectively, in order to assist employees to improve attendance;
 - Exploring the reasons for sickness absence to understand any underlying issues;
 - Identifying and seeking to address work-related causes of sickness absence;
 - Dealing robustly with any identified abuses of the sickness absence system;
 - Promoting the physical and mental well-being of staff.
 - Understanding the causes of any absence and the effect it may or will have on an employee’s ability to carry out their job function effectively;
 - Providing support to employees to help manage their health, work or welfare problems;
 - Exploring any options which could help employees to improve their attendance and/or facilitate their return to work;

- Managing attendance issues in a fair and consistent manner and in line with relevant employment legislation and best practice;
- implement this policy with due regard to any individual's disabilities and our duty to make reasonable adjustments where applicable;
- Clearly outlining the key stages of an absence management process and the potential outcomes at each stage.

1.3 This policy applies to all employees of the Trust with the exception of employees serving a probationary period in which cases absence concerns will be managed under the probationary policy. It does not form part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment and is not intended to have contractual effect. The Trust reserves the right to amend its content at any time.

1.4 The Trust is committed to ensuring that its employees attend work whenever they are fit for work. However, it also recognises that individuals do become ill and need to be absent from work at times. Where this is the case, it will manage such absence with the ultimate aim of getting the employee back to work as soon as possible, giving appropriate and reasonable assistance to achieve that aim.

1.5 This policy sets out the likely steps involved in managing sickness and attendance, but recognises that different approaches may be required, depending on the nature of absences. The procedure to be followed in the case of an acute or long-term medical problem ("long term sickness absence") differs from the procedure to be followed in the case of persistent, intermittent short-term absenteeism ("short term sickness absences").

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Good Shepherd Trust Executive Leadership Team is responsible for the overall monitoring of the effectiveness of this procedure.

2.2 The Headteacher and Trust Senior Leaders are responsible for ensuring that those with line management responsibilities are suitably skilled to manage sickness absence and have received appropriate training.

2.3 All line managers are responsible for ensuring that their members of staff are familiar with the expectations placed upon them in relation to their attendance at work, for monitoring absence, ensuring that consistent reporting is in place and conducting informal and formal meetings with individuals in accordance with the various stages outlined within the procedure.

2.4 The Trust expects all of its employees to take responsibility for their own attendance at work and, if they are ill, their recovery and timely return to work. Employees are required to comply with our notification and certification procedures; provide sufficient information as and when required to keep us informed of their condition and prognosis; co-operate with us to implement any advice from medical and/or occupational health practitioners in order to facilitate a timely return to work and attend meetings when requested to do so.

2.5 All employees are expected to take responsibility for maintaining general health and fitness in order to sustain a high level of attendance.

3. Reporting Sickness Absence and Certification Requirements

3.1 Employees must report their absence in line with their School or Department's procedure at the earliest possible opportunity and this must be before their contracted start time.

- 3.2 Reporting should include the reason for absence, the likely duration of absence, the action the employee is intending to take e.g. visiting their GP and any necessary briefing on work commitments so that appropriate arrangements for cover can be made.
- 3.3 The employee must attempt to speak in person to their line manager; if it is necessary to leave a message, contact details should be left to enable the manager to make a return call. Notification must be by the employee themselves unless their incapacity is such that this is not possible.
- 3.4 If absence continues for longer than initially anticipated, the employee is expected to regularly update the line manager in the same way, confirming the likely duration of absence.
- 3.5 Employees who become unwell during the course of the working day should ensure that the line manager (or a senior manager if the line manager is unavailable) has been notified before leaving work early. Any accident or incident at work must be reported as soon as possible in accordance with the school's health and safety procedures so that it can be appropriately recorded and any required action taken at an early stage.
- 3.6 All absences, including part days, must be notified and recorded.
- 3.7 Absences of less than one calendar week must be supported by a self-certificate form completed upon the employee's return to work.
- 3.8 Absences of more than one calendar week (i.e. from the eighth calendar day) must be supported by medical evidence from a registered medical practitioner, usually in the form of a fit note, which must be submitted as soon as possible to the line manager. Additional fit notes must be submitted thereafter as necessary to ensure that the whole period of absence is covered, including any intervening Trust or School closure periods.
- 3.9 Any period of absence caused by sickness or injury which is not covered by an acceptable medical certificate may be treated as unauthorised and therefore unpaid. Unauthorised absence may also be treated as a disciplinary matter.

4. Sick Pay

- 4.1 The Trust Statutory Sick Pay and or Occupational Sick Pay entitlement is calculated by taking into account the length of service on the first day of absence and any sick pay received in the 12 months prior to the first day of absence. Sick pay entitlements are in line with an employee's contract of employment.
- 4.2 The Trust reserves the right to stop or withhold payment of sick pay under its contractual sick pay scheme if:
- the employee has failed to comply with the organisation's sickness absence notification and evidence requirements;
 - the employee refuses to attend a medical examination at the reasonable request of the organisation;
 - the employee's incapacity has been caused by participation in dangerous sports or activities, or is as a result of any other occupation the employee has;
 - the employee makes or produces any misleading or untrue statement or document concerning their fitness to work;
 - the employee has given or received notice to terminate their employment; or

- sickness absence occurs when: any disciplinary, grievance, formal or informal performance management or capability proceedings (including investigations) are pending or ongoing against the employee; or, the employee has been informed of the outcome of such proceedings.

5. Return to Work Meetings

- 5.1 All line managers have a responsibility, with appropriate training, to conduct return to work meetings following every period of absence (including part days) to ensure that the employee is well enough to be back at work, to support their return and ensure they are updated on work matters.
- 5.2 This discussion will be recorded on the return to work interview record form, a copy of which should be given to the employee. The line manager is responsible for ensuring that they have all relevant information to hand, such as risk assessments and/or occupational health reports.

6. Meetings under this Policy

- 6.1 Meetings will normally be arranged during an employee's normal working hours, and therefore employees should be available to attend, and must take all reasonable steps to do so. Failure to do so without good reason may be treated as misconduct.
- 6.2 Employees will be notified in writing of the time, date and place of any meeting, and why it is being held.
- 6.3 Employees will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or an accredited trade union official at any formal absence review meetings, hearings or appeals. Employees do not have the right to be accompanied at return to work or informal welfare meetings.
- 6.4 All staff should note that being signed off by a medical professional as unfit to work does not of itself mean you are unfit to attend a meeting.
- 6.5 If the meeting is one at which an employee is entitled to be accompanied, and their companion is unavailable to attend at the time specified they should immediately inform the Headteacher or other Senior Leader who will seek to agree an alternative time within a reasonable period (normally 5 working days). If this is not possible, the employee would be expected to find an alternative companion.
- 6.6 A formal meeting may be adjourned if the Headteacher or Senior Leader is awaiting receipt of information, needs to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at a previous meeting. An employee will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the meeting is reconvened.
- 6.7 Confirmation will be given to you in writing as soon as reasonably practicable following any meeting under this Policy of:
- the issues discussed;
 - any decisions made or actions agreed at a meeting;
 - the reasons for such;
 - any adjustments or support agreed;
 - the consequences of failure to improve; and
 - any right of appeal (if a formal sanction has been issued).

7. Referrals to Occupational Health

- 7.1 The Trust has access to an Occupational Health service and may use this to obtain medical advice to provide appropriate support to you and aid decision-making in sickness absence cases for any reason.
- 7.2 The Trust may refer an employee to the Occupational Health service at any point if they are concerned about the impact of their health on their work or attendance or for any other reason where it is necessary to have medical advice to make or consider decisions, including support and adjustments.
- 7.3 It is likely that a referral will take place when an employee has been on sick leave for 4 continuous weeks, or the Trust receives a medical certificate indicating that an absence of this length is anticipated.
- 7.4 An earlier referral may also be requested by the Employee or Senior Leader to provide early support in managing absence. Referrals may also be made at any time for concerns regarding frequent short-term absences.
- 7.5 In the event of a refusal by the employee of an Occupational Health referral, decisions about the employee's future employment will be made on the basis of the information available at the time.

8. Unauthorised Absence

- 8.1 Absence that has not been notified according to the sickness absence reporting procedure will be treated as unauthorised absence.
- 8.2 Cases of unauthorised absence may be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and may result in loss of pay to which an employee may otherwise have been entitled to for the period of unauthorised absence.
- 8.3 If, at any time, the Trust considers that an employee may have taken or are taking sickness absence when you are not unwell, they may refer matters to be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

9. Disability Related Absence

- 9.1 At each stage of this Policy, particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the requirements of a job or other aspects of working arrangements that will provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.
- 9.2 If an employee considers that they are affected by a disability or any medical condition which affects their ability to undertake their work, they should inform the Headteacher or other Senior Leader at the earliest opportunity so that support and adjustments can be considered.

10. Pregnancy Related Absence

- 10.1 Sickness absence which is pregnancy-related will be recorded in the normal way and will count against sickness entitlement but will be disregarded for the purposes of the trigger points for short term absence.

10.2 An Occupational Health referral will usually also be appropriate if such absences become frequent or otherwise where advice to management on suitable workplace adjustments would be beneficial.

11. Ill-health Retirement

11.1 If you are a member of the LGPS or the TPS, the Trust will consider whether ill-health retirement may be an appropriate course of action before making any recommendation for dismissal.

11.2 For further information regarding ill-health retirement, an employee may contact the relevant pension scheme provider or they may also contact the Trust HR team (hr@goodshepherdtrust.org.uk)

12. Terminal Illness

12.1 Cases of terminal illness must be handled with compassion and sensitivity, respecting the employee's dignity and privacy.

12.2 The employee and their nominated representative will be given a senior-level contact within the Trust who can act as a conduit for relevant communications and ensure that any issues are dealt with promptly and efficiently.

12.3 The Trust will seek HR/pension advice on the options available regarding pension entitlement, death in service benefits and benefits for partners and dependents.

12.4 The Trust may give consideration to the extension of sick pay entitlement to alleviate financial worries.

13. Confidentiality

13.1 The Trust will ensure that any information relating to concerns about an employee's attendance are disclosed only to those who have a direct involvement in dealing with, or advising on, those concerns, emphasising the need for strict confidentiality.

13.2 Medical information can be particularly sensitive and, whilst it is essential for the school to have appropriate information about the nature of an employee's ill health in order to manage their absence accordingly, this will be balanced against an employee's desire for privacy over such matters.

13.3 Where the employee is reluctant to discuss medical information that their views as sensitive with their line manager, the employee may ask to speak to an alternative manager or an OH adviser instead.

14. Relationship with Disciplinary and Capability Procedures

14.1 On occasion, an employee may not be meeting the required standards of work either in terms of their attendance or their conduct/performance. In such cases, unsatisfactory attendance may be considered alongside conduct or performance issues in a joint formal meeting to avoid the complexity of instigating parallel procedures with similar stages and potential outcomes.

15. Sickness Absence and Annual Leave

- 15.1 While it is recognised that during a period of sickness absence, time away from home (for example going on holiday or visiting family) may be therapeutically helpful, employees are required to seek prior approval from the Trust before doing so.
- 15.2 A decision to take time away from home, without permission, during a period of sick leave without prior approval may result in a loss of your Occupational Sick Pay during that period.
- 15.3 Any requirements in employment contracts regarding requesting annual leave will continue to apply during any period of sickness absence.

16. Phased Return to Work Following Long Term Sickness Absence

16.1 A phased return to work is when someone who's been absent gradually builds up to returning to work. For example:

- starting on reduced hours
- doing work that is different to their usual job
- having a lighter workload

16.2 A phased return to work might be appropriate after a:

- long-term illness
- serious injury
- bereavement

16.2 If an employee is disabled, the Trust must also consider reasonable adjustments to support them.

16.3 How long a phased return will last depends on the employee's individual circumstances. The Trust and the employee should agree how long it will be for.

16.4 If an employee has a fit note, this will usually give advice on how long their phased return should be. However, the Trust and the employee should still discuss and agree this together.

16.5 The Trust and employee should regularly review how the phased return is going.

16.5 The Trust will be flexible and make sure they're supporting their employee's health and wellbeing. For example, they might need to:

- extend the phased return to work
- agree to new changes to the employee's responsibilities or work pattern

16.6 An employee's pay during a phased return to work will depend on what kind of phased return to work they have agreed with the Trust.

16.7 In order to encourage employees to return to work, the Trust will pay full pay for the first two weeks of a phased return; however after two weeks the employee will be paid their hourly rate of pay for the hours worked during their phased return.

16.8 In circumstances where previously agreed phased returns to work (within 12 months) have not been successful, the Trust may inform the employee that they will be paid for the hours worked only during their phased return to work.

17. Right to Appeal

17.1 An employee has the right to appeal any level or warning (issued under the short-term absence process only) or a decision to terminate their employment under this policy.

17.2 If an employee wishes to exercise this right of appeal, they should write to the Head of HR via email (hr@goodshepherdtrust.org.uk) within 7 days of any outcome being notified to them, setting out the grounds and basis for the appeal.

17.3 At the hearing, the employee will be given a full and fair opportunity to put forward their grounds of appeal. No decisions will be reached during the hearing itself. The senior leader or panel will need to consider all the evidence together with the representations that have made. In some cases, further investigations may be required before a decision can be reached.

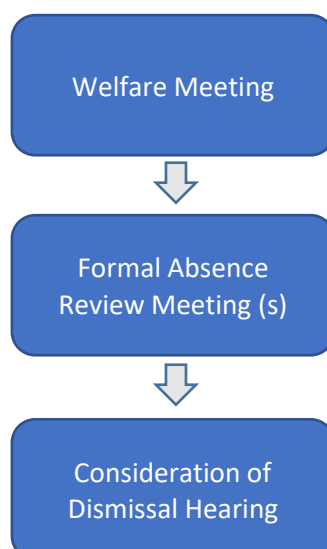
17.4 The individual will be notified of the result of the appeal in writing without unreasonable delay. The decision of at the appeal hearing is the final stage of this procedure and there is no further right of appeal.

17.5 The date that any dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of an appeal. However, if the appeal is successful, the decision to dismiss will be revoked with no loss of continuity of service or pay.

Section A - Managing Long-Term Sickness Absence

17.1 The purpose of the procedure is to investigate and discuss the reasons for an employee's absence, whether it is likely to continue or recur, and whether there are any adjustments or support which could improve their health and/or attendance. We may decide that medical evidence, or further medical evidence, is required before deciding on a course of action.

17.2 The diagram below shows the types of meetings that may be held under the long-term absence procedure. The number of meetings at each stage may vary depending on the specific circumstances of the case and will be discussed with you. There is no minimum number of meetings required nor set timescales between each stage;



17.3 Welfare Meetings – Long-Term Sickness Absence

An informal welfare meeting will usually be arranged after a continuous period of 4 or more weeks' absence; however, this can be arranged sooner if the Trust is concerned about an employee's wellbeing or either party consider it beneficial to hold an informal meeting.

At the welfare meeting, the following will likely be discussed:

- the reason for the employee's absence;
- the anticipated duration of absence;
- the treatment and care an employee is receiving;
- whether it is necessary for the Trust to consider making reasonable adjustments or put support in place to assist the employee in returning to work;
- whether medical evidence is required, or has already been obtained, to assess an employee's fitness to return to work and if any adjustments or support are necessary to assist them;
- if an employee's continued absence may lead to a formal absence review ,meeting; and
- whether we are able to agree a return to work plan (and if so, the various aspects of that plan); and timescale for review;
- Whether this period of long-term sickness absence will impact on any current absence management processes that are in place under the short term absence policy (if applicable).

17.4 Informal welfare meetings can take place at any stage of the long-term absence procedure.

17.5 Formal Absence Review Meetings – Long-Term Absence

If, following a Welfare Meeting – Long-Term Sickness Absence, you have not been able to return to work, the Trust may proceed to hold a Formal Absence Review Meeting.

At this meeting, we will review the key points and any updates or progress from the welfare meeting(s).

A similar agenda to the one detailed in section 17.3 is likely to be followed. We may also discuss;

- whether further medical advice or clarification is required at this stage;
- if there are any possible redeployment opportunities within the Trust;
- an employee's ability to return to their job in view of your capabilities and the Trust's operational needs;
- whether the Trust needs to notify the employee that they may be at risk of dismissal if they are unable to return to work within a reasonable timeframe;
- whether ill health retirement is an option which can be considered.
- any further matters that the employee or their representative wishes to raise.

The timings of Formal Absence Review meetings required for this process will largely be determined by the content of any medical evidence obtained, and an employee's circumstances. However, if it becomes clear that an employee will either be unable to return to work within a reasonable timeframe, or if they are no longer able to carry out their contracted duties and consideration has been given to any adjustments, support or possible redeployment opportunities without success, the will Trust will discuss with the employee arranging a Consideration of Dismissal Hearing.

17.6 Formal Absence Review Meeting – Consideration of Dismissal Hearing – Long-Term Absence

Where an employee has been notified that they are at risk of dismissal, and the situation has not changed significantly, we will hold a Consideration of Dismissal Hearing to consider the possible termination of employment. Before we make a decision, the Trust will consider any matters an employee or their representative wishes to raise and whether there have been any changes since the last meeting.

In exceptional instances, the Trust may receive clear Occupational Health advice that the anticipated duration of the absence means that the Trust would consider it appropriate to commence the process at this final stage, without it being necessary to conduct a Formal Absence Review meeting first. Any such decision will be clearly communicated to the employee.

A similar agenda to the ones detailed in sections 17.3 and 17.5 is likely to be followed. In addition, we may also discuss;

- any reasonable options for redeployment on medical grounds before making any recommendation for dismissal (where redeployment is an option identified by Occupational Health);
- any reasonable options for ill health retirement before making any recommendation for dismissal
- and consider the possible termination of employment.

The grounds for consideration of dismissal will usually be that the employee is incapable of fulfilling their duties by reason of continued absence(s). Any dismissal will be with contractual notice or payment in lieu of notice.

An employee will have the right to appeal against any decision to terminate their employment. This right is detailed in section 16. The date that any dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of an appeal. However, if the appeal is successful, the decision to dismiss will be revoked with no loss of continuity of service or pay.

Section B - Managing Short-Term Sickness Absence

The following paragraphs set out our procedure for dealing with short term intermittent absences.

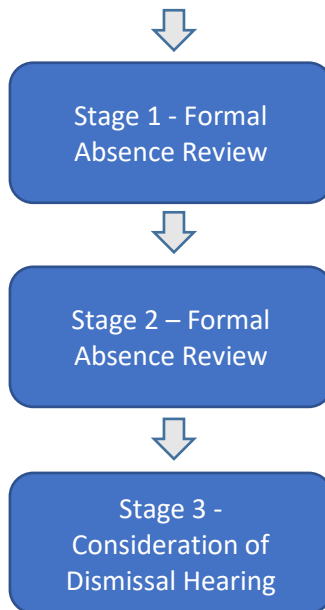
The purpose of the procedure is to investigate and discuss the reasons for absence. Consideration will also be given to whether these short-term intermittent absences are likely to continue and whether there are any adjustments or support which could improve an employee's health and/or attendance.

We may decide that medical evidence, or further medical evidence, is required before deciding on a course of action. The Trust will also give serious consideration to the impact that an employee's absences are having on the students, their colleagues and the wider Trust community as a whole, and will give consideration to how to reduce any such impact and whether, as a result of any such impact, their level of absence can be sustained by the Trust.

18.1 The diagram below shows the types of meetings that may be held under the short-term absence procedure. The number of informal meetings may vary depending on the specific circumstances of the case and will be discussed with you. There is no minimum number of meetings required nor set timescales between each stage;



Informal Welfare
Meeting



18.2 Short-Term Absence Trigger Points

The purpose of the Trust specifying trigger points is to set clear expectations regarding the expectations for regular attendance at work. These triggers enable Leaders to take prompt action to deal with absence, alert employees to the fact that their level of absence is causing concern and identify potential problems and deal with them effectively before they escalate.

It is not always necessary for a trigger point to be reached before action is taken. The Trust may take action at any time, (for example, referring an employee to Occupational Health), if they have concerns about an underlying cause of sickness and/or there is a significant impact on the Trust. The Trust's sickness trigger points are either of the following in the preceding 12 months:

- **6 or more working days sickness absence or**
- **4 separate occasions of sickness absence of any length in a 12 month period**

These trigger points will be pro-rated for part time staff.

18.3 Welfare Meeting – Short-Term Absence

When an employee meets or exceeds a trigger point above, or where the Trust considers that an employee's absence level is a cause for concern or is concerned about an employee's wellbeing, they may be asked to attend a welfare meeting. This informal discussion can form part of a return to work interview.

At the Welfare Meeting, the discussions may include:

- the reason for any absences;
- the likelihood of any further absences;
- any treatment and care the employee has received (or are receiving);
- any medication they have taken (or are taking) and any expected side effects;
- whether it is necessary for the Trust to consider taking reasonable adjustments or putting support in place to assist the employee in the workplace and to minimise the occurrence of repeated absences;

- whether medical evidence is required to assess the employee's fitness and if any adjustments or support are necessary to assist them;
- what improvement is required in the employee's attendance pattern; and
- targets to improve attendance over a set period of time (if appropriate).

If an employee meets their attendance target during the review period set at this meeting (which is usually set for one full term), the Trust may arrange an informal meeting with the employee to discuss this at the end of that review period and this procedure may be brought to an end. However, the above trigger points (section 18.2) will continue to apply and if the employee reaches another trigger point, the Trust may decide to move to Stage 1 of this procedure, without repeating the informal Welfare Meeting.

18.4 Stage 1 - Formal Absence Review Meeting (Short-Term Absence)

If an employee has been unable to meet their attendance targets during the review period set at the welfare meeting, or if there is a new trigger of the absence policy in the following 6 months after the welfare meeting, then they will be invited to a Stage 1 Formal Absence Review Meeting, the purpose of this meeting will be to review the discussions of the Welfare Meeting and consider why further absences occurred and the impact of these.

At the Stage 1 Formal Absence Review Meeting, we will follow a similar agenda to the one set out in 18.3 for discussions. In addition, the following are likely to be discussed;

- the reasons for most recent absence(s) and the reasons why the employee has been unable to meet the attendance targets set at the Welfare Meeting;
- the impact of absence on the students, colleagues and the wider Trust community as a whole;
- what adjustments or support the employee believes the Trust could offer to reduce the impact of absences;
- the employee's ability to remain in your job in view of your capabilities and the Trust's operational needs;
- any action that will be taken and a timescale for review and/or a further meeting.

A potential outcome of this meeting is that the employee may be issued with a first written warning for unsatisfactory attendance.

An employee can appeal against a decision to give a written warning (section 16).

If an employee meets their attendance target during the review period set at the First Formal Absence Review Meeting, the Trust may arrange an informal meeting with the employee to discuss this at the end of that review period and this procedure may be brought to an end. However, the above trigger points (section 18.2) will continue to apply and if the employee reaches another trigger point whilst the warning is active then the Trust may decide to move to Stage 2 of this procedure without repeating any of the earlier stages.

18.5 Stage 2 – Formal Absence Review Meeting (Short-Term Absence)

If an employee has been unable to meet their attendance targets during the review period set at the Stage 1 Formal Absence Review Meeting, they will be invited to a Stage 2 Absence Review Meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be essentially the same as the purpose of the Stage 1 Absence Review Meeting and the same agenda may be followed (18.3 and 18.4).

A potential outcome of this meeting may include an employee being issued final written warning for unsatisfactory levels of attendance. The employee will also be warned that a failure to meet the attendance targets set at the meeting may place them at risk of dismissal.

An employee can appeal against a decision to give a final written warning (section 16).

18.6 Stage 3 - Consideration of Dismissal Hearing (Short-Term Absence)

If an employee has been unable to meet their attendance targets during the review period set at the Stage 2 Formal Absence Review Meeting or they have later breached the Trust's absence triggers in a 12 month period following a Stage 2 Review Meeting and have a live Final Written Warning issued under this policy, then they will be invited to a Stage 3 - Consideration of Dismissal Hearing.

A similar agenda may be followed to previous meetings (18.3 and 18.4). In addition, a detailed discussion will take place to explain absence concerns and will include;

- reviewing the meetings that have taken place and matters discussed at previous meetings;
- discussing the impact that the employee's absences are having on the students, their colleagues and the wider Trust community as a whole, the steps the Trust has taken to reduce that impact and whether these steps can be maintained;
- consider whether there have been any changes since the last meeting under this Policy, either as regards the employee's likelihood of further periods of absence or opportunities for redeployment into a role which would be less impacted by your absences than your current role;
- consider any further matters that the employee wishes to raise;
- consider whether there is a reasonable likelihood of the employee achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time;
- consider whether the employee may be eligible for retirement on ill-health grounds;
- consider the possible termination of the employee's employment, having considered whether their high absence levels can continue to be sustained by the Trust, taking account of the impact of those absences.

The grounds for consideration of dismissal will likely be that the employee is incapable of meeting the Trust's expectations regarding attendance levels and that their absences are having an unsustainable impact on the students and/or their colleagues and/or the wider Trust community as a whole.

Any dismissal will be with contractual notice or payment in lieu of notice.

An employee will have the right to appeal against any decision to terminate their employment. This is detailed in section 16.

18.7 Warnings issued under Short-Term Absence Procedure

The period during which a warning issued under the Absence Management Procedure will remain 'live' for the purposes of this procedure is not definitive and may be varied according to the circumstances of the case. As a general rule, written warnings will remain live for a period of 12 months after which point they will be disregarded.

A longer warning period may be appropriate in certain cases, for example where there has been a history of poor attendance or where a longer warning period was determined as an alternative to dismissal.

18.8 Employee issued with a warning for Short-Term Sickness and is then absent for 4 weeks or more

In these circumstances, the focus will be on ensuring that the employee is supported to return to work. A formal absence review meeting will take place under the long-term absence procedure.

Following the employee's return to work, then the line manager may convene a Formal Absence Review Meeting at an appropriate stage of the short-term absence procedure (at either Stage 1,2 or 3) depending on the individual's absence history and levels of attendance prior to their period of long term absence.

18.9 Employee hits the Short-Term Absence triggers Following a Period of Long Term Sickness

Any one period of long-term sickness absence will mean that the employee has breached the Trust's absence triggers. In the event of a single period of long-term sickness absence in a 12-month period followed by a successful return to work, then no further formal action will be taken.

If it is considered that there was a high level of absence before the most recent period of long-term sickness, then the Headteacher may convene a formal meeting under the short-term absence procedure at the relevant stage taking into account the number of days and occasions of absence in the 12-month period prior to the most recent period of long-term absence. A warning may be issued for unsatisfactory levels of attendance.