



# HOLTON SLEAFORD

— INDEPENDENT SCHOOL —

## **Sickness and Absence Policy**

At Holton Sleaford Independent School (HSIS) we endeavour to employ the very best professionals in their respective fields, as such our Sickness and Absence Policy reflects a desire to look after those staff and help them to return to the work that they do so well. HSIS commits to actively promoting a positive working environment which treats employees absent from work due to sickness with consideration and respect.

We recognise that from time-to-time employees become ill, through no fault of their own and will make every effort to assist staff to fully recover and return to work, including by giving a commitment to phased return to work programmes should they be necessary.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time.

### **What are our commitments to you?**

- No employee will be dismissed on grounds of sickness absence without due warning and without following an agreed Sickness Procedure and that all possible alternatives to dismissal will be thoroughly explored with the employee and their trade union.
- Absence arising from medical appointments or disability-related absence may be paid, at the discretion of the Director of Schools/Proprietor and not considered under the management of sickness absence policy.
- HSIS is committed to operating fully in accordance with all relevant legislation, in particular, The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

### **Sickness and Absence Entitlements**

From the beginning of your employment, you will be entitled to a month's full pay, per academic year.

Any Company Sick Pay following on from that will be at the absolute discretion of the Director of Schools/Proprietor and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

You may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if you satisfy the relevant statutory requirements. The rate of SSP is set by the government in April each year. No SSP is payable for the first three consecutive days ('qualifying days') of absence. It starts on the fourth day of absence and may be payable for up to 28 weeks.

### **Disability**

If you're classed as disabled under the Equality Act 2010, you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. We will require clinical confirmation of your disability diagnosis from a certified healthcare professional to ensure we can make the necessary or recommended reasonable adjustments to your working environment and/or working practices.

### **Essential Family Care**

In addition to sickness and absence HSIS realises the importance of staff being able to fulfil essential family care obligations and emergencies. As such each staff has 5 working days allocated to essential family care, should they be required. Further days are at the discretion of the Director of Schools/Proprietor. 'Essential Family Care' is not counted towards staff sickness and absence records or entitlements.

### **Medical and Dental Appointments**

HSIS will always seek to help staff with their own wellbeing, however there is an expectation that wherever possible dental and medical appointments for you and your dependants are made outside of the school day wherever possible. If this is not the case and the appointment is not an emergency HSIS expects at least one weeks' notice.

### **What do we need from you?**

#### **Reporting Absence**

The process on the morning of any absence is for all staff to phone the School Absence line on 01529 410111 by 9am, giving brief details of your illness/reason for absence and if known when you expect to return to work. Staff are able to self-certify their illness for up to 7 days, after which they are required to obtain a sick note (fit for work note) from their doctor. On return to work the Head of School or Proprietor will complete a 'Return to Work' form with the member of staff concerned.

#### **Sick Notes**

- HSIS will need Sick Notes (Fit for Work notes) from your doctor or other medical professional after the eighth calendar day of absence.
- We need you to attend and be clear and transparent with us during 'informal' return to work meetings, these are intended to be supportive meetings.
- Follow medical advice where it is given in medical certificates, such as advice regarding a return to work (e.g. altered hours, a phased return to work, amended duties).

#### **Whilst off work**

- Rest, recuperate and follow your doctor's advice
- WE DO NOT require cover work to be set if you are absent
- Keep HSIS informed about the length of your absence and any potential complications
- Be receptive to a home visit from HSIS SLT in the case of long-term absence

#### **Monitor your Mental Health**

Regardless of whether or not you are off work, HSIS encourages all staff to be aware of their own mental health needs. SEMH schools are highly stressful environments, that are emotionally draining and often physically demanding.

One aspect over which we have an element of control is maintaining a work-life balance, to that end we encourage all employees to go home as soon as their daily tasks are completed, clock-watching will not happen at HSIS.

HSIS SLT are always ready and willing to talk to staff about their mental health, and this should be the first port of call for any concerns. Depending on the needs of the staff member concerned an occupational health referral may be offered. The result of which may be reasonable workplace adjustments to support your mental health and general wellbeing.

## **HSIS Sickness and Absence Monitoring Procedure**

### **Trigger Points**

HSIS Sickness and Absence Policy sets trigger points for Absence Management Meetings at 3 separate instances per rolling 12-month period and also after any sustained absence, i.e. a month or more. This process is intended to be supportive.

### **Initial Monitoring**

The process for every staff member returning to work will involve HSIS SLT completing a 'Return to Work' form. This is an 'informal' meeting, and the record will only be used if trigger points are met. If these trigger points are met, then an Informal Absence Review Meeting will take place.

A copy of the 'Return to Work' form can be found below.



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Return to work form

<b>Name</b>	
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This form needs to be completed after any period of absence; Employees must complete all questions marked in bold.

Date(s) of absence:

<b>First date of absence:</b>	
<b>Last date of absence:</b>	
<b>Return to work date:</b>	
<b>Total numbers of days absent from school:</b>	

<b>Reasons for absence?</b>		
<b>Did the employee notify the employer of his/her absence?</b>	Yes	No
<b>Did the employee consult his/her GP?</b>	Yes	No
<b>Did the employee indicate the factors at work may have caused or contributed to the absence.</b>	Yes	No
If <u>yes</u> please explain:		
If <u>so</u> what actions was taken		
Signed		
Signed Head of School		

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## **Process after Initial Monitoring**

### **Informal Absence Review Meeting**

If initial trigger points are met, i.e. 3 instances in a 12-month rolling period or an absence of over 1-month, then HSIS commits to undertake an Informal Absence Review Meeting. This will take place to ensure that HSIS as an organisation is doing everything reasonably possible to help staff back into work. There may be requirement for two courses of action at this stage.

#### **1. Return to work with ongoing monitoring of staff health and wellbeing**

#### **2. Occupational health (OH) referral (likely to involve return to work)**

- The objective of OH is to protect and promote employees' health and wellbeing, including the likelihood of a successful return to work
- We may refer an employee to an OH advisor for an OH consultation
- We will meet all costs associated with any examination undertaken by the OH service and/or the release of the employee's medical report, should the employee agree to such a request
- The employee will have the right to give their written permission for OH to request a medical report from the employee's doctor

### **Formal Absence Review Meetings**

If after the Informal Absence Review Meeting staff attendance does not improve, i.e. further trigger points are hit, then a process of Formal Absence Review Meetings will be required. During these meetings HSIS undertakes to consider the following if long-term absence is involved.

- provisions for regular contact between the workplace and the employee, through a trade union representative
- occupational health (OH) referral and regular follow-up referrals, unless the absence is clearly time limited (e.g. recuperation from surgery, or absence due to broken limbs)
- warnings will not be given to employees on a long-term absence
- where the prognosis/OH report indicates no prospect of a return to work, this will be discussed with the individual and their trade union
- a commitment to provide medical interventions (e.g. cognitive behaviour therapy) where appropriate
- employees on long-term sick leave who are not terminally ill will not normally be dismissed unless all efforts to support return have failed and OH reports indicate there is no prospect of a return to work, or no realistic prospect of ill-health retirement.
- a statement that ill-health retirement will be explored where appropriate.

If all of these interventions fail the remaining possible outcomes are;

### **Medical Suspension**

- The Proprietor may opt for a medical suspension, this would be in extreme circumstances and may include life-limiting and/or threatening situations.
- Whilst on medical suspension full pay will continue and absence will not be counted as sickness absence for the purposes of this policy.

### **Supporting the search for alternative employment**

- HSIS will do whatever is reasonable and practicable to retain employees whose health prevents them from undertaking all aspects of their present job (e.g. reorganising the existing job, suitable alternative work)

- We commit to consider, on a case-by-case basis, salary protection for employees redeployed into jobs on lower salaries.

#### **Dismissal on the grounds of ill health**

This is an absolute last resort, and all other avenues will be thoroughly pursued prior to such an outcome.

<u>Written by...</u>	<u>KM, Tick HR Solutions</u>	<u>01/02/24</u>
<u>Approved by...</u>	<u>Dan Laughton</u>	<u>15/11/24</u>
<u>Signed...</u>	—	
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