Title	**Attendance Management Policy**
Purpose	To encourage employees to achieve and maintain acceptable standards of attendance and to support consistent and fair treatment of all employees.
Relevant to	Trustees, Governors, Employees
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Introduced	6/2017
Modification History	6/2020, 6/2023, 6/2026
Related Policies	› Appraisal policy › Capability procedure › Data protection policy › Family leave policy › Privacy notice for staff members › Staff code of conduct › Staff disciplinary procedures › Staff wellbeing policy
Date Due for Review	6/2029 (or earlier according to regulation changes)
Relevant committee for review	Board of Trustees
Agreed at meeting of Trust	20/07/2026
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Contents

Attendance Management Policy 1
1. Aims 2
2. Scope 2

3. Data protection 2
4. Roles and responsibilities 3
5. Procedure for reporting sickness absence 4
6. Returning to work 5
7. Pregnancy-related absence 6
8. Medical and dental appointments 6
9. Elective surgery 6
10. Fertility treatment and IVF 7
11. Stress-related absence 7
12. Work-related injuries or illness 7
13. Procedure for managing short-term sickness absence 7
14. Procedure for managing long-term sickness absence 9
15 Ill-health capability review hearing (for short and long-term absences) 10
16. Right to be accompanied to formal meetings 11
17. Appeals 12
Appendix A: return-to-work interview form 12

1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Set out Barnet Special Education Trust's approach to staff sickness, including the procedures for reporting sickness and how we manage sickness absence fairly
- Support all parties in managing staff sickness and absence effectively and consistently, to ensure a fair and transparent approach across the Trust that complies with our duties under the Equality Act 2010
- Set out our approach to requests for time off outside of annual leave or leave covered by other policies
- Help create and maintain a happy and healthy working culture in which staff are encouraged to look after their physical and mental wellbeing

2. Scope

2.1 Eligibility

This policy applies to all staff who are employed directly by Barent Special Education Trust.

Agency workers are not covered by this policy, however we ask that agency staff follow absence reporting procedures as detailed to enable us to arrange cover for our students.

2.2 Exceptions

This policy does not apply to staff who are:

Taking maternity, paternity, neonatal, shared parental and/or adoption leave.

3. Data protection

All discussions and sensitive medical and personal information about staff members' sickness and other absence will be treated confidentially by all parties concerned. This data will be processed lawfully and stored in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Please refer to our privacy notice for staff members for more detail on how data will be processed.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring:

- this sickness and absence policy is applied consistently across the school and that it is in line with equality legislation
- All staff are aware of this policy and their responsibilities
- Staff ill-health matters are managed confidentially and sensitively, and in line with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018
- Promotion of positive working arrangements, including monitoring workload and maintaining effective communication with staff
- Monitoring staff absence and following the procedures on managing staff absence if 'trigger points' are surpassed (see sections 17 and 18 for more information)
- Liaising with payroll/HR promptly if a staff member's pay needs to be adjusted as a result of their absence
- Giving due regard to equality legislation and taking any disability requirements into consideration

4.2 The Trust

The Board of Trustees will approve this policy and hold the headteachers to account for its implementation.

4.3 Other staff

Staff are expected to:

Follow the procedures set out in this policy

Adhere to the stated timescales when responding to or appealing the Trust's requests or decisions

4.4 Centrally Employed Staff

For employees who are centrally employed by the Trust and do not report to a Headteacher, references within this policy to the *Headteacher* shall be interpreted as the *Chief Executive Officer (CEO)*. Centrally employed staff must report absence and maintain contact regarding absence in accordance with this policy, with notifications being made to the CEO (or their nominated representative).

The CEO will be responsible for undertaking all duties and responsibilities assigned to the Headteacher within this policy in relation to centrally employed staff. This includes, but is not limited to, absence monitoring, return-to-work meetings, informal and formal attendance review meetings, occupational health referrals, ill-health capability procedures and any decisions arising from those processes.

Any appeal submitted by a centrally employed member of staff under this policy will be heard by a panel of the Board of Trustees. The appeal panel will consist of Trustees who have had no prior involvement in the case, and its decision will be final.

4.4.1Absence Management of the Chief Executive Officer

Where the Chief Executive Officer is absent due to sickness or injury, absence notifications should be made to the Chair of Trustees (or another Trustee nominated by the Board). The Chair of Trustees will undertake all responsibilities assigned to the Headteacher under this policy in relation to the CEO's attendance management, including return-to-work meetings, attendance reviews, occupational health referrals and any ill-health capability process.

Any appeal submitted by the Chief Executive Officer under this policy will be heard by a panel of the Board of Trustees, comprising Trustees who have had no previous involvement in the matter. The decision of the appeal panel will be final.

5. Procedure for reporting sickness absence

We encourage staff to keep an open dialogue with their Headteacher/line manager regarding their health to help us:

- Identify absence problems early on
- Support staff wherever possible, including with rehabilitation and return to work

If a staff member is taken ill or injured while at work, they should report or be taken to their line manager to be given permission to leave work, if appropriate.

If a staff member is unable to attend work because of illness or injury, they should:

- Contact their Headteacher by telephone no later than 7.30am. If they cannot get hold of the Headteacher, they should:
    - Send a text message to the Head letting them know about their illness or injury and confirming how they can contact the staff member.
- Explain the nature of their illness or injury and provide an estimate of when they are able to return to work
- Agree with the Headteacher or HR manager how and when to keep in touch (see more in section 6.2 below) and confirm contact details
- Advise on any urgent or outstanding work-related matters that need attention

If the staff member is too unwell or otherwise unable to contact the school, they should ask somebody to make contact on their behalf as soon as possible.

If the headteacher is unable to attend work because of illness or injury, they should contact their Deputy Head and advise the Chair of Governors and Chief Executive Officer.

Centrally employed staff must notify the CEO (or nominated representative) of sickness absence. Where the CEO is absent, notification must be made to the Chair of Trustees.

For absences of more than 7 **calendar** days (not working days), staff members must obtain a “statement of fitness for work” from an eligible healthcare professional stating that they are not fit for work and the reason(s) why. This should be forwarded to their line manager as soon as possible. If absence continues, the staff member must obtain further medical certificates to cover the whole period of their absence.

If the statement or medical certificate says that the staff member “may be fit for work” the individual should inform their line manager immediately. We will discuss any potential measures needed to facilitate the staff member’s return to work, taking into account the healthcare professional’s advice. If appropriate measures cannot be taken, the staff member will remain on sick leave, and we will agree on a date to review the situation.

5.1 Unauthorised absence

If a staff member does not report for work and we receive no contact from them or someone on their behalf (in accordance with section 6), their line manager will contact them as soon as possible to:

- Make sure they are safe
- Give them an opportunity to explain their absence

Staff should not treat this as a substitute for reporting sickness absence and persistent failures to report correctly could result in disciplinary

Where staff are absent without leave and/or there are grounds to believe that they are acting dishonestly or failing to follow the procedures above, we may treat this as an unauthorised absence without pay.

We may deal with cases of unauthorised absence under our disciplinary procedures – see our staff disciplinary procedures for more detail.

5.2 Maintaining contact with line managers during sick leave

If staff are absent on sick leave, their line manager or HR manager may contact them from time to time to discuss:

- Their wellbeing and expected length of continued absence from work
- Any of their work that requires attention

The purpose of such contact is to support the staff member, and line managers or HR Manager will maintain such contact as is appropriate in the circumstances. Line managers will, where appropriate, agree the purpose, type and level of contact with the staff member.

If staff have concerns while absent on sick leave, whether about the reason for their absence or their ability to return to work, they should feel free to contact their line manager at any time.

5.3 Sickness absence caused by a third party

If a staff member's absence is, or may be, caused by another party who is, or may be, legally liable to pay damages (for example, if the staff member is injured in an accident caused by another person or company), the staff member must immediately give their line manager details of this and of any legal claim they are pursuing.

If the Trust asks them to, the staff member must take part in any legal proceedings to recover damages. They must also, if asked, give the Trust part of any damages or compensation payment that relates to lost earnings. The amount will be all of the following:

- Reasonably determined by the Trust
- Minus any costs the staff member has incurred to get the damages or compensation payment
- Capped at the amount the Trust paid the staff member over the period of absence

6. Returning to work

6.1 Return-to-work meeting

When a staff member returns to work after sickness absence, their line manager will arrange a return-to-work meeting to:

- Discuss the staff member’s absence, making sure they’ve recovered and establishing whether there are any continuing underlying issues
- Talk about any support the staff member needs
- Update the staff member on any work matters
- Complete a return-to-work form (see appendix A)

- If relevant, review their sickness absence record for the past year and make them aware if they are approaching a trigger point
- If required arrange an Occupational Health referral

6.2 Phased return to work

Medical professionals or the occupational health service may recommend that a staff member returning to work from sickness absence should:

- Work reduced hours
- Have lighter duties or different duties

This will be followed by a gradual increase of working hours and/or duties normally over a period of 4 weeks, depending on individual circumstances, and may be extended if required.

We will consider recommendations by a medical practitioner on:

- Further extending the phased return to work
- The need to permanently change the staff member's duties

Staff will continue to be paid their normal salary during the period of phased return to work that they are in school and residual sick pay for the time they are not in school.

7. Pregnancy-related absence

Pregnant staff members may need to take time off to attend medical appointments and/or due to pregnancy-related illness, and our Trust will support this. We will not count pregnancy-related sickness absence when reviewing staff's attendance record.

However, if the Trust has concerns about the reasons or lengths of absence, it reserves the right to formally investigate the nature and cause of the absence.

8. Medical and dental appointments

Where possible, staff should book routine medical and dental appointments outside of working hours. If this is not possible (e.g. for hospital or specialist appointments) staff should:

- Where possible, book appointments for early in the morning or end of the day so it causes minimal disruption to the working day
- Speak to their line manager, who may agree to time off. Staff may need to provide proof of the appointment

The Trust will pay for up to 2 hours leave for a medical appointment. If a staff member has a medical procedure and is subsequently unable to work because of the procedure, this will be classified as sickness absence.

Staff will be granted paid time off for cancer screening.

9. Elective surgery

If a staff member is undergoing elective surgery, they should discuss their need for time off and recovery with their the headteacher, who may:

- Authorise it as sickness absence if the surgery is medically necessary. The staff member is expected to provide satisfactory medical evidence to support this. In this case, the staff member may be entitled to occupational sick pay and/or SSP
- Grant or refuse the absence as special leave. If the absence is granted, it is normally unpaid unless:
    - Staff arrange the surgery and recovery time to occur outside term time
    - It is possible for staff to use annual leave for the period of absence

View the time off as sickness absence where not doing so may be in breach of the Equality Act 2010. The headteacher may seek further HR advice on how to proceed

10. Fertility treatment and IVF

Staff are encouraged to reach out to their line manager to enable our Trust to support the staff member where possible. These conversations will be strictly confidential.

If staff need to take time off due to sickness caused by the side effects of assisted conception treatment, this time off will be treated as sickness absence in accordance with this policy.

Sickness absence relating to IUI or IVF treatment will be recorded separately from other sickness absence, and disregarded in any future employment-related decisions.

Appointments for fertility treatment and IVF will be treated as any other medical appointment (see section 12). However, where possible, our Trust will endeavour to make reasonable time-off arrangements.

If a staff member becomes unfit for work because of fertility treatment, they should follow the normal procedures for reporting sickness in section 6.

11. Stress-related absence

The Trust is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of staff. We recognise the importance of identifying and tackling the causes of work-related stress. We also recognise that personal stress, while unrelated to the workplace, can adversely impact the wellbeing of staff at work.

Staff who need time off or support should speak to the headteacher or HR Manager who may:

- Arrange external support, such as counselling or occupational health services
- Suggest completing a risk assessment and following through with any actions identified
- Reassess the staff member's workload and decide what tasks to prioritise

At all times, the confidentiality and dignity of staff will be maintained.

12. Work-related injuries or illness

Staff should report work-related injuries or illnesses to the medical room /first aider on duty as soon as possible. Incidents will be reported in the Accident Book on Civica. The HR Manager/Headteacher or SLT will review and investigate any relevant injuries and work-related diseases, ensuring that accident records are kept and submitting reports to the relevant authorities if required under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013.

13. Procedure for managing short-term sickness absence

The informal review process is triggered if, during a 12-month rolling period, a staff member is absent on over 4 occasions in a rolling six-month period or over 10 days in a rolling six-month period. This process may also be triggered where concerns that have been identified during a return-to-work meeting require further investigation.

Before triggering the process, the headteacher should be satisfied that they have explored any reasonable adjustments to help the staff member improve attendance.

13.1 Informal review

We will aim to give the staff member 5 working days' written notice of the date, time and place of an informal review meeting.

At the meeting, the line manager and staff member will discuss:

- The staff member's pattern of absence to understand the reasons for it

- Any medical treatment, and whether medical advice is needed from the occupational health service
- Whether the illness is work-related and if any temporary changes to the staff member's work could help them improve attendance
- Whether the staff member has any underlying health problems (including a disability), how this will likely affect their attendance in the future, and whether any reasonable adjustments can be made
- How the staff member's absence is affecting pupils, colleagues and the school
- Any other ways the Trust can support the staff member

After the meeting, the line manager will summarise the main points in writing, which will be shared with the staff member normally within 10 working days.

If a staff member's absence levels continue to be of concern after the informal review meeting, their line manager will invite them to the first formal review meeting (see section 17.2). This will usually take place 4 working weeks after the informal review meeting, depending on circumstances.

13.2 Formal review

There are 2 formal review meetings: the first formal review meeting, and the attendance review meeting. If the staff member's absence levels do not improve to an acceptable level after the attendance review meeting, the Headteacher will convene an ill-health capability hearing, with a panel, to fully review the case (see section 19).

Each formal review meeting will usually take place at least 4 working weeks after the previous one, depending on circumstances. The line manager will inform the staff member of each meeting, in writing, 5 working days in advance. The staff member has a right to be accompanied to any formal meeting under this procedure by a trade union representative or official, or a colleague (see more in section 20).

Where the staff member's attendance improves to an acceptable level during the formal reviews process, the headteacher will hold a review meeting to confirm this. They will also agree on any further monitoring meetings, which the headteacher will confirm to the staff member in writing.

Where the staff member's attendance improves to an acceptable level and for a sustained period of time e.g. 3 months, formal monitoring will cease. However, if the staff member's absence levels become a concern again within a year, the formal review procedure will commence at the stage it was at previously.

13.2.1 During formal review meeting(s)

At the meeting, the staff member and line manager (or the headteacher or other senior staff, if this is a final attendance review meeting) will discuss:

- The staff member's absence levels, the reasons for it, and whether further absences are likely going forward
- Any medical advice received
- Any work-related issues that may be affecting the staff member's attendance and whether any temporary changes to the job could help improve their attendance
- If the staff member has underlying health problems, any reasonable adjustments that could be made
- How the staff member's absence is affecting pupils, colleagues and the school
- Any other ways our Trust can support the staff member. This may involve an action plan that includes obtaining further medical advice, or outlining what adjustments or adaptations will be made for the staff member

13.2.2 Possible outcomes

At the end of each formal review meeting, the line manager (or headteacher or another senior member of staff if this is a final attendance review meeting) may decide to:

- Agree the issue has been resolved and take no further action

- Continue to monitor and review the staff member's attendance

For the first formal review meeting only: issue a formal attendance notification, which will normally remain on their personnel record and be considered 'live' for 6 to 12 months depending on the circumstances (such as the nature and prognosis of the illness and impact of the treatment). The notification will:

- Explain the Trust expectations on attendance going forward and what the review period for this will be
- Warn the staff member of the potential consequences of not meeting the required standards, including another formal attendance notification and the risk of dismissal

For the second formal review meeting only: issue a final attendance notification, which will reiterate the Trust's expectations on attendance going forward, the review period for this, and warn the staff member of the potential consequences of not meeting the required standards, including the risk of dismissal.

For the third, final attendance review meeting only: recommend dismissal and arrange a formal hearing for a panel to examine the case. See section 19 below.

After each review meeting, the line manager will summarise the outcome in writing

14. Procedure for managing long-term sickness absence

Our Trust is committed to dealing fairly and sympathetically with staff members who are absent from work for long periods because of ill health.

We define long-term sickness absence as absence lasting for 4 weeks or more. At this point, we may refer the staff member to the occupational health service so that we can obtain medical advice.

Before triggering the process, the headteacher/ line manager should be satisfied that they have explored any reasonable adjustments to help the staff member improve attendance.

14.1 Informal review

We will aim to give the staff member 5 working days' written notice of the date, time and place of an informal review meeting.

At the meeting, the line manager and staff member will discuss:

- The medical opinion, prognosis and expected timescale for the staff member to return to work
- What support the staff member needs to enable them to successfully return to work
- Whether the staff member has a disability under the Equality Act 2010 and whether any reasonable adjustments can be made
- What impact the staff member's absence has on the school's operations

14.1.1 Possible outcomes of informal review

The line manager will summarise the main points of the meeting in writing, including agreed actions (if any) such as:

- A return-to-work plan – phased return to work
- Whether to seek further medical advice with a possible referral to Occupational Health

Where the staff member recovers and returns to work, the headteacher will decide, in consultation with the staff member, whether to hold further review meetings.

If a staff member's absence continues, the line manager will invite the staff member to the first formal review meeting after the informal review meeting, with the timescale depending on the circumstances. See section 18.2.

14.2 Formal review

There are 2 formal review meetings: the first formal review meeting, and the formal review meeting.

The purpose of formal review meetings is to assess the staff member's medical condition, prognosis for returning to work, and any reasonable adjustments or support needed. These meetings will be informed by up-to-date medical evidence, including occupational health reports.

If, after the final formal review meeting, medical evidence indicates the staff member is unlikely to return to work within a reasonable timeframe, or the Trust cannot sustain the absence due to operational needs, the Headteacher will convene an ill-health capability hearing, with a panel, to fully review the case (see section 19).

Each formal review meeting will usually take place within 4 working weeks after the previous one, depending on circumstances. After each meeting we shall agree on a way forward, action that will be taken and a timescale for review and/or a further meeting. The line manager will inform the staff member of each meeting, in writing, no less than 5 working days in advance. The staff member has a right to be accompanied to any formal meeting under this procedure by a trade union representative or official, or a colleague (see more in section 20).

Where the staff member recovers and returns to work during the formal reviews process, the line manager/headteacher will decide, in consultation with the staff member, whether to hold further review meetings.

The line manager will support the staff member who is returning from long term sickness absence by:

- Obtaining medical advice
- Making reasonable adjustments where appropriate
- Agreeing a return-to-work programme with everyone affected
- Consider whether the staff member can do other suitable work in school

14.2.1 During formal review meeting(s)

We will follow the same process for formal review meetings as for the informal review meeting in section 18.1.

14.2.2 Possible outcomes of formal review

At the end of each formal review meeting, the line manager, in consultation with the occupational health service (if relevant) may decide to:

- Agree the issue has been resolved and take no further action
- Agree a return-to-work plan with the staff member
- Extend the period of monitoring and review
- Begin a phased return to work
- Seek further medical advice

For the final formal review meeting only:

- If medical professionals advise that the staff member is unlikely to return to work in a reasonable timeframe, usually 3 months, the line manager/headteacher will convene a formal review hearing, where the facts of the case will be examined (see section 19)

After each formal review meeting, the line manager will summarise the outcome in writing,

15 Ill-health capability review hearing (for short and long-term absences)

The headteacher or another senior member of staff will convene a panel to fully review the case if all other options have been explored and:

- A staff member’s short-term absences have not improved sufficiently
- The long-term absence of a staff member continues due to the nature of the illness

The headteacher will inform the staff member of the meeting, in writing, 5 working days in advance, including that:

- The staff member has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative or official
- If the staff member is not well enough to attend, they can send a representative instead and/or submit a written statement
- The headteacher or line manager will present a recommendation to the panel
- A possible outcome of the meeting could be dismissal

15.1 Convening the Hearing

The panel will usually consist of:

The Headteacher

The headteacher will also invite the following people to the meeting

- An HR adviser

During the meeting, the headteacher will review:

- The record and pattern of absence, and how likely it for their level of attendance to improve to a satisfactory and sustained standard within the foreseeable future
- What support the staff member has received and whether all appropriate options have been properly explored
- Whether the staff member has an underlying illness, disability, or any other issues raised by the occupational health service
- The impact of the absence on colleagues, pupils and the school
- The staff member's attitude towards recognising and addressing the impact of their absence
- The needs of the school and best interests of the staff member
- The staff member will also have the opportunity to present evidence and explain their level of absence and what actions they are taking to reduce it to an acceptable level
- Explore if the staff member is eligible for ill-health retirement

15.2 Deciding on appropriate action

The meeting will be adjourned and the panel will reflect on it before coming to a decision.

The panel may decide to:

- Keep the staff member's absence under review for a defined period of time
- Agree a return-to-work plan
- Dismiss the staff member

The Headteacher will dismiss the staff member with notice

The Headteacher may decide whether the employee (if a support member of staff and in the pension LGPS scheme) can retire on the grounds of ill health (where appropriate and with suitable medical evidence).

The Headteacher will communicate the decision to the staff member normally in writing within 5 working days. The decision will also inform the staff member that they can appeal if they are not satisfied with the outcome and explain how to do this.

16. Right to be accompanied to formal meetings

The staff member has a right to be accompanied to any formal meeting under this procedure by a trade union representative or official, or a colleague. Their details must be provided to the line manager conducting the meeting in good time before any meeting.

17. Appeals

If the staff member is not satisfied with the outcome of the Ill-health Capability Review Hearing, they have the right to appeal. Appeals for school-based staff will be heard by the Governing Body. Appeals for centrally employed staff and the CEO will be heard by a panel of the Board of Trustees

The staff member should set out their grounds of appeal in writing within 10 working days and submit this to the Clerk to the Governors/Trustees

An appeal is not designed to re-hear the matter but to examine the grounds of appeal. The staff member should therefore be specific about the grounds of the appeal.

However, a full re-hearing may be appropriate in exceptional circumstances.

The Clerk to the Governors will convene an appeal panel consisting of 3 Governors (or Trustees) This will be a group of Governors independent from any previous stage of the procedure, and the panel will be chaired normally by the Chair of Governors.

Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay and in any event normally within 10 working days of the date of the appeal notice. The Clerk to the Governors will tell the staff member the time and place of the appeal meeting in advance.

Staff have the same statutory right to be accompanied to the appeal meeting by a colleague or trade union representative or official.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed in writing by the chair of the appeal panel to the staff member within 5 working days of the appeal. The decision of the appeal panel is final.

Appendix A: return-to-work interview form

RETURN-TO-WORK INTERVIEW FORM	
Staff member name:	Line manager name:
Meeting date:	Location:
List of those present at the meeting:	
Period of absence From: To: Total number of days absent in this period:	
Total number of days absent in the past year:	
Formal review process triggered? Yes / No	
Reasons for absence and other issues discussed:	

RETURN-TO-WORK INTERVIEW FORM
Support offered to staff member:
Actions agreed and timescales: