

Islamiyah Girls High School



Managing Sickness Policy

Document Control:

This document has been approved for operation for:	Islamiyah Girls High School
Date of last review	September 2023
Date of next review	September 2025
Review Period	2 year
Owner	Islamiyah Girls High School
Approved by:	Governing Body

1. Introduction

Islamiyah Girls' High School hereafter to be called the school.

1.1. School will adopt a number of principles to govern the way sickness absence is monitored and management action considered in certain circumstances. These principles are designed to ensure that the School takes proactive measures effectively to manage sickness absence whilst also having regard to the need to support employees who are sick and treat them with sympathy and understanding.

The principles which the School will adopt are:

- All employees are entitled to expect fair and reasonable treatment, including taking account of equal opportunity considerations.
 - All staff who suffer from serious or chronic ill-health problems necessitating long periods of absence from work should be treated sensitively and with sympathy.
 - Staff are entitled to a working environment and to systems of work that do not create health problems and in particular do not impose an undue level of stress.
 - Sickness absence needs to be managed fairly and systematically to ensure the continued provision of high quality education.
 - All employees will be made aware of and be expected to adhere to the procedures relating to sickness absence.
- 1.2. Dealing effectively with absence calls for a continuous and co-ordinated effort by senior management and HR with support from the Corporation. It is intended that management will demonstrate to employees and their representatives an understanding towards those who need to be absent through sickness. Equally it is expected of employees that they should recognise that appropriate action should be taken against anyone who abuses the relevant sick pay scheme.

2. Roles and Responsibilities in the Management of Sickness Absence

2.1. Role of employees

The role of each employee is to:

- attend work when fit to do so;
- comply with the School's sickness absence reporting procedures;
- ensure medical advice and treatment, where appropriate, is received as quickly as possible in order to facilitate a return to work;

- keep their line manager informed of any significant developments;
- provide the School with a completed self-certification form (Appendix 5) after a period of sickness absence from one to seven calendar days and a doctor's note if the absence continues after seven consecutive days.

2.2. Role of the School

The role of the School is to manage the attendance of teaching and support staff. This will be achieved by:

- ensuring that, where appropriate and justifiable, quick and decisive action is taken with employees who do not comply with the sickness absence notification procedures;
- acting fairly and consistently in applying the appropriate procedures;
- ensuring that accurate sickness records are maintained and absence returns are quickly and accurately completed, both for monitoring and sick pay purposes;
- reviewing each employee's sickness record in accordance with the procedures set out in these guidance notes;
- using the School's sickness records to develop and implement policies which will reduce the health risks to employees;
- ensuring that all new staff are made aware of the rules and procedures for sickness absence, and follow every aspect of the sickness absence notification procedures. Staff will be advised as to whom they should contact when sick and how much information they need to give. This information must be treated as confidential;
- establishing clear action plans for a member of staff where it is decided that action is justified;
- seeking advice as appropriate.

2.3. Role of the Governors

The role of the Governors is to ensure that:

- the School has a policy on this issue;
- there is a clear procedure for reporting absence;
- the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning Leaders carry out their responsibilities;

- it monitors the absence of the Head Teacher and applies the appropriate procedures (see Appendix 4).

3. Monitoring and Recording Absence

- 3.1. School will have a clear and well understood method whereby staff notify the appropriate person of their absence due to sickness. The procedure for notification (see Appendix 1) will be displayed on the staff notice board and published in the staff handbook.
- 3.2. Upon receiving a telephone call from an employee an enquiry will be made of the general nature of the illness and its expected duration in a discreet and sympathetic manner. This information must be treated as confidential.

Return to work discussion

These will be held by:

Staff member	Reviews
Head Teacher	Chair of Governors
Deputy Head Teacher, Assistant Head Teacher	Head Teacher
Director of Studies	Deputy Head Teacher
Teachers, Members of Support Staff	Relevant Line Manager

- 3.3. It is only courteous to enquire after an employee's health when someone is returning to work after a period of sickness. If the period of absence has been relatively short this will probably be sufficient, but for longer periods of absence a return to work discussion will be appropriate.
- 3.4. The discussion itself may only last a few minutes. The basic purpose is to recognise that an employee has been off work and to offer them support and encouragement in their return to work. This is particularly the case for someone who has been absent for some time and may be concerned at the impact their absence has had on the School. Only where doubts exist as to the validity of a particular absence will the circumstances be carefully documented and used at a later time (see Absence Monitoring Interviews, Appendix 3).
- 3.5. The informal discussions should not be recorded formally on the employee's personal file, but if it is felt appropriate the outcome may be recorded as an aide memoire and a copy given to the employee. It may be used subsequently if further action is appropriate. The information contained within the aide memoire must be kept confidential.

3.6. For effective sickness absence management it is essential that the Deputy Head Teacher or the Chair of the Governors (in the case of the Head Teacher) formally demonstrate that they are aware the employee has been absent and show an interest in the employee's health. This should happen on every occasion of absence.

Absence Monitoring and further action

3.7. An employee with a terminal illness or life-threatening degenerative illness where the employee's medical condition is known and will not improve will not be subject to absence monitoring interviews. The School will provide support and encouragement to individuals in these circumstances and this could well mean that meetings, interviews etc. are held at reasonable intervals. However, such action does not form part of a management initiative to reduce sickness levels. The wishes of the employee to keep their circumstances confidential will be respected. Financial help and / or additional support may be available to Schools who continue to employ staff in these kinds of situations.

3.8. Schools should review absence levels more formally with the employee where the following criteria apply:

For teaching staff and for support staff in any School academic year:

- Where the "Bradford" calculation is greater than or equal to 160,

*The "Bradford" calculation is:
(number of incidents of absence)² X number of days absent.*

- Where patterns have emerged that cause concern, e.g. regular Friday or Monday absence.

3.9. The Absence Monitoring Interview (see Appendix 3) will be conducted by the Line Manager. The approach will be an investigatory one with the view, initially, of offering help and advice to aid the employee to improve attendance. The interview should be conducted in private with the complete absence record available for discussion. The employee's trade union representative (or other person of their choice (chosen from the staff) will be allowed to attend. The intention will be to agree an action plan (this would normally include setting targets and a review date).

The relevant person will ensure that:

- the details of the interview are recorded formally and are kept confidential,
- any part of the action plan agreed that involves any management action is taken as quickly as possible,
- the triggers for absence monitoring are re-applied from the date of the meeting.

If the first Absence Monitoring Interview does not produce an improvement the Line Manager Deputy Head Teacher will consider the reason why this may be so and if necessary report it to the Head Teacher (see Frequent Short-term Sickness and Absence section).

Absence Monitoring Interview Staff member	Reviewer
Head Teacher	Chair of Governors
Deputy Head Teacher	Head Teacher
Assistant Head Teachers / Directors of Studies	Deputy Head Teacher
All others	Line Managers

3.10. Teaching as a profession is stressful and teachers may be particularly susceptible to stress related illnesses. All Schools need to address the problems created by stress and ensure measures are taken to reduce its effect on the School's workforce. The measures referred to in these guidelines - "Return to Work Discussions" and "Absence monitoring Interviews" - will assist the Head Teacher to judge at an early stage if one of the School's employees is suffering from stress. If the early symptoms can be identified then measures can be taken to protect the employee from situations that may exacerbate the situation and eventually lead to a breakdown.

3.11. In order to achieve this there must be an environment of trust in Schools whereby an employee is able to discuss problems / issues without feeling under pressure and vulnerable to management action. Measures which could be taken to protect an employee include re-allocating duties, providing close support from a senior member of staff, encouraging the employee to refer themselves for medical treatment and / or referral to the Occupational Health Unit at Good Hope Hospital (or any other occupational health scheme provider selected by the School) for specialist treatment and advice. The School recognises that people suffering from stress find themselves feeling extremely vulnerable and they can easily become concerned at their future employment position. The School will endeavour, at all times, to provide a supportive environment.

3.12. Some employees may be absent from work as a result of an illness or injury which it is subsequently diagnosed will result in a disability. Employees who develop a disability during the course of their employment should not automatically be considered unfit to continue working. In these situations the School will examine ways in which it may be possible, with support, to enable the employee to work effectively and to continue in their role. Contact will be made with the HR Department for advice and the employee will be advised to seek advice from relative bodies.

3.13. Pregnancy-related sickness absence should be reported and documented as normal. Absence will be recorded as usual, however will not be taken into consideration when assessing trigger points for the Bradford factor calculations. Pregnancy-related sickness absence during the four week period prior to the due date will automatically

start the maternity leave. In this case, the member of staff will be entitled to maternity pay and not sick pay.

4. Frequent Short-Term Sickness Absence

4.1. Absences widely described as absenteeism can be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

4.2. The Head Teacher when considering taking action for frequent short-term absences will:

- establish the facts - by reference to the sickness record,
- establish whether the employee has attended Absence Monitoring interviews and been given the opportunity to explain their absence record,
- check whether any promised assistance has in actual fact been provided,
- examine carefully the reasons given for the various absences,
- consider whether the employee has been informed of concerns about their absence and the effect their poor sickness record is having on the work of the School. If a significant reduction is required has it been achieved? If not, what are the reasons?
- Has a reasonable period of time been given to the employee for their sickness absence rate to improve? If an employee has been told they must improve their sickness record they will be given the opportunity to demonstrate an improvement. A minimum of three months will be regarded as fair although this may be varied to suit the circumstances.
- check whether the employee has been asked to submit doctor's notes to cover every absence.

4.3. Once these considerations have been tried and failed to have a satisfactory impact upon the employee's sickness record, a judgement will be made about the employee's sickness record and whether it is reasonable to treat the failure to achieve a satisfactory standard as one of misconduct. This would be on the basis that it is not acceptable (in the absence of a satisfactory medical explanation) for an employee to incur one, two, three or four day absences at regular intervals.

4.4. If the absence is to be treated as one of misconduct then the Staff Disciplinary Procedure will be used. It is also appropriate to use the Disciplinary Procedure when dealing with capability cases (see 4.5 and 4.6 below). In these latter cases it is not appropriate to use the disciplinary sanctions but the framework of the procedure (to ensure natural justice and that the employee is given the opportunity of stating their case) before any action is taken.

Capability

4.5. There may be circumstances where an employee is suffering from genuine illness that results in absence on frequent occasions for short periods of time. It will be necessary, where the School is unduly suffering as a result of such absence, to discuss with the employee and his / her representative the options available which include ill-health retirement.

4.6. Once all other options have been explored and no other solution is readily available the employee should be advised that despite the fact that their sickness is genuine, the School is unable to sustain the current level of sickness absence. At a meeting where the employee is represented the individual should be advised that if there is no improvement in their pattern of sickness absence, dismissal proceedings will be commenced.

A warning to this effect should be given and confirmed in writing.

If after a reasonable time no such improvement has taken place or an improvement has taken place but not to an acceptable level, a further final meeting should be held, with the employee's representative present, to advise that if no improvement occurs within a specified time then proceedings will be taken to terminate the contract of employment. If this latter stage is reached, the framework of the Disciplinary Procedure should be used in order to ensure the decision to dismiss on capability grounds is a fair and reasonable one.

5. Long Term Sickness

5.1. If an employee has been absent for a continuous period of four weeks, the Deputy Head / Head of Section will address the issue and decide if any action is appropriate.

5.2. A welfare visit to the employee's home, with their prior agreement, may be appropriate and / or referral to a doctor.

5.3. In assessing whether it is appropriate to instigate a process leading to the termination of employment, the School will consider the following factors:

- The length of the absence to date, and the likely length of the continuing absence.
- The nature of the illness.
- Any medical advice / prognosis on the individual.
- The effect of continuing absence on the work which needs to be done.
- The views of the employee and in particular whether they feel they will be able to return within a reasonable period of time.

5.4. Any decision to terminate the employment on grounds of medical incapability will be the responsibility of the Head Teacher based upon recommendations from the medical adviser and the employee and / or a representative acting on their behalf. Staff are also able to initiate an ill-health retirement request via an application for Premature Retirement.

6. Referral for a Medical Assessment

An employer is entitled to know what is causing an employee's sickness so that measures can be taken to reduce its effect on the work of the School (such information will be kept confidential).

A medical assessment is necessary before a retirement on the grounds of permanent ill-health can be considered.

6.1. The School may refer employees for a medical assessment under the following circumstances:

- Where the School has doubts about the ability of the individual to perform their duties following an accident or a notifiable disease.
- Where a teacher has been sick for 100 working days in any two year period.
- Where the Head Teacher or a member of the Support Staff has been sick for six months in any two year period.
- Where an employee's sickness absence is giving cause for concern because of the incidence, pattern and level of absence, e.g. where there is a pattern of persistent but short-term illness.
- Where the Head Teacher / Head of Section is concerned about aspects of an employee's health that adversely affect his / her ability to perform the duties of the post.

6.2. Where possible a discussion will occur with the employee before a referral is made. This will normally occur during an Absence Monitoring Interview. There is no right of appeal against a decision to refer someone for a medical examination, although consent is required for access to medical records.

6.3. All referrals for a medical assessment must be made by the Head Teacher, except in the case of the Head Teacher (see Appendix 4).

7. Sickness Absence, Dismissal and the Law

Providing the employer acts reasonably throughout, employees may be fairly disciplined and dismissed for absence due to ill health.

Long term sickness absence with underlying medical conditions should be treated differently from short term absences where there appears to be no underlying medical condition.

Full consultation will occur throughout the period of absence.

The School will treat the employee's level of absenteeism as an unacceptable standard of conduct and set a minimum standard which, if not attained, may lead to dismissal.

There will be a fair review of the sickness record (in the case of persistent short term absences), the appropriate warnings will be given and time for improvement allowed before the absence can be treated as sufficient reason for dismissal.

Where there is no underlying medical evidence to support any persistent absences from work the matter should be treated as misconduct and normal disciplinary procedures followed.

A failure to return from extended leave due to ill health must be given the same consideration as above.

Approved by:

Mrs. Yaasmin Mubarak

Headteacher

Date:

September, 2023

Mubarak Patel

Chair of Governing Body

September, 2023

APPENDIX 1

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING SICKNESS ABSENCE

- (a) On the first day of absence the employee should notify School Reception, if possible by 8.15 a.m., that they will not be able to come to work and stating the nature and probable duration of the illness. Notification must be by a telephone call from the employee unless there are clear reasons why this cannot occur. All information will be treated as confidential.
- (b) The School Reception will notify the appropriate Line Managers and the HR Department so that accurate records can be kept.
- (c) When the employee returns to work the line manager should be informed, and either the Sickness Self Certification completed or appropriate medical certificate(s) produced.
- (d) Where possible, please send details of appropriate work or instructions to the school admin office.

If the employee is absent for more than three days, School Admin must be notified of the reason for continued absence. Notification should be by telephone, but could be by letter/email. All employees who are sick must complete a self-certification form covering the first seven calendar days of their absence.

Copies of the self-certification forms are available from the School Finance Office or the Staff Room. However the School Finance Office tend to send out copies of the form, with a reminder to the line manager the week after the employee has returned to work.

Self-certification forms **must** be completed to support the first seven calendar days of absence. All information relating to an employee's sickness will be treated as confidential.

The following procedure should be adhered to in cases of more than seven calendar days sickness absence:

- (a) If the employee is away sick for more than seven calendar days he / she must obtain a Medical Certificate from his / her doctor on the eighth day of absence and send this to the School Finance Office without delay.

If, during the first seven calendar days of the employee's absence the doctor provides a Medical Certificate, this should be sent immediately to the Finance Office.

- (b) The employee should ensure that subsequent doctor's statements are submitted to cover his / her absence if it extends beyond the period covered by the initial statement.

APPENDIX 2

Self-Certificated Sickness

This is absence which is half a day's sickness or more, but less than eight calendar days. The reason and duration of the illness must be written on a self-certification form (Appendix 5) by the employee and a return to work interview/discussion should take place with their line manager. Once this has all been signed, the completed form should be handed to the Head Teacher. The employee may or may not have consulted with their doctor.

Certificated Sickness

This is absence of more than seven consecutive days supported by a medical certificate completed and signed by a qualified medical practitioner.

APPENDIX 3

HOW TO CONDUCT ABSENCE MONITORING INTERVIEWS (Guidelines)

An employee may request to speak to someone of the same gender, ethnic origin or age. This will be accommodated wherever possible.

Preparation

As with any interview, the interviewer will have the relevant facts and figures to hand, be clear on the purpose of the interview and have a basic outline of the points to be covered.

When preparing for the interview:

- obtain the attendance record and make a note of the number of days absence and how many separate periods of absence there are,
- check the reasons given for the absences,
- examine what action has already been taken,
- decide whether it would be advisable to consult with the governors (recruitment) in order to discuss options, proposals, etc.
- be clear that the ultimate purpose of the meeting is to improve attendance. This may be achieved by a number of methods, including giving help and support, referring someone for medical examination, taking measures to improve the motivation and morale of the workforce, warning someone that there is concern about the validity of absences,
- allow the employee to have a teacher association / trade union representative present (or other person of their choice), and allow reasonable time for representation to be arranged.

Conduct of interview

The interview should be conducted in a firm but sensitive way. Accordingly the interviewer should:

- explain the purpose of the interview and be aware that this is a potentially sensitive matter: it is important to be polite and courteous,
- try to encourage discussion: it is not an interrogation but without knowing what the problem is it will not be possible to do anything about it,
- challenge the individual if there are discrepancies, but in a polite way,
- explain why attendance levels are important to the School - there is a commitment to provide quality education to students, parents, etc. and excessive levels of sickness absence undermine this commitment,

- try to reach joint solutions to any problems identified.

It is essential that the focus remains purely on sickness and attendance and that discussion of other performance issues does not occur. The interview is for a specific purpose and it is not a performance appraisal or disciplinary hearing.

Further Absence Monitoring Interviews

It may be that over a period of time a number of absence monitoring interviews will occur.

Interview Process

First Formal Interview

The first interview should be approached with an open mind since it is mainly an information gathering exercise. The main purpose of this interview is to review the employee's attendance record and reasons for absence.

The interviewer will emphasise the supportive nature of the interview and also inform the employee that high levels of absence inevitably cause difficulties in the effective operation of the School. The employee will be advised to seek medical help if there appears to be an underlying problem.

At the end of the meeting, if necessary, the employee may be set attainable targets for improvement based on 'triggers; which will be formally reviewed at the end of a set period. The details of the meeting will be sent to the employee and a copy put on their personal file.

The employee should be informed what the potential consequences will be if they fail to meet the expected standards.

First Formal Interview Review following Monitoring Period

At this stage if the employee has met the agreed standards no further formal action under this policy will be taken.

If the employee has however failed to meet the agreed standards, a Second Formal Interview will be arranged.

Second Formal Interview

The second interview will occur even if the first has achieved its objective. The interview will then formally acknowledge that the problem has been resolved. If an unacceptable absence level has continued then the interviewer will consider the following items and raise them with the individual. There may be:

- (a) emotional or domestic problems giving rise to the possibility of underlying health problem,
- (b) problems within the working environment particularly working relationships,

(c) a chronic health problem which may be receiving medical attention but which leads to regular, although not constant, incapacity for work (monitor and deal with as long term sickness),

(d) a chronic health problem which is receiving medical attention but which may take some time to respond to treatment and / or may have some unfortunate side-effects. In addition to showing sympathy for the condition it is important that enquiries are made about how long care / treatment will take.

If the employee fails to seek medical advice or states that the doctor cannot find any problem, the Head Teacher should seek advice from the governors. The employee will be informed that continued absences may need a medical certificate from the first day of any subsequent absence, paid for the by School, and / or that the employee will be referred to a doctor for a medical report. The request for a medical certificate to cover every absence is a short term measure only and, should the absence pattern continue, consideration should be given to invoking the Disciplinary Procedure.

Depending upon the circumstances it may be at this stage that the employee may be warned that because of frequent intermittent sickness absence and the effect it is having on the School it is considered that a continuance of this amount of sickness absence is not acceptable. A formal notification to this effect will be given at the interview and a further monitoring period of up to six months will be established accompanied by a warning of the ultimate sanction of dismissal if the sickness absence continues at unacceptably high levels. Paragraphs 4.3 to 4.6 describe in more detail what should happen. The expected standard of improvement, reflecting the 'triggers' should be made clear highlighting that if it does continue then further and more serious action will occur.

The details of the meeting will be sent to the employee and a copy put on their personal file.

Second Formal Interview Review following Monitoring Period

At this stage if the employee has achieved the identified improvements in their attendance, the employee will return to be informed and their sickness absences will be monitored for a further period of up to 6 months to ensure that the improved level of attendance is reinforced. At the end of this period, if improvement has been sustained, formal action under the Managing Sickness Policy will cease, and the employee will be advised of this.

If the employee has however failed to meet the agreed standards, a third formal interview will be convened.

Third Formal Interview

The third interview may occur even if the issues identified in the first and second interviews have been resolved. The purpose of the third interview in this situation will be to confirm that an improvement has occurred and establish the reasons for it.

If the required improvement has not occurred then further enquiries / investigations are necessary and the employee must be asked to account for their failure to improve to the necessary standard. At this stage serious consideration should be given to referring the individual to a doctor.

In those situations when an employee is frequently absent for a short period of time and a satisfactory explanation for the absences cannot be given then serious consideration should occur about invoking the Disciplinary Procedure.

All information relating to an employee's medical condition will be kept confidential.

APPENDIX 4

PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF SICKNESS ABSENCE OF THE HEAD TEACHER

(a) On the first day of absence the Head Teacher will notify the School Admin Office in the same way as other staff.

(b) The Chair of Governors will keep a record of absence of three days or less.

(c) If the Head Teacher is absent for more than three days, a Self-certification form must be completed and sent to the Chair of Governors who will inform the Chairman of the Trustees.

(d) If the Head Teacher is absent for more than seven calendar days a Medical Certificate must be obtained from a doctor on the eighth day of absence and sent to the Finance Officer who will inform the Chair of Governors.

(e) Subsequent medical certificates must be submitted to cover absence which extends beyond the period covered by the initial certificate. The Chair of Governors will be kept informed.

Throughout any period of prolonged illness of the Head Teacher or in the event of the Head Teacher's absence levels causing concern the Chair of Governors will be responsible for determining the action to be taken after consultation with the Governing Body. Any decision regarding referral for a medical examination will only be taken by the Chair of Governors after consultation.

The grounds for terminating the Head Teacher's appointment on grounds of ill health are as set out in the Head Teacher's contract of employment.

APPENDIX 5

STAFF ILLNESS CERTIFICATE

This form should be used to certify illness for 1 to 7 calendar days.

The completed form should be sent *without* delay to:-

Islamiyah Girls' High School,
Willow Street,
Blackburn,
BB1 5NQ

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): _____

Reference Number: TR _____

School Reference Number : _____

I wish the period of absence detailed below to be treated as self certified sick leave.

From (first day of illness): _____

To: (last day of illness): _____

Nature of illness: _____

I understand that I must submit a doctor's statement from the 8th calendar day of a continuous period of sick leave.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____