Staff Sickness Procedure

The Governing Body is committed to ensuring the wellbeing of all employees. They will apply consistent practices and procedures to all employees in respect of sickness absence. There will be occasions when an employee is sick and unable to attend work. (The school has a policy that an employee should not attend for work if they have an infectious disease or a contagious virus which could spread and cause major disruption to the school and its community. Any such illness should be reported direct to the Headteacher.)

To support staff with anything that they may be struggling with either in school or in their personal lives, we buy into an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) through Health Assured Ltd. All staff are welcome to access this service confidentially to discuss any problems, issues or concerns that they are experiencing: Health Assured Ltd – 0844 891 0356

If an employee is not fit to attend work they should contact Sarah Pollard in person by 7.30am. If the school needs to make cover arrangements it is incumbent on the employee to update about their state of health on a regular basis. Further details can be found in The Southfield Staff Handbook.

The Governing Body assumes the responsibility for sickness absence of the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors, supported by a panel of Governors will take any action in respect of the Headteacher when they are absent.

In addition, every employee is required to certify as below:

**Sickness Absence of 4 to 7 days (Self-Certified Sickness)**
If the absence continues into a fourth day (including weekends, rest days and public holidays) the employee, or someone on his or her behalf, should again notify the designated member of staff giving some further indication of the nature of the illness and the likely length of the absence. All sickness absence of over 3 days and under 8 days for all employees (including weekends, rest days and public holidays) must be backed by a Self-Certification Form. This should be completed on the employee’s first day back at work.

**Sickness Absence which lasts for 8 or more days (Medically certified Sickness)**
If the absence continues into an eighth day, (including weekends, rest days and public holidays) the employee should obtain a medical certificate from a doctor and send it immediately to the Headteacher. Doctors no longer issue certificates to confirm an employee is fit to return. If an employee returns after a long period of absence and the school is concerned about whether they are fit to return the school should contact Occupational Health.

Return to Work Meeting
The school will conduct a Return to Work Meeting with an employee prior to or on their return to work. This will also ensure appropriate certification documents have been provided and consider any Fit Note which may have been issued by the GP.

The school will continue to monitor sickness absence and has set the following triggers for more formal review meetings should absence be persistent or ill health long term:

The LA guidance, which has been agreed with the trades unions, is

- 7 working days absence in the equivalent of a term
- 3 occasions of absence of any duration in the equivalent of a term
- when cumulative absence is 12 days in the equivalent of three terms or as soon as triggered
- 5 occasions of absence of any duration in the equivalent of three terms or as soon as triggered within that period.

If the triggers are hit, either by short term absence or in the case of long-term absence, the following process will be applied:

**Attendance Review Meeting**
This meeting will be a discussion to explore the reasons for absence and discuss support which may be provided to improve attendance at work. The employee will be informed orally and in writing of an Attendance Review Meeting, the date and the time. If this is inconvenient the employee will be offered one alternative date. Failure to attend could result in a written statement of concern about absence levels and a review period. The employee is encouraged to call upon the advice of a trade union representative or work colleague (‘companion’) and/or to make a written submission. The outcome will be confirmed in writing and a period of review will be set.

**First Formal Review**
If the absence continues at a high rate which hits the school’s triggers, the employee may be interviewed before the set review date. The employee will be informed in writing of the date and time of the review meeting. If this is not at a convenient time, there will be one further attempt to organise the meeting. Failure to attend could result in a decision being taken in the employee’s absence. The employee is encouraged to call upon the advice of a companion and/or to make a written submission.

If the employee’s attendance has improved, he or she will be advised that it was expected that the improved attendance would continue, or the procedure will be invoked again. This will be at the First Formal Review stage if deterioration is within the last year. Should the employee’s absence have continued in the same way or worsened, the purpose of the meeting will be to continue to discuss the sickness absence and reasons and identify any underlying reasons for sickness and making the employee aware that if there is no improvement, then consideration may have to be given to the continued employment of the employee in that job. The employee will be referred to the school’s Occupational Health provider. The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed to the employee in writing, within 7 calendar days.

**Second Formal Review**
If the absence continues at a high rate which hits the school’s triggers, the individual may be interviewed before the set review date. The second formal review will be held by the Headteacher if the reason for sickness has not been recognised by the Occupational Health Consultant as grounds
for ill health retirement, and dismissal on grounds other than retirement is a possible outcome. The review will take constitute a formal hearing (see below).

The employee will be informed in writing of the date and time of the review meeting. If this is not at a convenient time there will be one further attempt to organise the meeting. Failure to attend could result in a decision being taken in the employee’s absence. The employee is encouraged to call upon the advice of a companion and/or to make a written submission. The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed to the employee within 7 calendar days. A possible outcome is dismissal from post.

If the employee’s attendance has improved he or she will be advised that it was expected that the improved attendance would continue or the procedure will be invoked again. This will be at the Second Formal Review stage if deterioration is within the last year.

**Formal Hearing**

Paperwork to inform the hearing will be sent to the employee and the Headteacher if they have not been involved in the review process previously, at least 14 calendar days before the hearing. Should the employee wish to submit any documentation to inform the hearing this should be sent to the Headteacher and the reviewing manager if applicable, at least 7 calendar days before the hearing. There will be the right of appeal to the Governing Body.