



RETURN TO WORK GUIDANCE

		Due for review January 2021
1	Summer 2018	Approved by the Board of Trustees
Version	Date	Description

PREPARATION

A return to work interview provides the opportunity to discuss an employee's attendance record. Prior to the interview managers should gather all relevant information regarding the employee's attendance record, giving consideration to the following factors:

- Are the absences regular or erratic?
- Does the absence precede or follow annual leave/weekends/days off?
- In which part of the week do the absences occur?
- What is the average length of absence?
- What reasons are given for the absence?
- Are the reasons varied, or is there a pattern?

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

The following structure should normally be followed:

- Welcome back
- Enquiry regarding health
- Consequence of absence
- Future action
- Records

Welcome back

The interview should normally begin with the line manager welcoming the employee back and letting them know of any important events that have taken place in their absence. Explain the purpose of the meeting and make it clear that all staff receive a return to work interview following absence due to sickness on every occasion of absence.

Enquire about health

Key words to remember when carrying out a return to work interview are empathy and privacy. Line manager to gain the following information:

- Whether the employee is fit enough to resume their duties
- Whether the absence was work related
- What steps the member of staff has taken towards their recovery
- What preventative measures they are taking to reduce possible recurrence
- Their GP's advice if appropriate

These areas should be carefully explored, consider how to handle any identified risks and provide appropriate support as necessary.

If there is a concern about the employee's fitness to work, line managers can send the employee home and request that the employee obtain a statement from their GP/refer them to occupational health to confirm fitness to work. Only qualified medical staff and practitioners can make medical judgements. Please seek advice from your HR Adviser in these circumstances.

Consequence of absence

In cases of persistent absence line managers should take the opportunity to remind the employee of the triggers. Discuss any observations you have made regarding their absence eg if any pattern is apparent, and explore ways in which you can help the member of staff attend as required.

Future action

In cases of persistent absence, line managers are to explain that continued periods of absence could lead to formal action being instigated, under the schools disciplinary procedure.

In all cases, record any action agreed eg referral to the occupational health department, changes to working arrangements, setting of targets for attendance etc, and be clear who will be taking this action and whether anyone else needs to be involved.

Records

Complete the return to work interview form, ensuring that all actions are recorded.

Keep a copy of the form on the employee's personal file.

The information collected and actions agreed can be used as part of future disciplinary proceedings where necessary.