

1 MINUTE GUIDE

Safeguarding Committee *staff sickness*



At Witham Prospect School, our staff form a **vital network of support** for our children and young people. When a staff member is **absent** for an extended period due to **illness**, it can create ripples throughout this network, affecting both colleagues and the children and young people we care for. This guide aims to explore those **impacts**, promote **understanding**, and suggest **supportive strategies**.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF STAFF SICKNESS ON COLLEAGUES

Long-term staff absence can significantly affect remaining colleagues in various ways. The most immediate impact is often an increased workload for those who remain. Essential tasks and responsibilities must be redistributed to ensure continuity of care, leading to heavier workloads and longer hours for existing staff. Colleagues may be required to take on unfamiliar roles or adapt their working practices. This can lead to stress, anxiety, and a feeling of being overwhelmed, especially if adequate training and support are not provided.

Long-term absence can disrupt established team dynamics and communication patterns. This can create tension and affect team cohesion, especially if roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and communicated. Seeing a colleague struggle with illness can be emotionally taxing. Colleagues may feel concern, sadness, or guilt, particularly if they feel unable to provide adequate support. The combination of increased workload, role changes, and emotional strain can significantly elevate stress levels and increase the risk of burnout among remaining staff. It can also be more difficult to cover other absences, as the team is already stretched.

THE IMPACT TO OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The impact of long-term staff absence on our children and young people requires careful consideration. Children and young people at Witham Prospect School often rely heavily on consistent routines and familiar faces. Changes in staffing can disrupt these routines, leading to anxiety, confusion, and behavioural challenges. Long-term absence means the loss of a familiar and trusted adult. This can be particularly difficult for children and young people who have formed strong attachments with staff members and rely on them for emotional support and guidance. Different staff members may have varying approaches to care and education. This inconsistency can be confusing and unsettling for children and young people, potentially hindering their progress and development.

For children and young people with communication difficulties, a change in staff can create significant communication barriers. Agency staff may be unfamiliar with individual communication styles, aids, or preferences, leading to frustration and misunderstandings. The combination of disrupted routines, loss of familiar support, and communication challenges can contribute to increased anxiety and behavioural issues in some children and young people. Some may regress in their development or display previously overcome behaviours as a response to the stress and instability caused by staff absence. Disruption to teaching and support can negatively impact learning outcomes and hinder the achievement of individual goals.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

Witham Prospect School recognises the importance of supporting the overall wellbeing of our employees. To assist with this, we provide access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through Health Assured.

The Health Assured EAP is a confidential service designed to provide support and resources for a wide range of personal and work-related issues. This service is available to all employees and is free to use.

Key features of the EAP include:

- **24/7 Telephone Support:** Employees can access confidential support and advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by calling the dedicated Health Assured helpline.
- **Counselling Services:** The EAP offers access to qualified counsellors for short-term therapy to help employees cope with emotional, personal, or work-related challenges.
- **Information and Advice:** Health Assured provides information and guidance on various topics, including legal issues, financial management, stress management, and family matters.
- **Online Resources:** Employees can access a wealth of online resources, including self-help tools, articles, and webinars, through the Health Assured portal.

Confidentiality:

The EAP service is strictly confidential. No information shared by an employee with Health Assured will be disclosed to Witham Prospect School without the employee's explicit consent, except where there is a legal obligation to do so (e.g., safeguarding concerns).

Accessing the Service:

- By Phone: For immediate, confidential advice and support, call the Health Assured 24/7 confidential helpline at: **0800 032 7097**
- Online Portal: Access a wealth of online resources, articles, and self-help tools via the Health Assured portal: <https://www.healthassured.org/> Employer code: **MHA049211**



HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT

Witham Prospect School is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of its employees. To this end, we offer the following:

- **Physiotherapy and Chiropractic Care:** In cases of work-related injury, employees may be eligible to access physiotherapy or chiropractic care through the company's staff recovery scheme. This aims to facilitate a swift and effective recovery.
- **Back to Work Scheme:** The company operates a supportive back-to-work scheme to help employees return to their duties after a period of absence. This scheme may involve:
 - Return-to-work interviews to discuss any concerns and identify necessary support.
 - Phased returns to work, where appropriate, to allow for a gradual reintegration.
 - Reasonable adjustments to duties or the work environment, if necessary.
- **Private Health Care:** Employees seeking information on this should contact payroll.

It's important to note that the specifics of the back-to-work scheme and eligibility for physiotherapy/chiropractic care may vary depending on individual circumstances and are subject to the company's policies.

REMEMBER: ALWAYS REPORT YOUR ABSENCE DUE TO ILLNESS BY CALLING YOUR LINE MANAGER DIRECTLY, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND WITHIN THE SPECIFIED TIMEFRAMES.

ACAS: provides impartial advice on workplace relations, and their guidance on absence reporting and management is valuable for both employees and managers. It promotes good practice and helps to prevent disputes. www.acas.org.uk

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Staff Absence and Return to Work Policy: To ensure you are fully aware of our procedures for reporting and managing sickness absence, please refer to our full policy document. [HERE](#)