Christ Church Felixstowe

Sickness and absence policy

1. Adoption of this policy

This policy was formally adopted at a meeting of the Parochial Church Council on __13th October 2026_, and will be reviewed and re-adopted every three years.

Signature of the vicar: ___Dominic Turner_____, on behalf of the PCC.

1. Purpose

Christ Church Felixstowe is committed to supporting staff wellbeing and managing sickness absence fairly, consistently, and with pastoral care. This policy sets out how sickness absence should be reported, recorded, supported, and reviewed, ensuring that:

- Staff know how to report sickness absence.
- Managers understand their responsibilities.
- Absence is managed with compassion and clarity.
- Support is offered early, including reasonable adjustments.
- The PCC meets its legal obligations under employment law.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all paid employees of the PCC.

It does not apply to clergy office-holders, who are not employed by the PCC, and whose sickness absence is governed by the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009 and Diocesan clergy policies.

3. Principles

Christ Church Felixstowe will manage sickness absence in a way that is:

- Pastoral – caring for the individual and their household.
- Fair and consistent – applying the same process to all staff.

- Proportionate – recognising the realities of a small parish team.
- Confidential – handling medical information sensitively.
- Supportive – offering reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Clear – ensuring staff know what is expected.

4. Reporting Sickness Absence

If an employee is unable to attend work due to illness, they must:

1. Notify their line manager (normally the Vicar or Churchwarden) by phone as early as possible and no later than 9:30am on the first day of absence.
2. Provide brief information about the nature of the illness and likely duration.
3. Keep the manager updated if the absence continues.

Text messages or third-party notifications should only be used if the employee is unable to call personally.

5. Certification

- Up to 7 calendar days: Employees must complete a self-certification form.
- More than 7 calendar days: A GP fit note is required.
- Fit notes should be provided promptly and kept up to date.

6. Sick Pay

Employees will receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) in accordance with UK law, provided eligibility criteria are met. For up to four weeks of sickness absence in any calendar year, the PCC will increase this to full pay.

7. Keeping in Touch

During sickness absence, the line manager will maintain appropriate contact to:

- Offer pastoral support
- Check on wellbeing
- Discuss any practical needs
- Plan for return to work

8. Return to Work

When an employee returns to work after any sickness absence, the line manager will hold a brief return-to-work meeting to:

- Confirm the employee is fit to return.
- Discuss any ongoing health issues.
- Identify support or adjustments needed.
- Update absence records.

9. Medical Appointments

Employees should try to schedule routine medical or dental appointments outside working hours where possible. Where this is not possible, reasonable paid or unpaid time off may be agreed.

10. Long-Term Sickness Absence

An absence of 28 calendar days or more will be treated as long-term sickness absence.

In such cases, the PCC may:

- Seek medical advice (with the employee's consent).
- Consider referral to Occupational Health.
- Explore reasonable adjustments.
- Agree a phased return to work.
- Review duties or hours temporarily.

The aim is to support recovery while ensuring the church's work continues safely and sustainably.

11. Persistent or Frequent Short-Term Absence

Where short-term absences become frequent or problematic, the line manager will:

1. Meet with the employee to discuss patterns of absence.
2. Explore underlying causes.
3. Offer support or adjustments.

4. Set clear expectations for improvement.
5. Review progress over an agreed period.

If absence continues to be problematic, the matter may move into the formal sickness management process.

12. Reasonable Adjustments

Where an employee has a disability or long-term health condition, the PCC will consider reasonable adjustments, which may include:

- Changes to duties.
- Altered working hours.
- Equipment or support.
- Phased return.
- Temporary redeployment (if feasible).

13. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All medical information will be handled confidentially and stored securely in accordance with the PCC's GDPR policies.

14. Formal Sickness Absence Management

Where absence becomes long-term or persistent, the PCC may initiate a formal process, which may include:

- Formal review meetings.
- Medical reports.
- Occupational-health advice.
- Agreed improvement plans.
- Consideration of ill-health capability procedures (as a last resort).