



THE DWASTRE

Education Trust

Policy Name:

STAFF ABSENCE AND ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Author: Head Teachers Leadership Group

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Publish on Trust website: Yes

Publish on Academy websites: Not required but ensure that all staff have access to a copy

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gary Oswald', is enclosed within a thin blue rectangular border.

Chair of Directors



STAFF ABSENCE AND ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

This policy statement applies to all employees at all Academies who come under the control of the Thedwastre Education Trust.

Aims and objectives

Thedwastre Education Trust recognises the importance of health and wellbeing for all employees; there are times, however, when employees are not well enough to attend work.

All employees have a contractual duty to attend work unless they are unable to do so through sickness or injury, or other statutory entitlement to time off. The absence management policy has been designed to ensure that the impact of absence at work is minimised, whilst ensuring that employees are treated fairly and consistently.

Everyone in the school feels the impact of ill-health and absence. It can significantly affect how the school performs and affects the service we provide to pupils. In this context we have procedures for managing absence and attendance, as detailed in this policy.

Thedwastre Education Trust is committed to proactively managing attendance, and believes that it is the responsibility of the school, trade union representatives and employees to work together to promote the management of absence and ill-health and to promote well-being. It should not be forgotten, however, that employees must be treated with respect and dignity at all times, within an environment of a person-centred approach, balanced with the needs of the school and its pupils.

The governing body aims to:

- Maintain high levels of attendance
- Minimise disruption to the education of pupils
- Treat employees' absence in a consistent, fair and sensitive manner
- Provide a reasonable and safe working environment, appropriate welfare support, and advice on general health issues
- Enhance employee relations
- Ensure prompt action is taken
- Recognise where relevant training is necessary

We work to these principles:

- Good attendance is recognised and valued
- All absences are treated as genuine, unless there is reason to doubt this
- The absence management procedure is designed to be proactive and support rather than punitive
- Management of absence will be dealt with in a non-discriminatory way
- Individuals will be treated with respect and in confidence, in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and the Access to Medical Reports Act
- Open communication between managers and employees is greatly encouraged



Responsibilities

Thedwaste Education Trust will monitor and review this policy from time to time, delegate to the Headteacher of each academy the necessary discretion to operate absence management procedures and arrangements, and ensure that fair and consistent standards are applied to the management of absence. The Chief Executive will authorise any requests for absence from the Headteacher.

The Headteacher (with the assistance of senior staff) is responsible overall for the day-to-day management of sickness absence. S/he will also ensure that all management employees have appropriate training/coaching on this policy and its guidelines to ensure consistency of its application. The Headteacher is also responsible for ensuring that all employees have a return to work meeting on their first day back from every absence, regardless of its duration, and that the relevant forms are completed and then passed to the Admin Office in a timely manner for recording and monitoring absence.

The Admin Office will ensure that the school has suitable arrangements for enabling employees to notify absence, for communicating information about absence in a timely manner for payroll and other necessary purposes, and for following up absence in appropriate circumstances – in line with the Trust's HR guidance.

Employees have a duty to attend for work unless they are unable to do so through sickness or injury, or unless their absence has been otherwise approved. They have a responsibility to report their own absence through sickness or other emergency using the school's procedures, and to produce medical evidence as required.

Procedures and Arrangements in Cases of Absence

Notification of absence

In all cases of absence, teachers should contact the Headteacher (or Deputy/Assistant Headteacher if the Headteacher is unavailable) at the earliest opportunity. Where possible, this should be done the day before the absence, or by 7.30am on the morning of the first day of absence, stating the reason for the absence and likely return date. If the phone is not answered please leave a message with your name, brief reasons for absence and contact telephone number so that the Headteacher (or DHT/AHT) can call you back if required.

Support staff should contact the school office at the earliest opportunity. Where possible, this should be done the day before the absence, or at 8.00am on the morning of the first day of the absence, stating the reason for the absence and likely return date.

In the case of a Headteacher they should report their absence to the CEO and Chair of Governors at the earliest opportunity.

Unless a member of staff is seriously ill or incapacitated, it is unacceptable to have a friend or relative call on their behalf. It is not acceptable to ask colleagues to pass on messages – the Headteacher (or Deputy/Assistant Headteacher in the absence of the Headteacher) is responsible for managing staff and making arrangements for cover.

If staff absence continues, they or a representative must contact the Headteacher regularly to update on continuing absence. Text messaging or e-mailing are not considered appropriate forms of communication in this instance.



The person receiving the call should:

- find out the general reason for the absence
- find out if at all possible how long the absence is likely to last
- arrange for the employee to confirm when they will be returning to work or, if that is not possible, to update the school on their progress
- ensure the person responsible for arranging temporary cover is informed

In cases of extended periods of sickness, the Headteacher will put in place suitable arrangements for keeping in touch with the employee who is absent or, where this is not practicable, an appropriate representative of the employee's family.

Where absence arises from an incident at work, details should be reported through the school's incident reporting procedures.

Teaching staff are also required, in all cases of absence and if the employee is fit enough, to inform the Headteacher about any activities or lesson plans that need to be used during the absence, particularly for long-term absence. The school will make arrangements to collect any plans or resources that cannot be emailed to the school.

It is an expectation that teachers who have a planned absence for course attendance or other CPD, will leave planning and resource information available for the cover teacher.

Non-notification of absence

If an employee does not contact the Headteacher by the required time, the Headteacher will attempt to contact the employee at home. If they do not receive any answer they may decide to contact next of kin. Not following the notification of absence procedure may lead to more formal action being taken.

Self-certification and Medical practitioner's certificate

Staff must provide the appropriate certificates referred to below at the relevant times, and complete all absence recording documents upon return to work, at your return to work meeting. Failure to notify the school as set out below may result in disciplinary action. The school reserves the right and will proactively monitor those employees who are absent through sickness on a regular basis.

Staff should produce the following written evidence of absence in a timely manner and ensure that appropriate certificates are provided for the whole of your absence:

- Self-certification/return to work form for every occasion of absence
- Medical practitioner's certificate:
 - on 8th calendar day of absence
 - or
 - when requested, where an unacceptable pattern of absence has occurred (at the schools expense)
 - or
 - for absence before or following annual or public holidays, at the discretion of the school (at the school's expense)



The school reserves the right to request that you to undertake a medical examination by a medical practitioner and/or specialist via the Trust's Occupational Health service.

Further details of our Occupational Health Policy including your rights regarding consent and access to medical reports can be obtained from the school.

Payment for absence

During periods of sickness the Trust operates both statutory sick pay and occupational sick pay provisions appropriate to employees' conditions of service. Payment will only be made for occupational sick pay if the reporting procedure is followed correctly.

Monitoring and Recording of absence

The Headteacher will use return to work meetings as appropriate to monitor sickness absence. Records will be kept on all absence and reported to the Trust HR chair, Chair of Governors (LGB) and CEO in line with data protection regulations.

Health, Safety & Wellbeing

The Trust will make available to employees appropriate counselling, welfare and wellbeing arrangements to promote and maintain the health of employees.

Disability Related Leave

Any request for time off for reasons related to an employee's disability (e.g. for therapy or rehabilitation) will be considered sympathetically and in the context of the employee's statutory rights.

As appropriate, we will arrange for consultation with the Trust's Occupational Health Consultants in relation to individual sickness absence or any general work related health issues identified at school.

Time off for Family and Dependants and Compassionate Leave

All staff are allowed time off to deal with an emergency situation involving a dependant. A dependant could be a spouse, partner, child, grandchild, parent, or someone who depends on you for care. For example: if a child falls ill staff could take time off to collect from school, go to the doctor and/or make care arrangements. Staff may be asked to take unpaid leave if they wish to take longer off to look after their child or dependant.

There are no limits on how many times staff can take time off for dependants for emergency situations; however line managers may want to discuss the amount of time off if it is affecting work.

Employees are entitled to 2 days paid compassionate leave if an immediate/family/household member dies or suffers a life threatening illness or injury. The compassionate leave can be taken as: a single continuous 2 day period, or 2 separate periods of 1 day each. An additional day can be taken for a funeral of an immediate/family/household member.

Time off for all other planned events and situations known in advance such as hospital appointments must be discussed and paid time off is at the discretion of the headteacher. If time off in these situations becomes frequent/regular and/or affecting their work the headteacher will discuss this with the member of staff.



Trigger Points

Trigger points have been agreed, to enable managers to monitor absence levels. The senior leadership team will continuously monitor these levels, and will investigate with the employee any levels or patterns of absence which cause concern and decide whether any action (informal or otherwise) is required.

In any event, absence that reaches any of the following trigger points will be investigated in every instance:

- Three periods of absence or ten working days or more absence in a rolling 3 month period
- Four periods of absence or fifteen working days absence in a rolling six month period
- Five plus periods of absence or 20 working days or more absence in a rolling 12 month period
- All long-term absences (over 20 working days)
- Unacceptable patterns of absence (e.g. regular Friday and or Monday absences)
- Unauthorised absence

It should be noted that the above trigger points do not prevent earlier intervention if appropriate. Any employee, who the school finds to be abusing the above, will be subject to disciplinary procedures, which may lead to possible dismissal.

Contact during absence

The Trust is committed to maintaining appropriate contact throughout long-term absences to ensure the successful and sustained re-integration of the employee back to the workplace. Employees are expected to co-operate with the school's policy on keeping in touch during long-term absence, and to provide medical reports if they exist.

For longer term absences, contact will include some discussion around:

- The likely prognosis for the employee's condition/illness (and any medical certification details)
- Any further investigations/medical intervention underway/anticipated, and likely timescales
- What support they are receiving, i.e. counselling, CBT
- Anything the school could do to help during their absence
- An agreed means and regularity of contact, i.e. weekly/fortnightly by phone/email
- How much (if at all) the individual would like to be updated on work issues during their absence. For example, would they like the school newsletters sent to them?

Employees are expected to co-operate with attempts to manage and support sickness absence.

Line managers, or a nominated person, will keep in regular contact with any of their employees who are absent. If this is not appropriate, the employee may wish to nominate a different person, which will need to be agreed.

Guidelines on contact with employees from the school:

- Minor illness: if the minor illness is likely to end within seven days further contact is not usually necessary.
- Traumatic injury or sudden illness: discretion until the longer prognosis is known. Contact usually made after 1 week, if no further communication from the employee has been forthcoming.
- Planned treatment: the school may arrange with employees individually on visits to the hospital or at home.



- Stress: contact within 2 weeks. Discretion will be exercised until the longer-term prognosis is known.

Having no contact during long-term absence is not acceptable. If the employee will not speak to their line manager or the Headteacher, other options will be explored, including contact from another manager and/or making use of an intermediary such as a colleague, family member, trade union official, or a member of the Trust's HR team.

Contact during long-term absence will be reviewed and adjusted jointly with the employee as appropriate.

Records will be kept of all conversations and details of any provisions that have been put in place.

If the employee is taking medication that may impair their judgment or mobility or any other faculty required to perform their duties, the employee should discuss this with their line manager, Headteacher or nominated person to explore options. Medical advice may need to be sought from Occupational Health.

Referral to Occupational Health

The Trust's Occupational Health Service is available to provide advice and guidance to schools on matters of employees' health. The Headteacher or CEO will seek advice from the Trust's HR Advisor regarding referrals to Occupational Health. Referrals will be made by the school – it is not open to an employee to self-refer. The school will not contact employees' general practitioners.

The support and guidance of Occupational Health can be sought at any stage. Normally, however, the Headteacher or CEO will refer an employee who has been absent for 4 weeks or longer, unless the nature of the medical condition is clear and the prospect of a return to work well defined, e.g. a broken limb or routine surgery. Employees who have frequent short term absences can also be referred, if, after discussion, it appears that a medical report would be useful.

The Occupational Health Physician's report will give information about the employee's medical condition and its possible effects on employment – s/he does not offer diagnosis or treatment.

This report may also be used to establish:

- The reason for and likely duration of absence
- When you will be able to return to work
- What, if any, treatment is being prescribed
- Whether and what reasonable adjustment need to be made to your job and/or working environment
- Whether you are capable to continue in your job

The Headteacher or CEO in the case of a Headteacher, with support from the Trust's HR Advisor, will then decide what action is appropriate in the light of the report and any other relevant information. Employees will receive a copy of the Occupational Health Physician's report, and the report will be discussed with the employee. In some cases the Occupational Health Physician may require a further meeting with the employee or may undertake to monitor the recovery process and suggest what assistance may be appropriate for a return to work.

Occupational Health will always be consulted if it appears that there may be a prospect that the employee will be unfit to return to work through ill-health.



Return to Work Interviews

A Return to Work Interview will be held after every period of absence to confirm that their record of absence is correct, and enable the employee to raise any remaining health or other issues that need addressing with the school's support. This meeting will be documented in order to assist with recording and monitoring of absence and filed in your personnel file with any confidential medical information filed in a CONFIDENTIAL personal file.

Strategies for return to work where the employee will resume full duties eventually might include:

- Preliminary visits to the school
- Phased or therapeutic return
- Light duties for a short period

It is the schools intention to consider all reasonable rehabilitation measures and adjustments as appropriate to enable its employees to return to work.

Schools will discuss all options with the Trust's HR Team and, as appropriate, with Occupational Health consultants, prior to implementation.

Formal procedures

The school takes seriously disingenuous absence, and if it is proven or reasonably suspected, disciplinary procedures will be invoked.

Poor attendance records will also be dealt with in the appropriate way, and in serious cases the school may have to consider your continuing employment.

Ultimately, unacceptable and unsustainable absence levels may lead to dismissal.

Rehabilitation and Wellbeing

The Trust wishes to maximise the attendance of all employees and as such will focus on the rehabilitation of employees on long-term sickness absence, or those with long-term conditions but still at work, to ensure that all employees can return and remain in work. We want to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing is effectively cared for and to prevent, where possible, conditions worsening. Rehabilitation will hopefully aid recovery and improve the prospects of a speedy and lasting recovery and return to work.

All reasonable adjustments, whether temporary or permanent, will be considered, medical advice sought where appropriate, and advice taken from the Trust's HR advisors in all such instances.

All employees will be treated fairly and consistently with dignity and respect. Consideration will be given to the Equality Act 2010 and any other statutory obligations, in all instances.

Whilst the school's trigger levels will be taken into account, the school will adopt a case management approach to individuals' cases. All rehabilitation measures will be done in full consultation with the employee and their representatives.

Occupational Health will often be part of the rehabilitation process, as will monitoring, and regular reviews.

Employees are also obliged to look after their own health, safety and wellbeing. The school can provide stress toolkits if needed, as well as useful guidance from our HR Advisors and the HSE.

In all sickness absence cases the School will act with guidance from the Trust's HR Advisors.





Appendix 1

Return to work proforma

Appendix A

Sickness Absence Meeting Record

Employee	Date of Meeting
Length of Service	
Interviewing Manager	
Details of Sickness Absence	
Period of Absence	Number of days Absent
Reason(s) for Absence	
<p>Is absence related to a known or possible disability under the Equality Act? Has there been consideration of whether the 'trigger point' relating to days absence should be extended, or if the sickness absence policy should otherwise be modified?</p> <p>No Yes if yes - details of medical evidence must be attached</p>	
Details of Meeting	
Key Points discussed Welcome and update, if necessary, on work events and changes	
Reasons for absence - underlying medical condition?	



The value of your contribution? The impact of absence on teaching and learning, service delivery and colleagues. How your work has been covered in your absence.

Are you fully recovered and able to resume full duties? **Yes** **No**

If your view is “no” then action plan must consider:

- Referral to Occupational Health (OH)
- Temporary adjustments which can reasonably be accommodated?

Action Plan

The objective is that attendance will be satisfactory to the employer. Is there anything we can do to improve your attendance, e.g. OH referral, counselling, a review of risk assessment, temporary or permanent reasonable adjustments to the workplace, working practices or working hours or training?

Is your absence in any way related to work?

Are you doing all you can to improve your attendance?

e.g. Act on medical advice, lifestyle choices, attention to work life balance, non-medical support
e.g. counselling.

Fit note required for any period of absence during the monitoring period?

Yes **No**



Review

Attendance will be reviewed in

1 month 2 months 3 months Date of review: _____

Please note that further absence during this period may, depending on the circumstances, mean that the review is held under Stage One of the formal procedure if appropriate.

Copy of Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure has been provided and process explained.

Yes Date: _____ **No** (must be provided and explained prior to a formal meeting)

Signature of Manager: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Employee: _____ Date: _____