



Managing Attendance at Work Policy

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office@tssmat.staffs.sch.uk or 01543 472245

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05.10.22	2.1	Addition required	Further information on phased return to work added. J Bowman	PHRP
18.11.22	3.0	Board Review	Ratified	

Managing Attendance at Work Policy

This Policy strives to ensure the wellbeing of employees at work, through support, advice and help where underlying health issues are contributing to their absence in order to encourage consistent high levels of attendance. It recognises that whilst a certain level of sickness may be inevitable, a reasonable balance must be maintained between the needs of the business and those of employees to take time off from work due to sickness. This policy outlines what is expected from managers and employees when such situations occur (both short and long term sickness absence) in order to ensure that support and treatment is consistent, lawful, fair and equitable.

Policy Principles

The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust expects its employees to take responsibility for managing their own health wherever possible to ensure regular attendance at work, and to engage fully in the attendance management process when sickness absence occurs.

The Trust will use the Bradford factor scoring system to monitor all sickness absence, and employees not meeting the expected standards of attendance will be managed under the terms of this policy.

Sickness absences arising from and related to maternity, pregnancy, disability (Equality Act 2010), critical illness, or where the employer accepts that there has been an accident on duty, will normally be discounted from the Bradford score. An exception to this may be where reasonable adjustments have been agreed and put in place, but sickness absences continue to occur.

The Trust will manage attendance through the use of Return to Work Discussions which will be conducted each time an employee returns to work following any period of sickness absence.

Managing Attendance

The three stages of managing attendance are progressive and intended to remind and enforce the attendance standards that are expected from all employees, with support mechanisms to encourage this. The manager must consider formal action at the appropriate stage where the Bradford score is 150 or above, after taking account of absences that are normally discountable.

The policy applies from the first day of employment, although an employee must never unknowingly find him or herself under consideration of the formal attendance procedure.

Sometimes conflict with others at work can lead to employees taking sickness absence. In these circumstances mediation can be particularly helpful, providing a process for the parties involved to explore their issues in a safe and confidential environment, paving the way to a successful return to work.

This policy provides a framework to manage attendance issues in ways that are founded on the principles of:

- Effective support in the handling of sensitive and complex matters;
- Recognising disability related conditions and issues in the workplace and taking appropriate action to mitigate the effect of these;
- Equity and fairness of treatment;
- Consistency of application of the process and procedures agreed for handling sickness absence and attendance issues;
- Timeliness (in accordance with reasonable timelines).

Employees are expected to engage appropriately with this policy insofar as they are affected by it. Abuse or misuse of this policy is unacceptable and may give rise to action under the Trust's formal procedures.

Information recorded during this process may on request be disclosed to any party involved in the process (subject to exemptions). When a request for information is received, it would need to be established if the requested information is the requestor's personal data. The request would then be assessed to identify if there are any exemptions from release, for example, if it would put another person at harm. Written requests for information will be subject to the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the General Data Protection Regulations, and the Data Protection Bill. For further advice please contact the Data Protection Officer (details on website).

Reporting Sickness Absence

Employees are required to contact their Headteacher/line manager by 7.00am if they will be absent from work on that day. This should be done with a phone call where possible. Text or email are not acceptable as means of notifying of absence. If the Headteacher is absent, a message may be left with the School Secretary.

The Headteacher must inform the School Secretary of all staff absence on the day of the absence.

If the employee expects to be absent the following day they should inform their line manager as soon as possible.

A self-certification form must be filled out as soon as possible by the employee immediately on their return from sickness absence. This form must be returned to the School Secretary on the day of return.

If the absence is for 8 days or longer, a Fit Note must be provided to the School Secretary. The employee must inform their Headteacher of the period of any Fit Notes. In an ongoing period of sickness absence, the employee must inform the Headteacher in advance of their return date, or whether another Fit Note is expected.

On return to work the employee must contact the School Secretary to make arrangements for a return to work interview, which will be held with the line manager.

If an employee returns to work with a phased return Fit Note, they should inform the Headteacher of this in advance in order that any reasonable adjustments can be made prior to return.

Phased Return to Work

Following a period of absence, the employee may require a phased return to work plan to support and facilitate a return to work. A phased return to work may incorporate:

- reduced hours,
- lighter duties, and/or
- different duties.

A phased return to work plan will usually be for 2-6 weeks.

The plan will be kept under review throughout the phased return to work and where appropriate, adjustments may be made to the plan in order to ensure its continued appropriateness and as a means of assessing an employee's likely ability to return to their full duties and hours upon completion of the plan.

Where appropriate it may be reasonable to extend the phased return to work plan and consideration will be given to the period of the extension, as well as, the reason for the extension.

Pay during a phased return to work

The organisation will determine an employee's entitlement to receive full or part pay during a phased return to work plan.

Where a plan continues beyond 6 weeks, and the employee is receiving full pay, pay will be adjusted to reflect the number of hours worked per week. The organisation may take the decision to extend full pay entitlement depending upon the circumstances.

Linked Absences

If the phased return to work plan is not completed, or an employee is unable to return to work following the plan, then the organisation will consider whether the absence is linked to the absence prior to the commencement of the phased return to work plan.

If the absences are considered as linked, then this will be taken into account for the purposes of sick pay entitlement and formal absence management in accordance with the organisation’s policy and procedures.

Referring to Occupational Health

The Trust retains the right to refer staff to Occupational Health to help the Trust and employees understand any health conditions that might be impacting on their work, and how employees may be supported in the workplace.

Reasons for making a referral may include, but are not limited to:

- Long term sickness absence
- Frequent levels of short term absence
- To access advice and support about an employee’s health condition and understand how they can be supported in the workplace
- To gain advice about workplace/ergonomic assessments
- Ill health retirement.

Employees will be asked to input into the Occupational Health Referral Form, but may choose not to. The Trust may submit the Referral Form even if the employee does not agree with the contents, although this will be noted on the form.

Employees can request a referral to Occupational Health themselves.

Three Stages of Managing Sickness Absence

Stage 1

Trigger	Bradford Score is at least 150
Action	<p>Review the attendance record to determine whether any absences have previously been discounted because they are disability related, for a critical illness, directly related to pregnancy, or an accident at work. Check if these absences have been discounted from the Bradford Score and recalculate as necessary.</p> <p>If the Bradford Score remains 150 or over, arrange a formal meeting with the employee (usually within 14 calendar days of the employee returning to work, but in all circumstances as soon as is reasonably practical)</p>

	Give a minimum of 14 calendar day's notice of the meeting in writing, clearly stating that it is being convened under the formal attendance procedure.
Warning duration	Stage 1 warning remains live for 6 months

Stage 2

Trigger	Bradford Score of at least 150 points, and two further absences, or one absence of 10 days or more has occurred during the live previous Stage 1 warning
Action	As Stage 1. At the meeting, advise the employee that their attendance is unsatisfactory, and if a Stage 2 warning is issued, should a further two absences, or one absence of 10 days or more occur, the employee will progress to Stage 3 of the policy, at which point dismissal will be considered.
Warning duration	Stage 2 warning remains live for 9 months

Stage 3

Trigger	Bradford Score is at least 150 points, and two further absences, or one absence of 10 days or more, has occurred during the live previous Stage 2 warning
Action	As Stage 1 & 2. Where the decision is to dismiss, the employee will be advised accordingly in writing and informed of the last day of service, setting out their appeal rights. Where a decision is taken not to dismiss at Stage 3, the employee will return to Stage 2 of the procedure and to their original Stage 2 warning, and its applicable expiry date. Where an employee fails to co-operate with efforts by the manager to establish the true medical position (for example – fails to attend OHU) a decision concerning future employment will be made based on the information currently available.
Note	During any stage of the formal process, where two same stage warnings (i.e. two Stage 1's) have been issued within the preceding two years, the formal procedure may be escalated automatically to the next stage if the sickness absence standards are breached.