



## ABSENCE POLICY (STAFF)

St. Aldhelm's Academy recognises that:

- The maintenance of high levels of attendance is essential in the planning and provision of cost effective and high quality services to young people and their families and in achieving high morale amongst employees.
- Low levels of attendance can have an adverse effect on the Academy's image and effectiveness leading to poor provision, low standards and low morale amongst both learners and staff.
- Adjustments need to be considered and, if reasonable, made for employees where illness or disability prevents them from performing the full range of duties associated with their post; this includes consideration of redeployment to a suitable alternative post where the employee is fit to undertake it.

### Principles

The Academy will continue to develop and review policies and procedures which encourage high levels of attendance and which reflect the following principles:

- Acceptance that the best results will be achieved where there is a commitment to securing high levels of attendance by employees, trade unions and management.
- Provision of appropriate information and training for employees and managers on relevant policies and procedures.
- Provision of suitable Occupational Health Services.
- Provision of appropriate health education including policies on smoking and the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse.
- Provision of welfare and counselling services.
- Co-operation with external agencies and specialists to explore and consider fully (and, if reasonable, secure) adjustments for employees where appropriate.
- Commitment to the provision of good working conditions and the maintenance of proper health and safety standards.
- Ensuring that policies and procedures provide for fair, consistent and sensitive treatment of employees.
- Providing a system that enables full consultation with employees and their representatives to explore ways of improving attendance.
- Ensuring that managers act firmly but fairly where there are abuses of the system; and,
- Provision to managers of prompt, accurate and comprehensive advice and information concerning attendance levels, trends and any problem areas.

## **Responsibilities**

Whilst the Academy is aware that most sickness absence is unavoidable, employees, managers and senior leaders are required to play their part in maintaining the highest possible level of attendance.

### Employees

Employees have a responsibility to the Academy to attend for work unless unable to do so for genuine reasons, to comply with the requirements of the Absence Reporting Procedure (see Appendix) and to comply with the provisions of the Occupational Sick pay scheme. The Academy has a responsibility to make payments to employees in accordance with their conditions of service and the statutory sick pay regulations.

Employees are required to cooperate with the Occupational Health Services provided by the Academy. Among other things, this will enable them to be fully consulted on the issues and have the opportunity for support and assistance to resume normal working at the earliest opportunity. It will also allow consideration to be given to making reasonable adjustments to facilitate their return to work.

### Managers

Each manager has a responsibility for the management of attendance in relation to employees under their direction. Each manager is required to make every effort to maintain the highest possible level of attendance.

In order to achieve this, each manager must seek appropriate advice from this document and the Academy's HR manager and act upon it without delay.

### Principal

The Principal (or other nominated member of staff) will monitor the level, cause and cost of sickness absence. Termly reports showing trends and costs of sickness absence will be produced by the HR Manager and shared with the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body.

## **Sickness and Disability Procedures**

### Reporting Absence

Staff must ensure that their absence is notified to the Principal (or nominated person) at the earliest opportunity, following the Academy's procedure (see Appendix), stating:

- The reasons for their absence.
- What steps they are taking to assist recovery.
- When they expect to attend work again, if known.

If the absence appears to be work related the HR manager will ensure that:

- Any health and safety reporting requirements have been met.
- Occupational Health have been involved if appropriate.
- Where necessary, any remedial action is taken.

- The Principal is kept up to date.

After 5 working days absence staff will present a medical certificate, prior to that self certification (i.e. informal notification is acceptable.) The Governors may elect to reduce the formal notification from 5 to 3 days in individual cases where formal concerns about an individual's health have been recorded and notified in accordance with this policy.

#### Return to Work

When a member of staff returns to work after any prolonged (i.e. absence requiring a medical certificate and/or identifying the academy as in part a cause) absence the Principal must make sure there is a return to work interview with the HR Manager to ascertain that:

- The employee is fit for work.
- Whether or not temporary adjustments of duties is appropriate.
- Whether or not any further steps are appropriate to reduce the risk of recurrence of the illness.

The Principal (or named person) is responsible for taking any appropriate action as a result of the return to work interview.

The member of staff is responsible for working in accordance with the return to work interview.

#### Informal Absence Review

This stage applies when an employee has had:

- Either: 15 or more working days absence due to sickness in the preceding 12 months:  
Or
- 3 absences due to sickness of whatever length within the preceding 6 months.

The Principal (or nominated person) must inform the employee that this stage in the procedure has been triggered.

In the case of continuous absence the Principal, or nominated person, must confirm the reason for absence. (This is triggered by a second (or any absence beyond 10 working days) medical certificate or upon any absence identifying the academy as a partial factor)

The Principal (or nominated person) must check with them whether or not there is a good prospect of recovery or return to work in no more than a week's time (in which case there may be no further action.)

The Principal (or nominated person) must check whether any facilities or actions are necessary to help speed the return. If any are identified these should be considered and formal action plans/risk assessments as appropriate be made and shared with the member of staff.

The Principal (or nominated person) must inform the employee that any absence beyond the further week will need to be considered under the formal absence review procedure.

The Principal (or nominated person) must, in the case of repeated absences, discuss with the employee whether there are any underlying factors causing the absences and whether or not there is anything that either the employer or employee can do to minimise the chance of repeated absences.

#### Formal Absence Review

This stage applies where the situation continues beyond the provisions of the informal stage above.

A representative nominated by the Principal must hold, if possible, a formal absence review meeting with the employee (this could be a home visit, with the employee's agreement). The member of staff is entitled to be accompanied by a representative. The purpose of this meeting is:

- For continued absence: (Exceeding 2 weeks in the first instance or a total of 15 working days within an academic year).
  - To explore the possibilities of a return to work and how workloads can be handled.
  - To consider and put into action reasonable adaptations that may be made to assist return.
  - To consult the employee about a referral to the Occupational Health Service.
- For repeated absences: (a third absence within a term of any length.)
  - To alert the employee to the difficulties caused by their absence.
  - To identify an underlying cause for the absences.
  - Where such cause may be work related, to make reasonable adaptations to the job/premises.
  - To consider referral to the Occupational Health Service.

**The employee must be told that this is the first formal stage of the absence monitoring procedure.**

In both cases a review meeting should be set (within one month). At this meeting the reviewer will decide:

That:

The employee's return to work/level of attendance is satisfactory, and the procedure can be halted at this stage but it may resume if a similar level of absence recurs within one year.

Or:

To arrange a further review meeting before the employee's sick leave expires when the Occupational Health Service envisages a return to work.

Or:

To give the employee a formal written notification that attendance is unsatisfactory and that the matter will progress to the next stage, final absence review, of the procedure.

The employee can appeal this decision, within one week of receiving it, to the Principal (if not the reviewer), or to a nominated Governor who is not a member of the dismissal or appeal committee of the governing body.

Where an appeal is upheld a further review meeting will be set and the procedure will resume at the formal stage.

### Final Absence Review

This stage applies where the employee has either no prospect of return within their period of paid sick leave or has an unacceptable continued absence or pattern of absences calling into question their capability to carry out the requirements of their employment.

The Principal or their nominee will, where possible hold a meeting with the employee to consider the prospects of the employee's return to work/ an acceptable level of attendance. Where he/she is not satisfied that the employee will achieve this within a reasonable time (one month), he/she Will:

- Explore the possibilities or redeployment/ setting down.
- Further consider any adaptations to the job or premises that will help the employee.
- Ensure that any reasonable adaptations are made.
- Set a review period (one month) within which time a return to work/acceptable level of attendance is achieved.
- Set the date for a further review meeting.

If the employee has returned to work/an acceptable level of attendance has been achieved the procedure can be halted at this stage but may be resumed if a similar level of absence recurs within one year.

Where the employee has not returned to work/ achieved an acceptable level of attendance by the time of the follow up meeting, the reviewer can give a final warning in writing. This should state that the situation is unacceptable and that the case will be passed to the Governors for consideration of their dismissal committee, unless the necessary improvement is achieved within a specified period (one month).

The employee can appeal this decision, within one week of receiving it, to the Principal, or to a nominated governor who is not a member of the dismissal or appeals committees of the governing body.

Where such an appeal is upheld a date for a further review will be set and the procedure will be resumed at the final stage.

### Consideration of Dismissal

Any such consideration will be by the Dismissal Committee of the Governing Body.

The grounds for consideration will be that the employee is incapable of fulfilling their duties by reason of continued absence/ absences following a final warning under this procedure.

The proceedings for the dismissal committee will be as under the Academy's disciplinary procedure.

The rights to appeal for the employee will be as set out for the Academy's disciplinary procedure.

Notes:

- The employee may be accompanied at any meeting held within the procedure by a friend or a union representative.
- The employee must be given at least one week's notice in writing of all meetings.
- Where, exceptionally, it is not possible to hold a meeting with the employee, they may authorise a union representative or friend to act on their behalf.
- The employee may also make written submissions at any stage.
- Any appeal within this procedure will normally be held within three weeks of being lodged.
- Reviewers must be particularly alert to the possibility that absence may be caused by a disability and consider getting specialist opinion.
- It is important that proper consideration is given to any case potentially caused by work related stress and professional advice should be taken in such cases.
- No action will be taken under the formal stages of this procedure against an accredited union representative until the circumstances have been discussed with a senior representative or paid official of the union concerned.
- In all cases involving potential referral to the dismissal committee advice should be taken from the HR/Personnel provider to the Academy.