



Sickness Absence Policy

1.0 - Policy Statement

1.1 - This Sickness Absence Policy sets out our procedures for reporting sickness absence and for the management of sickness absence in a fair and consistent way, in order to support employees to maximise attendance.

1.2 - Sickness absence can vary from short intermittent periods of ill-health to a continuous period of long-term absence and have a number of different causes (for example, injuries, recurring conditions, or a serious illness requiring lengthy treatment).

1.3 - We wish to ensure that the reasons for sickness absence are understood in each case and investigated where necessary. In addition, where needed and reasonably practicable, appropriate supportive measures will be provided to assist those who have been absent by reason of sickness to return to work.

2.0 - Who is covered by the policy?

2.1 - This policy covers all employees of Values Academy at all levels and grades, including members of the Senior Leadership team, NQT's, part-time and fixed-term employees.

3.0 - Disabilities

3.1 - We are aware that sickness absence may result from a disability. At each stage of the sickness absence meetings procedure (set out in paragraph 14 of this policy) and of the policy in general, particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the policy and procedure to assist an individual with a disability.

3.2 - If you consider that you are affected by a disability or any medical condition which affects your ability to undertake your work, you should inform your line manager or School Principal. In addition, consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the requirements of a job or other aspects of working arrangements that will provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.

4.0 - Sickness Absence Reporting Procedure

4.1 - If you are taken ill or injured while at work you should report or be taken to see your line manager, and for School Leaders, the School Principal, to ensure that the appropriate person is informed that you are leaving work, provided that you are fit to do so. Managers should contact the school office to make arrangements for anyone who is unwell to be accompanied home and to receive medical treatment where necessary. Injuries resulting from an accident at work should be recorded in accordance with the Health and Safety policy.

4.2 - If you cannot attend work because you are ill or injured you should normally telephone the main school telephone number and leave a message as early as possible (before 7.30 am. The following details should be provided:

- The nature of your illness or injury.
- Where possible, the expected length of your absence from work.
- Contact details.
- Any outstanding or urgent work that requires attention and if well enough and able to do so, teachers will need to email in cover work.

4.3 - If you have left a message, you should ring during normal school hours and make arrangements to speak with your line manager. Only in exceptional circumstances should someone else make this call on your behalf.

4.4 - Managers should ensure that:

- Any sickness absence that is notified to them is recorded and reported to the School Principal.
- Arrangements are made, where necessary, to cover work and to inform relevant colleagues (while maintaining confidentiality).

4.5 - You should expect to be contacted, if your absence extends beyond a few days, by your line manager or the School Principal, who will want to support you, enquire after your health and be advised, if possible, as to your expected return date. In the case of long term absence, such contact will be agreed between the member of staff and the school.

4.6 - In the case of long-term absence, particularly involving work-related stress and personal mental health issues, it may be more appropriate for contact to be made through your Trade Union representative or an appropriate third party.

4.7 - If you do not report for duty and have not notified the school of their absence, this will be considered an emergency situation and every effort will be made by the school to contact the member of staff without delay, including contacting their next of kin.

5.0 - Evidence of Incapacity

5.1 - For sickness absence of up to seven calendar days you must complete a self-certification form, which is available from the school office.

5.2 - For absence of more than a week you must obtain a certificate from your doctor (a "Statement of Fitness for Work") stating that you are not fit for work, and your GP will complete the reason(s) for you not being fit to work. This should be forwarded to the School Leader as soon as possible. If your absence continues, further medical certificates must be provided to cover the whole period of absence.

5.3 - If your doctor provides a certificate stating that you "may be fit for work" you should inform your line manager immediately. We will discuss with you any additional measures or adjustments that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your

doctor's advice. This may take place at a return to work interview (see paragraph 12.0) or following occupational health advice. If it is not possible to take appropriate measures to facilitate your return to work, we may need to consider a medical suspension of your duties – please see 7.0 for further details.

5.4 - Where we are concerned about the reason for absence, or frequent short-term absences, we may require a medical certificate for each absence regardless of its duration.

6.0 - Absence Due to Contact with Infectious Diseases

6.1 - If you are advised not to attend school by a medical practitioner because of contact with an infectious disease, you must inform the School Leader immediately.

7.0 - Medical Suspension

7.1 - In certain circumstances, where it is felt that you are not fit to attend work, the School Principal or CEO may suspend you on medical grounds. Any such suspension will be on your full normal pay. Suspension will be lifted, where appropriate, by the CEO only after advice has been sought from an Occupational Health Adviser.

8.0 - Unauthorised Absence

8.1 - Absence that has not been notified according to the sickness absence reporting procedure may be treated as unauthorised absence.

8.2 - Cases of unauthorised absence will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

8.3 - If you do not correctly follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy, your line manager, the School Principal or the School Business Manager will try to contact you, by telephone and in writing if necessary. This does not absolve you of the responsibility to report your absence.

9.0 - Statutory Sick Pay

9.1 - You may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if you satisfy the relevant statutory requirements. Qualifying days for SSP are Monday to Friday, or as set out in your employment contract. The rate of SSP is set by the Government in April each year. No SSP is payable for the first three consecutive days of absence. It starts on the fourth day of absence and may be payable for up to 28 weeks.

10.0 - Keeping in Contact During Absence

10.1 - If you are absent on sick leave you should expect to be contacted from time to time by your line manager, the School Principal or the School Business Manager in order to discuss your wellbeing, expected length of continued absence from work and any other

appropriate matters that may need attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and will be kept to a minimum.

10.2 - If you have any concerns while absent on sick leave, whether about the reason for your absence or your ability to return to work, you should feel free to contact your line manager, the School Principal or the School Business Manager as appropriate at any reasonable time.

11.0 - Medical Examinations

11.1 - We may ask you to consent to a medical examination by an Occupational Health Provider or a doctor nominated by us at our expense. You will be provided with a copy of the referral to the Occupational Health Provider

11.2 - You will be asked to agree that any report produced in connection with any such examination may be disclosed to us and that we may discuss the contents of the report with our advisers and the relevant doctor.

12.0 - Fit For Work service (FFW)

12.1 - Although we will generally use our own Occupational Health service, FFW is a government-funded occupational health assessment service. The service is intended to assist employees return to work, using a return-to-work plan where appropriate. If you want to know more about FFW please speak to your School Leader.

12.2 - Once you have been absent for four weeks, either we or your doctor may suggest referring you to FFW. Your doctor may do this before you have been absent for four weeks if they think it would be beneficial for you.

12.3 - If your doctor refers you to FFW please let the School Business Manager or School Principal know, unless you would prefer not to tell us. If your case manager at FFW wishes to speak to us, please ask them to contact the School Principal or School Business Manager.

13.0 - Return-to-Work Interviews

13.1 - If you have been absent on sick leave we will arrange for you to have a return-to-work interview with the School Leader or the School Principal. A record of the interview will be made on the Values Academy Return to Work Form (Appendix A).

13.2 - A return-to-work interview enables us to confirm the details of your absence and to consider any relevant adjustments or support that may be necessary for your return to work. It also gives you the opportunity to raise any concerns or questions you may have, and to bring any relevant matters to our attention.

13.3 - Where your doctor has provided a certificate stating that you "may be fit for work", we will usually hold a return-to-work interview with you to discuss any additional measures or adjustments that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your doctor's advice.

14.0 - Returning to Work from Long-Term Sickness Absence

14.1 - We are committed to helping members of staff return to work from long-term sickness absence. As part of our sickness absence meetings procedure (see paragraph 16) we will, where appropriate and possible, support returns to work by:

- Obtaining medical advice;
- Making reasonable adjustments to the workplace, working practices and working hours;
- Considering 'access to work' arrangements;
- Considering re-deployment;
- Agreeing a return to work programme with everyone affected, which could include a phased return; and/or
- Consider funding the reasonable cost of any appropriate short term therapy (e.g. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy).

14.2 - Values Academy recognises that there are financial benefits for an employee to remain in employment when diagnosed with a terminal illness. Therefore the Charity will not normally seek to dismiss an employee in these circumstances.

15.0 - Sickness Absence Meetings Procedure

15.1 - We may apply this procedure in the following circumstances, if you:

- Have been absent due to illness on 5 or more occasions of absence in a 6 month period;
- Have shown an unusual pattern of absence;
- Have raised matters at a return to work interview that require investigation; and/or
- Have been absent for more than 15 days continuously.

15.2 - Unless it is impractical to do so, we will give you five days' written notice of the date, time and place of a sickness absence meeting. We will put any concerns about your sickness absence and the basis for those concerns in writing or otherwise advise why the meeting is being called. A reasonable opportunity for you to consider this information before a meeting will be provided.

15.3 - The meeting will be conducted by the School Principal or the School Business Manager. You may bring a companion with you to the meeting. In the case of Stage 3 meetings, where dismissal could be a possible outcome, the meeting should be conducted by a person or committee of governors with delegated responsibility to dismiss.

15.4 - You must take all reasonable steps to attend such meetings. Failure to do so without good reason may be treated as misconduct. If you or your companion are unable to attend

at the time specified you should immediately inform the person who will be conducting the meeting, who will seek to agree an alternative time.

15.5 - Notes will be taken at each formal meeting.

15.6 - A meeting may be adjourned if the person conducting the meeting is awaiting receipt of information, needs to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at a previous meeting. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the meeting is reconvened.

15.7 - Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, the reasons for it and any right of appeal will be given to you in writing within five days of a sickness absence meeting (unless this time scale is not practicable, in which case it will be provided as soon as is practicable).

15.8 - If, at any time, your line manager, the School Principal or the School Business Manager considers that you have taken or are taking sickness absence when you are not unwell, they may refer matters to be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

16.0 - Right to be Accompanied at Sickness Absence Meetings

16.1 - You may bring a companion to any meeting or appeal meeting under this procedure.

16.2 - Your companion may be either a trade union representative¹ or a workplace colleague. Their identity must be confirmed to the person conducting the meeting within 24 hours of the meeting taking place.

16.3 - Employees are entitled to reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay to act as a companion. However, they are not obliged to act as a companion and may decline a request if they so wish.

16.4 - We may at our discretion, permit a companion who is not an employee or union representative (for example, a family member) to attend, where this will help overcome particular difficulties caused by a disability or difficulty understanding English.

16.5 - A companion may make representations, ask questions, and sum up your position, but will not be allowed to answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during a sickness absence meeting.

17.0 - Stage 1: First Sickness Absence Meeting

17.1 - This will follow the procedure set out in paragraphs 16 and 17 on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.

17.2 - The first sickness absence meeting may include discussions of:

- The reasons for absence.
- If you are on long-term sickness absence, the likely date of return to work.

¹ Defined as a representative of a trade union appearing on the Certification Officer's list of Trade Unions

- Where you have been absent on a number of occasions, determining the likelihood of further absences.
- Considering whether medical advice is required.
- Considering what, if any, measures and support might improve your health and/or attendance.
- Agreeing a way forward, including action that will be taken and a reasonable time-scale for review and/or a further meeting under the sickness absence procedure. In cases of a pattern of short term absences, the time-scale for review will not normally be less than 13 weeks. Time-scales for cases of long term absence will be dependent upon the circumstances.

18.0 - Stage 2: Further Sickness Absence Meeting(s)

18.1 - Depending on the matters discussed at the first stage of the sickness absence procedure, a further meeting or meetings may be necessary. Arrangements for meetings under the second stage of the sickness absence procedure will follow the procedure set out in paragraphs 16 and 17 on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.

18.2 - Any further meeting(s) may include discussions on:

- The reasons for and impact of your ongoing absence(s);
- Where you are on long-term sickness absence, how long your absence is likely to last;
- Where you have been absent on a number of occasions, the likelihood of further absences;
- Whether medical advice is required, if it has not already been obtained. If it has been obtained, considering the advice that has been given and whether further advice is required;
- Your ability to return to/remain in your job in view both of your capabilities and our business needs and any adjustments that can reasonably be made to your job to enable you to do so;
- Possible re-deployment opportunities and whether any adjustments can reasonably be made to assist in redeploying you;
- Where you are able to return from long-term sick leave, whether to your job or a redeployed job, agreeing a return to work programme;
- Whether there are any benefits for which you should be considered, if it is considered that you are unlikely to be able to return to work from long-term absence; and/or

- Agreeing a way forward, including action that will be taken and a reasonable time-scale for review and/or a further meeting(s). This may, depending on steps we have already taken, include warning you that you are at risk of dismissal.

19.0 - Stage 3: Final Sickness Absence Meeting

19.1 - Where you have been warned that you are at risk of dismissal, we may invite you to a meeting under the third stage of the sickness absence procedure. Arrangements for this meeting will follow the procedure set out in paragraphs 16 and 17 on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.

19.2 - The purposes of the meeting will be:

- To review the meetings that have taken place and matters discussed with you;
- Where you remain on long-term sickness absence, to consider whether there have been any changes since the last meeting under stage two of the procedure, either as regards your possible return to work or opportunities for return or re-deployment;
- To consider any further matters that you wish to raise;
- To consider whether there is a reasonable likelihood of you returning to work or achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time; and/or
- To consider the possible termination of your employment.

19.3 - Termination of employment will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice, and, if applicable, a payment for any outstanding annual leave entitlement.

20.0 - Appeals

20.1 - You may appeal against the outcome of any stage of this procedure and you may bring a companion to an appeal meeting (see paragraph 17).

20.2 - An appeal should be made in writing, stating the full grounds of appeal, to person named in the outcome letter within five days of the date on which the decision was sent to you.

20.3 - Unless it is not practicable, you will be given a week's written notice of an appeal meeting. Where the appeal is against dismissal, the hearing will be held as soon as possible. Any new matters raised in an appeal may delay an appeal meeting, if further investigation is required.

20.4 - You will be provided with written details of any new information which comes to light before an appeal meeting. You will also be given a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the meeting.

20.5 - Where practicable, an appeal meeting will be conducted by a governor or a manager senior to the individual who conducted the sickness absence meeting.

20.6 - Depending on the grounds of appeal, an appeal meeting may be a complete rehearing of the matter or a review of the original decision.

20.7 - Following an appeal the original decision may be confirmed, revoked or replaced with a lesser sanction. The final decision will be confirmed in writing, if possible within 10 working days of the appeal meeting. There will be no further right of appeal.

20.8 - The date that any dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of an appeal. However, if the appeal is successful, the decision to dismiss will be revoked with no loss of continuity of employment or pay.

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