



Special Partnership Trust



ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Managing Absence Policy

1. Background

- 1.1 From time-to-time employees may suffer ill health and it is essential that we care for them during this time. The quality of provision, the effectiveness of our services and our overall performance as a Special Partnership Trust depends on a reliable, motivated, and healthy workforce. Managing properly enables the Special Partnership Trust to care for its employees appropriately and maintain our high standards for learners. As part of the Special Partnership Trust Values, we aim to deal with absenteeism in an effective and sensitive way.
- 1.2 The Special Partnership Trust will always act within the law when managing absence and will always seek to make reasonable adjustments to retain staff and support attendance.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The aim is to provide a procedural framework to clarify the approach the Special Partnership Trust will take in addressing absenteeism and to assist managers with managing periods of absence of employees and supporting employees effectively to return to work.
- 2.2 Managing absence is not about punishing or penalising employees for being ill. It is about ensuring absence is dealt with sensitively, fairly, and effectively. There can be many causes of absence requiring different approaches. Where the absence is related to a disability, we would indicate this on our Absence Management System and would take this into consideration when reviewing attendance.

This policy applies to all SPT employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.

3. Reporting Absence

- 3.1 If you are absent for any reason you must speak to your line manager/designated officer to let them know of your absence. It is important that you speak to your line manager/designated officer in person via telephone so they can properly record your reasons for absence and discuss any support needed and work which needs to be covered. Texts or emails are not sufficient for reporting absence.

3.2 Staying in touch

It is important to stay in touch when you are absent from work. It is difficult to give an exact procedure for keeping in touch, but the general principle is that the Headteacher/managers and staff should stay in touch in a reasonable way during absence. When you speak to the designated officer to first report your absence you

should state how long you expect to be off. This will help to determine how often you should contact the school. The designated officer or your line manager may call you, for an update on your absence and any sickness your expected return to work date for example:

- If you expect your absence to be less than 3 days, then you should update the designated officer daily to enable the academy to effectively provide cover.
- If you expect that you will not be back for at least 4 days, then you should ring in on the day before your return to update the designated officer on your health and the need for cover.
- If you have been signed off work for two weeks you should contact the designated officer or your manager in the second week of absence to update on your health and return to work.
- If you are signed off work for more than 1 month you should agree a timescale for contacting your Head teacher/line manager

3.3 Payment

If you are absent from work through reasons of ill health you are entitled to a period of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). The level and amount of SSP is dependent on government rules at the time of absence. For full details of your sickness entitlement refer to your contract of employment. If you are absent from work for a period, which exceeds your full and half pay entitlements you may be eligible to a further period of state benefits (Statutory Sick Pay). If at any time you wish to know your remaining entitlement, please contact your designated officer or the current payroll provider – contact details of which can be obtained from your Finance Officer.

If you are absent for any other reason, please speak to your manager to discuss the rules around payment.

3.4 Medical Certification and Medical Opinion

If your sickness is for more than four days but less than eight days (including weekends and bank holidays) you must complete a self-certification form and return it to the designated officer. If your absence is for eight days or more, then you must obtain a medical certificate from your GP or other appropriate Doctor and send this to the designated officer. Sickness certification is required to receive payment during sickness absence.

During prolonged absence from ill health or continuous or recurring absences, the Special Partnership Trust may seek an independent medical opinion as to the capability to fulfil your contract of employment. Consenting to such requests and attending Occupational Health appointments is a requirement of the occupational sick pay scheme. Non-compliance may result in the suspension from the occupational sick pay.



3.5 Infectious Diseases

If you are aware that you are suffering from, or in contact with somebody who is suffering from, an infectious disease, you should inform the designated officer or your line manager as soon as reasonably practicable. The Special Partnership Trust may at its discretion and after taking appropriate medical advice require you not to attend your workplace to prevent the spread of the disease.

4. Absence management procedure

4.1 General

For the purposes of this document, we have categorised absence into 3 types that predominantly occur. The types of absence are:

- Long-term absence.
- Short-term intermittent absence.
- Unauthorised absence.

The designated officer's responsibility alongside the Headteacher is to assess what effect absence has on the school or Trust, NOT to have a discussion with the individual about the validity of the absence. In terms of dealing with absence each case should be taken on its merits. Further information or clarification, advice or guidance is available from the Special Partnership Trust HR Advisor.

4.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Below is a list of responsibilities and who should undertake them:

4.2.1 Manager/Headteacher

- To ensure that employees' attendance records are up to date.
- To ensure that employees follow the notification procedure when reporting in sick.
- To ensure that appropriate notes recording the date and time of discussions are kept, together with any action agreed and kept on file. A standard SPT template will be used across the Trust to record absence and keep a summary of calls/actions
- To progress the matter without delay where they are concerned or dissatisfied with the employee's explanation of the absence by following the appropriate policy or procedure.

4.2.2 Admin Manager/Designated Officer

- To keep records of all meetings produced by line management up-to-date and available from the employee's personnel file.
- To analyse on a regular basis reasons for absence, these may be symptomatic of underlying causes and may give positive courses of action.

4.2.3 Staff Members

- To take all reasonable steps to maintain / improve attendance at work
- To notify their line manager of any absence in line with Special Partnership Trust policy
- To engage in the absence management process in a timely way including returning consent forms, attending occupational health appointments, acknowledging meeting invites and attending meetings

4.3 Training in Managing Absence

It will be a requirement for all those who manage employees to attend a training course in Managing Absence arranged by the Special Partnership Trust. In addition, managers should also familiarise themselves with this document and ensure that staff members know their responsibilities when reporting in absent.

4.4 Undertaking Absence Management Interviews

An absence management interview is an opportunity for the manager to ascertain the reason for the absence and the likelihood of the absence re-occurring. Furthermore, the manager must be assured that the employee is well enough to work and whether that work is on normal day-to-day duties or on an adjusted role. A Return-to-Work interview should be conducted after a member of staff has had 5 consecutive days of absence (or the equivalent of 1 week for part-time employees). The general factors that occur with each type of absence that you are likely to deal with are as follows:

- Establishing the reasons for absence.
- Analysis of the information for the records to determine incidence patterns, levels etc.
- Obtaining a suitable medical opinion where appropriate.
- The necessary requirements to follow procedure.

4.5 Other Considerations

From time-to-time employees may experience difficulties in balancing work and home pressures, leading to sickness absence. If managers become aware that such factors may be causing sickness absence, please contact the Head Teacher. Staff should also be made aware of the various health and wellbeing support that is available for them to access as part of the Special Partnership Trust's benefits package. If you have a concern about an employee's welfare, please consult the Headteacher or the Director of the Trust. It is essential for this process to be managed effectively and consistently.

5. Managing long term absence

5.1 Absence Management Meetings

As a guide, long-term absence can be defined as a member of staff being off work for a period of four or more weeks. When a member of staff is absent from work it is important that they engage with the Academy. The Academy has a responsibility to consult staff about their absence and to ensure meetings are offered at times and venues that are suitable and staff have a responsibility to attend such meetings. The Academy will seek to discuss with staff about their health issues and any reasonable measures that can be put in place to facilitate a supported phased return or full return to work; however, if a member of staff unreasonably refuses to attend meetings the Academy may hold meetings in their absence. It is also a condition of the Occupational Sick Pay Scheme that staff members do not unreasonably refuse to attend meetings including those with Occupational Health.

5.2 Occupational Health Referral

Where a staff member has been absent for four consecutive weeks the line manager should invite the staff member to attend a formal meeting to review the absence. For management of intermittent absence, see point 6. Advice may be required from the Occupational Health service regarding:

- Likelihood of return to work.
- Capability on return.
- Adaptations that will require you to plan for on their return to work.
- Timescales of return to work.
- Support for an early but safe return to work.

In some cases, it may be necessary to try to adapt the job and put in place reasonable adjustments.

5.3 No reasonable expectation of return within a reasonable time scale

In respect of long-term absences, the Academy will balance the length of time the employee has been absent with the future prognosis and expected return date on a case-by-case basis. If there is no reasonable expectation of return within a reasonable time scale it may be appropriate to consider termination of employment on the grounds of ill health.

5.4 Phased Return

Where an employee is signed as fit for some work and a phased return by their doctor the Special Partnership Trust may agree a phased return to work if this can be reasonably accommodated. A phased return will normally be for 2 - 4 weeks and for a maximum of 6 weeks unless agreed by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or HR Advisor. During a phased return to work the manager and employee may agree a progressive increase in hours or duties. Payment for the phased return to work period will be in line with our Sick Pay Scheme. (i.e. If your phased return is

during the period of “full pay” entitlement you will continue to be paid at full pay. If your phased return is during a period of “half pay” entitlement you will be paid at half pay until such time as your hours worked exceed your pay entitlement. At which point you will be paid for hours worked. Your line manager/designated officer will record the agreed hours/period of your phased return and notify payroll.

6. Managing intermittent absence

6.1 Absence Triggers

Monthly absence trends will be monitored by the Special Partnership Trust management team. Absence triggers will be based around the “Bradford Scoring Factor”. The Bradford Scoring Factor relates to the 52 weeks preceding the last period of absence. This is one indicator; other factors may equally be relevant and attendance over a longer period of time will also be taken into consideration.

The Bradford Scoring Factor identifies persistent short-term absence for employees, by measuring the number of spells of absence, and is therefore a useful measure of the disruption caused by this type of absence. It is calculated as follows:

‘The number of ‘spells’ of absence squared, multiplied by the number of days absent.’

$S \times S \times D$

Where S = number of spells of absence in 52 weeks taken by an individual and
D = number of days of absence in 52 weeks taken by that individual

For example:

10 one-day absences: $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1,000$

1 ten-day absence: $1 \times 1 \times 10 = 10$

5 two-day absences: $5 \times 5 \times 10 = 250$

2 five-day absences: $2 \times 2 \times 10 = 40$

Trustees have set an ‘alert’ within the Bradford Scoring Factor to aid the monitoring process.

If a staff member reaches a Bradford Scoring Factor of 150, they should be invited to an informal meeting. The Headteacher will meet with the staff member to discuss their attendance at work and to see how the Special Partnership Trust can support the staff member.

The aim of informal absence management meetings is to help the staff member to improve their attendance at work. At all times during the absence management process managers must consider the need for reasonable adjustments for staff with a disability and for staff whose absence is pregnancy related. Managers should take into consideration the need for independent medical advice and speak to the Head

Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or HR Advisor if absence is, or may be, related to a disability.

If a staff members attendance does not improve and/or reaches a Bradford Scoring Factor of 250 (or above), they will then be invited to a formal meeting (First Stage) with the Headteacher to discuss the issues that have resulted in this score. For further information please see section 6.3 below.

6.2 Related episodes

Intermittent absences which are related to one reason may require a referral to Occupational Health to obtain further information on the condition and how the school/Trust may support an improvement in attendance.

6.3 Absence Meetings Procedure

Unless it is impractical to do so, we will give you [5] days' written notice of the date, time, and place of a meeting.

You must take all reasonable steps to attend a meeting. 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 [NAME/POSITION] who will seek to agree an alternative time.

A meeting may be adjourned if the [POSITION] 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.

Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, the reasons for it, and of the right to appeal will be given to you in writing within [5] days of the meeting (unless this time scale is not practicable, in which case it will be provided as soon as practicable).

If, at any time, the [POSITION] 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 Trusts disciplinary procedure.

Formal Meetings

Formal Meeting – first stage

If absence is persistently high (see 6.1) the Headteacher (or line manager) should invite the staff member to a formal meeting. The staff member has a right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work-based colleague. A HR Consultant may also be present in formal meetings in a supportive capacity. The

staff member should be given the chance to outline the reasons why absence levels are so high. Outcomes of a first formal meeting may include:

- a referral to Occupational Health
- an agreed change to working hours or times
- a request for flexible working
- targets for attendance
- agreed reasonable adjustments for a disability
- a formal capability warning

If a warning is given the staff member can appeal against the decision in writing to the Headteacher within five working days.

Formal Meeting – second stage (possible final warning)

If absence levels continue to be high (see 6.1) the Headteacher or line manager should invite the staff member to a formal meeting to discuss absence levels. Outcomes of the formal meeting may be a referral to Occupational Health and/or:

- Consideration of Occupational Health report (where one has been obtained)
- An agreed change to working hours or times
- A request for flexible working
- Targets for attendance
- Agreed reasonable adjustments for a disability
- Extension of formal warning
- A final capability warning

A final written warning would be issued in cases where a previous live (within the past 12 months) written warning has already been issued. The staff member can appeal against the decision in writing to the Head Teacher within five working days.

Formal Meeting – third stage (possible dismissal)

If absence levels continue to be high (see 6.1) the staff member should be invited to a formal meeting with a Headteacher/CEO to discuss absence levels. The purpose 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 the second stage, either as regards to possible return to work or opportunities for return or redeployment
- To consider any further matters that you wish to raise
- To consider the possible termination of your employment.

Outcomes of the formal meeting may be:

- a re-referral to Occupational Health
- an agreed change to working hours or times
- a request for flexible working
- further targets for attendance
- agreed reasonable adjustments for a disability
- Dismissal

Where dismissal is the outcome the staff member can appeal against the decision in writing to the CEO/someone who didn't hold the third stage meeting within five working days. Dismissal and appeal against dismissal will follow the Special Partnership Trust Dismissal procedure.

7. Absence recording

7.1 Absence data is recorded on an Absence Management System. We would also indicate on our Absence Management System where the absence is related to a registered disability, and this would be taken into consideration when reviewing attendance.

7.2 It is the responsibility of Headteachers to keep ongoing records of all correspondence and conversations related to absence. It is important when recording or keeping data relating to either absence or accident reports that the requirements of the Data Protection code of practice are adhered to.

8. Occupational health service referrals

8.1 If an employee is having difficulty carrying out their normal duties because of health problems it is sensible for either party to initiate communication at an early stage to prevent chronic problems. Discussions should take place between the designated officer and employee to see if there are any simple adaptations that can be made to ease the problem, as it may be a difficulty which can be easily dealt with through mutual agreement. Dealing effectively with absence and health problems, which affect the employee's capacity to work and/or capability to perform their role/responsibilities, often requires intervention from an Occupational Health service. Early referral is encouraged to prevent the development of chronic problems as proactive management can promote positive outcomes.

8.2 The manager must inform the employee concerned that they are to be referred to the Occupational Health service for assessment and why, and seek their consent to do so. The manager should contact the designated officer who will liaise with the HR Advisor to complete the referral.

8.3 Once an appointment has been agreed employees have a duty to attend the Occupational Health service appointment when asked to by the Special Partnership Trust. Whilst the Special Partnership Trust accepts the need to change appointments, failure to attend without notice or on a second occasion with notice may result in disciplinary action including suspension of occupational sick pay. If, for any reason, the employee finds it difficult to attend the appointment, they should

discuss this with Occupational Health (in advance of the meeting date) to see if alternative arrangements or venues can be agreed. After the employee has been seen by Occupational Health service a response/report will be returned to the designated officer. A copy is retained on the employee's record and a copy is sent to the employee.

9. Sickiness during annual leave

- 9.1** Employees, who are on sick leave, will accrue the appropriate statutory minimum holiday entitlement
- 9.2** The Special Partnership Trust will comply with all statutory requests to reinstate holiday if a staff member becomes sick whilst on holiday.

Note: For the purposes of this policy document – 'designated officer' refers to the person who has been given the responsibility of recording/managing absence within the Academy

