

Sickness Absence Policy

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1.0 Policy statement

- 1.1 This policy sets out our procedures for reporting sickness absence and for the management of sickness absence in a fair and consistent way.
- 1.2 Sickness absence can vary from short, intermittent periods of ill health to a continuous period of long-term absence, and it can 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, measures will be taken to assist those who have been absent by reason of sickness to return to work.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time following consultation. We may also vary the procedures set out in this policy, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case.

2.0 Scope and purpose of this policy

- 2.1 This policy covers all employees at all levels and grades, regardless of status.
- 2.2 The purpose of the policy is to ensure that staff understand the expectations of Dixons Academies Charitable Trust in terms of attendance at work. In applying this policy, we aim to ensure that attendance is managed appropriately and consistently and that employees receive relevant support.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 Short-term sickness absence: any absence that lasts between one half day and 10 working days.
- 3.2 Long-term sickness absence: any absence that lasts for a continuous period of longer than 10 working days.

4.0 Disabilities

- 4.1 We are aware that sickness absence may result from a disability. At each stage of the sickness absence meetings procedure (set out in paragraph 15 of this policy), particular 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.
- 4.2 If you consider that you are affected by a disability or any medical condition that affects your ability to undertake your work, you should inform the Operations and Business Manager or the Principal.

5.0 Sickness absence reporting procedure

- 5.1 All employees are required to follow the reporting procedure set out below.
- 5.2 If you are taken ill or injured while at work, you should report this to the Operations and Business Manager or the Principal's PA. Arrangements will be made for anyone who is unwell to be accompanied home or to receive medical treatment where necessary.
- 5.3 If you cannot attend work because you are ill or injured, you should normally telephone your line manager and HR Admin as early as possible and no later than 7.30am. Teaching staff must make arrangements for cover with the appropriate person within the academy. The following details should be provided:
 - the nature of your illness or injury
 - the expected length of your absence from work
 - contact details
 - any outstanding or urgent work that requires attention, including information in relation to pupil work that needs covering
- 5.4 Contact by text message or email is not acceptable.
- 5.5 Managers should ensure that:
 - any sickness absence that is notified to them is recorded and reported to the relevant person overseeing sickness management
 - arrangements are made, where necessary, to cover work and to inform colleagues (while maintaining confidentiality)
- 5.6 You should expect to be contacted during your absence by your manager or the Operations and Business Manager, who will want to enquire after your health and be advised, if possible, as to your expected date of return.



6.0 Evidence of incapacity

- 6.1 For sickness absence of up to seven calendar days you must complete a self-certification form, which is available from your line manager or HR Admin.
- 6.2 For absence of more than a week you must obtain a certificate from your doctor stating that you are not fit for work and the reason(s) why. This should be forwarded to HR Admin as soon as possible. If your absence continues, further medical certificates must be provided to cover the whole period of absence.
- 6.3 If your doctor provides a certificate stating that you 'may be fit for work' you should inform your line manager or the Operations and Business Manager immediately. We will discuss with you any additional measures 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 11.1). If appropriate measures cannot be taken, you will remain on sick leave and we will set a date to review the situation.
- 6.4 Where we are concerned about the reason for absence, or frequent short-term absence, we may require a medical certificate for each absence, regardless of duration. In such circumstances we will cover any costs incurred in obtaining such medical certificates, for absences of a week or less, on production of a doctor's invoice.
- 6.5 Where an employee is absent immediately prior to an academy closure period, the employee will continue to be deemed as being absent for the purposes of recording sickness and statutory and / or contractual sick pay during the academy closure period, unless the employee provides a fit note indicating he or she is fit to return to work. The cost of the fit note will be covered by the academy if applicable.

7.0 Unauthorised absence

- 7.1 Cases of unauthorised absence will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.
- 7.2 Absence that has not been notified according to the sickness absence reporting procedure will be treated as unauthorised absence.
- 7.3 If you do not report for work and have not telephoned your line manager or HR Admin to explain the reason for your absence, your line manager or the Operations and Business Manager will try to contact you, by telephone and in writing if necessary. This should not be treated as a substitute for reporting sickness absence.

8.0 Sick pay

- 8.1 You should refer to your contract for details of the sick pay to which you are entitled.
- 8.2 If a period of sickness absence is, or appears to be, occasioned by actionable negligence, nuisance, or breach of any statutory duty on the part of a third party, in respect of which damages are or may be recoverable, you must immediately notify the Principal of that fact and of any claim, compromise, settlement, or judgement made or awarded in connection with it and all relevant particulars that we may reasonably require. If we require you to do so, you must cooperate in any related legal proceedings and refund to us that part of any damages or compensation you recover that relates to lost earnings for the period of sickness absence as we may reasonably determine, less any costs you incurred in connection with the recovery of such damages or compensation, provided that the amount to be refunded to us shall not exceed the total amount we paid to you in respect of the period of sickness absence.
- 8.3 Failure to properly report your absence or to provide medical or self-certification could lead to your pay being suspended.

9.0 Keeping in contact during sickness absence

- 9.1 If you are absent on sick leave, you should expect to be contacted from time to time in order to discuss your well-being, expected length of continued absence from work, and any of your work that requires attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and will be kept to a reasonable minimum.
- 9.2 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 or the Operations and Business Manager at any time.

10.0 Medical examinations

- 10.1 We may, at any time in operating this policy, ask you to consent to a medical examination by our occupational health provider or a doctor nominated by us (at our expense).
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 Failure to agree to a reasonable request may be considered under the Disciplinary Policy.
- 10.4 In the event of a difference of opinion between an employee's GP and the academy's occupational health advisors regarding an employee's fitness for work, functional capacity, or the existence of an underlying medical condition contributing towards persistent absences, the OH advisor's advice will normally take precedence. In some cases, an independent medical advisor may be asked to give a second opinion.

11.0 Return-to-work interviews

- 11.1 We will arrange for you to have a return-to-work interview following any period of absence with either your line manager or that person's representative.
- 11.2 A return-to-work interview enables us to confirm the details of your absence. It also gives you the opportunity to raise any concerns or questions you may have, and to bring any relevant matters to our attention.
- 11.3 When your doctor has provided a certificate stating that you 'may be fit for work' we will usually hold a return-to-work interview to discuss any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your doctor's advice.

12.0 Returning to work from long-term sickness absence

- 12.1 We are committed to helping employees return to work from long-term sickness absence. As part of our sickness absence meetings procedure (see paragraph 13.5), 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, including a time-limited phased return to work
 - considering redeployment
 - agreeing to a return-to-work programme with everyone affected

13.0 Sickness absence meetings procedure

- 13.1 We may apply this procedure whenever we consider it necessary, including for example if you:
- have been absent due to illness on a number of occasions
 - have discussed matters at a return-to-work interview that require investigation
 - have been absent for six or more days in any rolling 12 months, or for three or more occasions in any rolling 12-month period
 - persistently fall just below the trigger points under item (c) and where absence is perceived to be a problem
 - have absences following a period of monitoring, even if they do not hit the six days or three occasions trigger points under item (c)
 - reach a trigger point under item (c) using the Bradford Factor calculation
 - exhibit any other pattern that causes concern
- The above are pro rata for part-time employees and indicate whether the employee can render reliable service.
- 13.2 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.
- 13.3 The meeting will be conducted by your line manager or the Operations and Business Manager. You may bring a companion with you to the meeting (see paragraph 14).
- 13.4 You must take all reasonable steps to attend the sickness absence 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 your line manager or the Operations and Business Manager, who will seek to identify an alternative time.
- 13.5 A meeting may be adjourned if your line manager or the Operations and Business Manager is awaiting receipt of information, needs to gather any further information, or needs to 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.
- 13.6 Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, the reasons for it, and of the 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).
- 13.7 Formal warnings issued for short-term sickness will remain live for a period of 12 months from the date of issue, during which time further absences beyond the review period would be dealt with at the same stage of the procedure.
- 13.8 If, at any time, we consider that you have taken or are taking sickness absence when you are not unwell, we may refer matters to be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

14.0 Right to be accompanied at meetings

- 14.1 You may bring a companion to any meeting or appeal meeting under this procedure.
- 14.2 Your companion may be either a trade union representative or a work colleague. You should provide details about that individual to the person conducting the meeting, in good time before it takes place.
- 14.3 Employees are allowed 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.

- 14.4 Some companions may not be allowed; for example, these would include anyone who may have a conflict of interest or whose presence may prejudice a meeting.
- 14.5 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 meeting.

15.0 Stage 1: first sickness absence meeting

- 15.1 This will follow the procedure set out in paragraphs 13 and 14 on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.
- 15.2 The purposes of a first sickness absence meeting may include:
- discussing the reasons for absence
 - in cases of long-term sickness absence, determining how long the absence is likely to last
 - in cases when you have been absent on a number of occasions, determining the likelihood of further absences
 - considering whether medical advice is required or, if already obtained, what that advice is
 - considering what, if any, measures might improve your health and/or attendance
 - determining a way forward, action that will be taken, and a timescale for review and / or a further meeting under the sickness absence procedure
 - issuing a written warning that your employment may be at risk if your attendance does not improve

16.0 Stage 2: further sickness absence meeting(s)

- 16.1 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 13 and 14 on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.
- 16.2 The purposes of further meeting(s) may include:
- discussing the reasons for and impact of your ongoing absence(s)
 - in cases of long-term sickness absence, discussing how long your absence is likely to last
 - in cases when you have been absent on a number of occasions, discussing the likelihood of further absences
 - if it has not been obtained, considering whether medical advice is required. If it has been obtained, considering the advice that has been given and whether further advice is required
 - considering your ability to return to / remain in your job in view of both your capabilities and the needs of the Trust, and any adjustments that can reasonably be made to your job to enable you to do so
 - considering possible redeployment opportunities and whether any adjustments can reasonably be made to assist in redeploying you
 - in cases when you are able to return from long-term sick leave, whether to your job or a redeployed job, agreeing to a return-to-work programme.
 - If it is considered that you are unlikely to be able to return to work from long-term absence, whether there are any benefits for which you should be considered
 - determining a way forward, action that will be taken, and a timescale 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
 - issuing a final written warning that your employment may be at risk if your attendance does not improve or you do not return to work

17.0 Stage 3: final sickness absence meeting

- 17.1 When you have been warned that you are at risk of dismissal and the necessary improvement has not been made, 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 13 and 14 on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.
- 17.2 The purposes of the meeting will be:
- to review the meetings that have taken place, the matters discussed, and the warnings issued
 - in cases when 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 redeployment
 - to consider any further matters that you wish to raise
 - to consider whether there is a reasonable likelihood of your returning to work or achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time
 - to consider the possible termination of your employment

17.3 Termination will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice.

18.0 Appeals

- 18.1 You may appeal against the outcome of any stage of this procedure, and you may bring a companion to an appeal meeting (see paragraph 14).
- 18.2 An appeal should be made in writing, stating the full grounds of appeal, to the Principal within five days of the date on which the decision was sent to you.
- 18.3 Unless it is not practicable, you will be given five days' written notice of an appeal meeting. In cases of dismissal the appeal will be held as soon as possible. Any new matters raised in an appeal may delay an appeal meeting if further investigation is required.
- 18.4 You will be provided with written details of any new information that comes to light before an appeal meeting. You will also be given a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the meeting.
- 18.5 Where practicable, an appeal meeting will be conducted by the Principal or a manager senior to the individual who conducted the sickness absence meeting.
- 18.6 Depending on the grounds of appeal, an appeal meeting may be a complete rehearing of the matter or a review of the original decision.
- 18.7 Following an appeal, the original decision may be confirmed, revoked, or replaced with a different decision. The final decision will be confirmed in writing, if possible within five days of the appeal meeting. There will be no further right of appeal.
- 18.8 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 or pay.

19.0 Review of policy

- 19.1 The Executive will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy on an annual basis to ensure it is working effectively and conforms to current legislation and HR advice. Any revisions will be presented to the Trust board for approval.