



KINGS ACADEMY TRUST STAFF ATTENDANCE POLICY

JANUARY 2026

1. Introduction

This policy supports Kings Academy Trust employees with absence from work. The policy deals with absence however there may be occasions when it is appropriate to consider an employees' overall attendance in conjunction with other policies such as the special leave, unpaid leave policies etc. Whilst some degree of illness is inevitable it is important that efforts are made to manage the health & wellbeing of all staff.

The following principles are intended to Kings Academy Trust in the application of a consistent and fair approach to monitoring, managing and improving the health & wellbeing of staff and as a result improving attendance levels of all employees. The emphasis must be on both the needs of the business and the health & wellbeing of the employee.

There are many factors that can affect an employee's attendance; Kings Academy Trust is committed to ensuring staff can maintain their Health and attendance in the work place by:

- • promoting a positive attendance culture
- • promoting health & wellbeing
- • supporting staff at all times to ensure high levels of attendance
- • supporting managers to actively promote an inclusive workplace
- • assisting managers to actively support the health & wellbeing of staff

It is also expected that employees will actively work with managers to improve the overall health & wellbeing of themselves and others. All employees should strive to ensure they are fit to carry out their duties and not knowingly place themselves in a situation that could have a negative impact on their health & wellbeing and their attendance at work.

Employee absence will be considered in a holistic way taking in to account all absences and appropriate action will be taken when absence becomes a cause for concern. There will also be occasions when an employee's absence record needs to be considered as a whole taking account of the overall impact of the absences upon both service delivery and their colleagues.

It should be emphasised that at all stages in dealing with sickness absence, communication with the employee is essential and employees are required to engage with the attendance policy and communicate with managers throughout any absence to ensure managers can effectively manage service delivery.

Certain sickness absences will have to be handled particularly carefully and sensitively according to individual circumstances, eg serious illness. It will not always be appropriate to deal with such cases under the policy.

2. Employee/management support

2.1 Occupational health

The primary purpose of the occupational health unit is to provide medical advice and information to Kings Academy Trust in cases of sickness absence so managers can assess how to manage the absence. They are expected to provide advice on the likely prognosis and the range of options available for both the employee and the employer.

Referral to occupational health can be made directly by managers. This must be accompanied by details of the employee's past absence, and a copy of the employee's job description.

Occupational health should be used positively to not only assist the employee in returning but where appropriate to help an employee remain in work and where appropriate provide managers with information on the likelihood of further absences or a potential date of return to work, and steps necessary to facilitate a return to work including reasonable adjustments in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. A referral should not be considered as a punitive action against the employee for their absence it is a means of providing support and advice to enable a successful return or prevent absence in the first place.

Employees may wish to 'self refer' to occupational health should they feel the need for support. The employee should contact their manager to arrange a referral.

2.2 Additional Wellbeing Services Kings Academy Trust provides an additional confidential and free of charge employee wellbeing service through **Health Assured Wisdom Wellbeing**; this includes access to;

- 24/7 confidential helpline for you and your immediate family
 - Counselling (face-to-face, telephone, and online)
 - Bereavement support and legal guidance
 - Medical information and advice from qualified nurses
 - Financial wellbeing and consumer advice
 - Stress and anxiety management
 - Childcare and housing support
 - Online CBT modules and wellbeing resources

For a full overview of the service provided, staff can visit the website <https://www.healthassured.org/> or download the Wisdom app.

2.3 Return to Work Meeting

Managers are responsible for ensuring the health & wellbeing of their staff at all times. The return to work interview constitutes only a part of this responsibility and allows managers to offer assistance and support to staff at an early stage. Following all absences arrangements should be made for employees to speak to their line manager on their first day back from a period of sickness absence, who will conduct a return to work meeting.

This meeting is undertaken as part of the normal management of staff. If necessary a separate meeting should be held if as a result of the absence the employee's absence has cause for concern or if the employee's absence is already under review.

3. Procedure for Dealing with Absence

Persistent absence can cause major disruption to service delivery in particular incidences of uncertified absences where there is no underlying cause, whilst it is

understood that most employees will have occasional absence due to minor ailments the need to manage these incidences effectively is key to maintaining service delivery. Cause for concern will arise where the frequency of such absences is excessive and/or causing operational difficulties.

Managers will take an overall view of an employee's absence, when it is considered that absence has become a cause for concern then this procedure will be implemented.

Some examples of when an employee's absence may be considered to be of concern are given below; this list is not exhaustive.

- • recognisable patterns of absence eg on Fridays and/or Mondays
- • where there are periods of absence following school holidays
- • where there is an increase in absence following expiry of a review period or an attendance monitoring warning

- • absent same time of year every year
- • mixture of short term and longer term absences
- • sickness absence exceeding three weeks in a rolling 12 months (certified and self-certified).

It is acknowledged that such causes for concern may be for genuine reasons and employees will have the opportunity to discuss this with their manager at a return to work interview before any decision is made to issue a stage 1 notice. It may be that as a result of that discussion, a decision will be made that the reasons for the absence are better dealt with without reference to the absence management policy.

It can be anticipated that some employees may be upset that their sickness absence is being questioned, but it should be explained that this is part of the schools agreed procedure on monitoring absence and health & wellbeing (occupational health). It is, therefore, important that the monitoring is applied to all staff and the procedure is applied fairly and consistently, however

consideration should always be given to an employee's historical sickness and the nature of the illness when implementing the policy.

It should also be noted that when dealing with long term sickness absence this can be distressing for the employee concerned and contact between the manager and member of staff should therefore be handled sensitively. A balance needs to be struck between the moral support/welfare role and that needed to establish the level and duration of cover required. Cover arrangements can only be managed properly if all concerned have an indication of the length of time involved.

Before moving to the formal process managers should ensure that staff have been made aware at return to work interviews of the possible outcome of further absences. Early intervention with employees can prevent further absences, thus removing the need to progress to formal action.

If an employee has a disability or long term condition as defined by the Equalities Act 2010, this should be taken into consideration when considering moving to the formal process.

Monitoring Process

3.1 Stage 1 – notice to improve

If following informal discussions with an employee their absence remains a cause for concern a meeting should be arranged with the employee and the manager to discuss the employee's absence. This meeting should be confirmed in writing (see guidance) setting out the absences to be discussed. This is not a disciplinary interview, although the employee should be advised of the right to be accompanied by a representative or colleague. Employees should be given a copy of this procedure prior to the meeting.

At a stage 1 meeting an employee may be issued with a notice of improvement for a period of six months. At the end of the review period a meeting should be arranged with the employee (review meetings may take place before the end of the six months). If there have been no absences during the review period, or there has been an acceptable improvement during the review period, then the procedure should be terminated. If however there have been further absences, a further review period may

be set at Stage 1 or the process could move to stage two (see model letter in guidance).

In circumstances where the employee remains continually absent for an extended period regular review meetings will be held in line with individual circumstances (all factors should be taken into consideration, see guidance), and where the absence is causing concern progression to the next stage may take place before the end of the six month improvement notice.

3.2 Stage 2 – notice to improve

If during the stage 1 notice to improve period there is not an acceptable improvement the employee will be invited to a stage 2 meeting. The employee should be advised of the right to be accompanied by a representative or colleague at this meeting.

At the stage 2 meeting a notice of improvement may be issued for a further six months failure to improve during this period may lead to being moved to a Stage 3.

Stage 2 - Review

At the end of the review period a meeting should be arranged with the employee (review meetings may take place before the end of the six months improvement notice where there is cause for concern following further absences during the review period). If at the stage two review meeting it is accepted that the absence record has improved significantly, the manager may decide to terminate the use of the procedure or agree a further review period at stage two. If however, there have been further absences or there has been little or no improvement a decision may be taken to move to stage three.

Note: If the decision is taken to terminate the use of the procedure at the stage two review any further problems arising from absence within 12 months will be dealt with at stage two (see guidance).

In circumstances where the employee remains continually absent for an extended period regular review meetings will be held in line with individual circumstances (all factors should be taken into consideration, see guidance), and where the absence is

causing concern progression to the next stage may take place before the end of the six month improvement notice.

3.3 Stage 3 – Review meeting

If during the stage two notice to improve period and following a review there is not an acceptable improvement in attendance or there have been further absences the employee will be invited to stage three meeting. The employee should be advised of the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at this meeting and a HR representative may also attend this meeting if requested.

The employee should be issued with a letter confirming the details of the interview and informing them of the consequences of failing to improve their sickness record ie a formal hearing which could result in dismissal on the grounds of ill health capability (see guidance).

If at the stage 3 review it is accepted that attendance has improved significantly, the manager may decide to terminate the use of the procedure or agree a further review at stage 3.

Note: If the decision is taken to terminate the use of the procedure at the stage three review any further problems arising from absence within 12 months will be dealt with at stage three.

If at stage three there has been no improvement in absence levels and attendance and/or in cases where there is continuing absence for an extended period there is no medical evidence or otherwise which shows a planned or anticipated return to work date then it may be appropriate to move to a stage four hearing.

3.4 Stage 4 – formal hearing

If an employee has been managed through stages 1 to 3 and there continues to be an unacceptable level of absence and improvement in the employee's attendance they may be referred to a formal hearing.

The employee should be informed in writing that he/she is required to attend a hearing with the headteacher or a panel of governors. A HR representative must also attend this meeting in an advisory capacity to the hearing officer. Seven days notice must be given of the date of the hearing. The letter should explain that the hearing is to consider the employees continuing poor sickness record (see guidance). The employee should be informed that he/she has the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague.

Taking into consideration the individual circumstances the outcome of hearing could be that the individual is referred back to stage three, and a further review period set, a further review by occupational health may be required or the employee be dismissed.

Dismissal may be reasonable if:-

1. a) The level of absence is consistently above the required/acceptable level and seems likely to remain so.
2. b) There are no, or insufficient signs of improvement despite discussions and written confirmation of expectations and consequences.
3. c) The effect of the absence on the performance, effectiveness and viability of the business makes the situation intolerable.
4. d) A thorough investigation has taken place, and all individual circumstances and factors have reasonably been considered.

The outcome of the hearing should be confirmed in writing to the individual.

If the decision is to dismiss the outcome must be provided in writing giving the appropriate notice and the right to appeal.

The reason for dismissal will be stated as "because of persistent and/or excessive absence for sickness (*for which there is no apparent underlying medical cause) which in law is a reason related to capability or alternatively is in law some other substantial reason".

4. Employee Support

Further information on these policies can be obtained from your line manager.