



# Staff Absence Policy

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# STAFF ABSENCE POLICY

The core business of Ashcroft Technology Academy is to provide ongoing high quality education to all students. The Academy recognises that the maintenance of high levels of attendance amongst both its students and staff are key to the success of its core business. Student attendance and absence is dealt with under student focussed policies covering these areas, while a separate staff attendance reward scheme was introduced in September 2009 to recognise high levels of attendance. Adult attendance at the Academy is very high when compared to both public and private sector averages.

This policy therefore focuses on staff absence. It deals with procedures associated with both planned and unplanned absences and it identifies ways in which such absence can both be minimised and followed up appropriately. 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. Where illness or disability prevents staff from undertaking their full range of duties associated with their post, adjustments to their working practices need to be considered, including the potential for redeployment to a suitable alternative post, where the individual is fit to undertake it, should such opportunities exist.

In playing its part, the Academy undertakes to encourage and maintain high levels of attendance beyond the reward scheme, in developing and reviewing policy and procedure, 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 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.

## **a) Planned Absences**

While the benefits of Professional Development, Visits & Journeys, Work Experience visits and meetings with parents are well recognised, it is important that they are organised so as to minimise the impact on quality teaching and learning.

For absences planned in advance, authorisation should be obtained by the member of staff as follows:

1. In the case of medical treatment, a job interview or a work experience visit, such occasions should be authorised by the Exams & Cover Administrator having already obtained the agreement of their Line Manager. Evidence may be requested and will certainly be asked for if this took place on a first or final day of term.
2. For the purpose of Professional Development, absences should be authorised by the Vice Principal who has responsibility for Professional Development in consultation with the Exams & Cover Administrator, again with the prior agreement of their Line Manager.
3. For Visits and Journeys, absences should be authorised in accordance with the Visits and Journeys Policy through their Line Manager, the Exams & Cover Administrator and the Principal.
4. Any other reasons for absence can only be agreed and authorised by the Principal.

Colleagues should only arrange meetings with parents during non-contact time. It is only acceptable to request cover for such a purpose in cases of extreme urgency and again only after authorisation in line with (1) above.

Request for Cover for other situations should be referred, in the first instance, to the Exams & Cover Administrator.

Otherwise, teaching colleagues are expected to remain on site during the Academy sessions. If there are exceptional circumstances why a colleague needs to leave the Academy during a session, they may only do so with the agreement of the member of Leadership Group responsible for that subject area and the Exams & Cover Administrator. In any case all staff should sign out at Reception when leaving the site (except when this is at the end of the day) and must sign back in again at reception upon their return. This is of particular importance in the case of fire or other evacuations when precise information on the whereabouts of all individuals is required.

Similarly, absences for routine appointments such as dental and medical check-ups, should be confined to holiday periods wherever possible unless an emergency appointment is required. Staff are expected to demonstrate seeking to arrange these accordingly.

## **b) Unplanned Absence**

Unplanned absence in the workplace is a sensitive issue, yet within any working environment it adds to costs, reduced performance and at times can lead to resentment amongst colleagues. Many organisations are now aiming to tackle this issue whilst recognising that absence is inevitable from time to time.

Ashcroft Technology Academy has developed this section of the absence policy to provide consistency in dealing with absence and to be fair to all its employees. The policy takes account of the procedures already in place for reporting absence but extends this to formal measurement of absence, the settings of standards clear to all personnel in this area and procedures to be employed when levels of absence give cause for concern. In monitoring staff unplanned absences, the Academy uses a method called the Bradford Factor. This also measures the

number of occasions of absence but also combines this with the number of days of absence through a basic formula. The formula recognises the increased effect of a higher number of shorter absences compared to a lower number of longer absences – even if the total number of days is the same. More occasions of absence, gives a higher score.

The Bradford Factor works firstly by taking the total number of occasions of absence and multiplying this figure by itself. By way of example, 2 occasions of absence would produce a figure of 4 (2 x 2). If each occasion of absence had been a single day, this gives 2 days absence in total. You then multiply this figure by the figure arrived at first of all (in this case 4). 4 x 2 gives a Bradford Factor of 8.

Therefore, in using the above method, an employee who has 9 sick days in a year (where 5 are single day absences and the other 4 days are together), has a total of 6 separate absences altogether. In this example the Bradford Score would be 324 (being 6 x 6 x 9).

The Academy introduced the usage of the Bradford Factor measure from the start of the 2012-2013 Academic Year in place of a system based solely on the number of occasions of absence. A Bradford Score of 125 will be the first trigger for discussion on the level of absences, followed by scores of 343 and 729.

The staff handbook has a section entitled “covering for staff absence,” which details the procedures to follow when either planned or unplanned absence occurs. All staff are expected to familiarise themselves with these requirements and to follow the guidelines in full. A copy of this section is attached to this policy for your information.

The Finance Department through liaison with the Exams and Cover Administrator will maintain a record of the total number of days of unplanned absences for internal monitoring as well as the number of separate absence occasions. An occasion is defined as a single day or a number of consecutive days, which means that one occasion covers one period of sickness however long that may be. This will help identify areas of concern or where support may be needed.

When an individual has been absent on a number of days and occasions during the course of a twelve month rolling period, producing a Bradford Factor of 125 or higher, the employee will be interviewed by their Line Manager upon their return to work and will require the completion of the confidential Return to Work Form (Appendix A). A copy of the completed form should be submitted to the Vice Principal for filing in the individual’s personnel file. The meeting will be required in order that any underlying reasons can be discussed and appropriate support provided or adaptations to working practices discussed where necessary. The Line Manager will remind the employee of the staff absence policy and its various stages as well as the formal monitoring process, whilst alerting the employee to the difficulties caused by their absences. This stage will be regarded as the Informal Absence Review **and the employee should be advised this accordingly.**

Should there be an increase producing a Bradford Factor of 343 or higher, then the individual concerned will meet with their Line Manager and appropriate Deputy Principal in the case of teaching staff or the Vice Principal in the case of associate staff (for part time cleaning staff this would be with the Building Services Manager), to again agree appropriate help and guidance and to register concern. This will be known as the Formal Absence Review and will again alert the individual to the difficulties caused by their absence. The Review will aim to identify the underlying causes of their absences and to consider reasonable adjustments if the cause may be work related. There may also be the need for referral to the Occupational Health Service. **The employee must be told that this is the first formal stage of the absence review and written to accordingly.** Unless specific medical considerations are taken into account, this will also constitute an informal warning under the Disciplinary & Dismissals Procedure for Staff Policy. The interviewer will make notes at the meeting on the Return to Work Form. A copy of the completed form (indicating this to have been an informal warning) should be submitted to the Vice Principal for filing in the individual’s personnel file.

Continued absences resulting in a Bradford Factor of 729 or higher, will lead to a meeting with the Principal or (in the case of part time cleaning staff) with the Vice Principal at which a request will be made for the Academy to contact the individual's own general practitioner for a statement on the individual's health and continuing suitability for the position they are appointed to as well as referral to the Occupational Health Service used by the Academy. The Principal or Vice Principal will also look to discuss the possibilities of redeployment/ stepping down and further consider any adaptations to the job or premises that will help the employee, ensuring that any reasonable adaptations are made. **The employee must be told that this is the second formal stage of the absence review and written to accordingly.** Unless specific medical considerations are taken into account, this will also constitute a first written warning under the Disciplinary & Dismissals Procedure Policy. The interviewer will make notes at the meeting on the Return to Work Form. A copy of the completed form (indicating this to have been a written warning) should be submitted to the Vice Principal for filing in the individual's personnel file.

A further final review period of six school weeks should be set, within which time an acceptable level of attendance should be achieved. A further meeting will be scheduled and **the employee will be advised that this further meeting will be a final review meeting.** Unless specific medical considerations are taken into account, it will constitute a final written warning under the Disciplinary & Dismissals Procedure for Staff Policy if attendance has not improved in the meantime. The interviewer will make notes at the meeting on the Return to Work Form. A copy of the completed form (indicating this to have been a final written warning) should be submitted to the Vice Principal for filing in the individual's personnel file.

If the employee has demonstrated an acceptable level of attendance at this final review, the procedure can be halted at this stage but will be closely monitored and may be resumed if a similar level of absence recurs within one year.

Where the employee has not achieved an acceptable level of attendance by the time of the final review, the reviewer will confirm that the situation is unacceptable and that unless there are specific medical reasons that the Academy is working with the employee to overcome, it will be concluded that the employee is potentially incapable of fulfilling their duties by reason of continued regular absence following the final review under this procedure.

Failure to demonstrate an acceptable level of attendance following final review, will be interpreted as having failed to meet the requirements of the final written warning under the Disciplinary & Dismissals Procedure for Staff Policy and will therefore result in dismissal.

In the case of a single lengthy period of sickness absence, the Academy will look to adopt similar procedures to identify any underlying reasons for the absence that can be discussed with the employee and appropriate support provided or adaptations to working practices discussed where necessary. Whilst it will be the case that the employee's General Practitioner will have signed the employee off as being unfit to work, it may become necessary to establish whether the employee will be likely to return to work and if so, in what given timescale. Furthermore there may also be the need for referral to the Occupational Health Service to provide a second opinion in this respect.

In having sought such professional advice and explored the possibilities of redeployment/ stepping down and further considered any adaptations to the job or premises that would help the employee, ensuring that any reasonable adaptations are made, should there be no foreseeable likely return to work at the Academy, then it is possible that dismissal could result from lengthy continued absence.

The Academy is sympathetic to the fact that a number of staff have children who may require parental support in the case of illness and that there exists the possibility that an emergency situation develops at home that requires attention the same day. In line with statutory practice, the employee would be permitted to take unpaid leave to attend to such matters but in the case of

having to stay at home to tend a sick child, one days' paid absence in any twelve month rolling period will be granted.

The award of compassionate leave is at the discretion of the Principal or the Vice Principal on his behalf for teaching staff and at the discretion of the Vice Principal in the case of associate staff, whose decision in such matters is final.

Both the above situations are referred to under the Parental, Compassionate and Urgent Family Leave Policy.

### **Accompaniment at Meetings**

Where such a meeting is arranged that is likely to result in a written warning or higher sanction, the individual should be advised accordingly in advance and they will have the right to be accompanied at the meeting in line with the arrangements set out in the Disciplinary and Dismissals Procedure Policy for staff.

### **Appeals Procedures**

In the event of disciplinary action having been taken as a result of an employee's absence from work, this shall have been taken with reference to the Disciplinary and Dismissals Procedure Policy for staff. Should an employee not agree with the decision taken, they have the right of appeal as also outlined within the above mentioned policy.

This policy is intended to provide a consistent and fair approach in dealing with unplanned absence, provide channels of support where necessary and to protect as best as possible, the learning opportunities of the students within the Academy.

# COVERING FOR STAFF ABSENCE

The distribution of cover will be equitable over the course of each academic year. Internal cover is provided for short periods, with external cover brought in on a flexible basis (subject to budget allocation). In order to minimise the cover requirements on teaching staff, the Academy employs its own cover supervisors who will undertake a majority of short term cover requirements. Directorate teams are encouraged to make their own arrangements if possible before drawing on support from other teaching areas. Arrangements have been made with appropriate external agencies; expenditure in this area will be monitored carefully. Our policy is to maintain the programme of study for each group of students, without interruption, as far as possible. The use of supported self-study units of work for cover purposes is encouraged, as these can operate with non-specialist supervision more than other types of activity, given the learning resources available within the Academy, and can be planned in advance to some degree within the framework of a term's programme.

The Cover Director holds responsibility for organising academic and staff cover and should be informed as soon as an absence due to outside Academy activity is confirmed or when illness arises. The date and duration of the planned or likely period of absence should be e-mailed to the "Cover Director". This should be done at least 24 hours in advance. In the case of illness, notification by telephone at the earliest opportunity and certainly before **07.30am** is required. The Cover Director's direct line is 020 8812 3539. Staff should give their name very clearly and the reason for absence. Any cover work should not be left on this number but should be given to the Curriculum Manager via the main Academy number (0208 877 0357).

Teaching staff are expected to notify both the Cover Director and their line manager, on the first day on which they become ill, the reasons why they are unfit for work and how long they anticipate to be off work. If the absence extends beyond 3 consecutive days please ensure to notify on the 4th day of absence and submit a self-certification (SSP3) upon return. A copy of one of these is enclosed at the back of the handbook. Periods of absence of 8 days or more must be supported by a Doctor's certificate. Associate staff should inform their respective line manager or Vice Principal at the Academy and cleaning staff are required to inform the Building Services Manager. Staff should also familiarise themselves with the Staff Absence Policy in place at the Academy.

Colleagues should remain on Academy premises throughout the day until the end of each day's timetable unless prior agreement has been made with the relevant Deputy Principal and the Cover Director informed accordingly. Important information may be disseminated at the morning e-mail/briefing.

## COVER PROCEDURES

1. If you phone in sick please make sure calls are made before 07.30am on 020 8812 3539 for the Cover Director in the case of teaching staff or 020 8877 0357 for Associate staff. On the answer phone please only give your name and reason for absence. Please avoid long messages on the answer phone. Messages should be clear and spoken only after the tone following the recorded message. Your name is the most important part of the message and should be given clearly.
2. Phone in again after 08.00 to speak with your Line Manager to give cover work or alternatively email the cover work to your Line Manager. Associate staff should phone in after 8.30am to speak to their Line Manager in person.
3. If you are definitely going to be away for more than one day please inform the Cover Director and Line Manager of this when you ring in.
4. Report back to your Line Manager upon return, discussing reasons for absence, whether it is likely to recur and for an update on what has happened during your absence.

## FOR KNOWN ABSENCES/COVER REQUESTS IN ADVANCE

- 1 Please send your requests from your e-mail address to the "Cover Director", copied to your line manager.
- 2 In the subject box please put the date of cover requirements only.
- 3 Please give details in the message section of the e-mail.
- 4 It is the individual's responsibility to ensure all the procedures are correctly carried out with regard to trips, PD admin, permission from Line Manager or Principal for other reasons. The Cover Director will assume that this is the case when a request is made by a member of staff.

### Cover Schedule

The cover schedule is posted on the staff intranet each morning before 8.00am. It is **your responsibility** to check and see if you are required to cover a lesson.

### Allocation of Cover

When cover supervisors are unavailable, the procedure for allocating cover are as follows:

- **Under-timetabled** staff are used as **priority cover** up until their allocation is reached. This means you can be used for as many periods as you are under-allocated each week and it is possible you will be used **twice or more** in one day up to your allocation.
- Where no under-allocated staff are available or where they have at the point of need reached their allocation, **other staff** (with the exception of non-qualified teachers) may be asked to cover lessons. This is done as fairly as possible and with the expectation of never covering for more than one period over your allocation in a week.
- **Over-allocated staff** are almost never scheduled for cover.

If you have concerns about cover allocation, please speak to Anne Zaadane but be assured that they follow the above procedure in every case. The Deputy Principal with responsibility for cover is Cheryl John.

### Cover for PD

Please ensure that a yellow PD form is completed and signed by your Curriculum Manager/Line Manager, Deputy Principal for PD and the Cover Director in advance of any PD course taking place. Details of PD course must also be included on the form to allow for cover to be pre-booked.

Please inform the Cover Director of any cancellation of PD courses in order to cancel any supply bookings.

### Cover for Visits/Trips

Please remember to check with the Cover Director for cover availability on the date of the proposed trip, details of staff accompanying and whether there are any excluded students to cover for.

Please also inform the Cover Director of any cancellations or changes to arrangements as soon as you know about them.

## FOR KNOWN ABSENCES/COVER REQUESTS IN ADVANCE

- 1 Please send your requests from your e-mail address to the "Cover Director", copied to your line manager.
- 2 In the subject box please put the date of cover requirements only.
- 3 Please give details in the message section of the e-mail.
- 4 It is the individual's responsibility to ensure all the procedures are correctly carried out with regard to trips, PD admin, permission from Line Manager or Principal for other reasons. The Cover Director will assume that this is the case when a request is made by a member of staff.

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## Appendix A

### Return to Work Form

In accordance with the School's Sickness Absence Policy, you are only required to complete this form if the employee meets the Bradford Factor sickness absence triggers (please refer to the Staff Absence Policy for definitions of triggers), or an Occupational Health Referral if considered appropriate. The interviewer should make relevant notes on the form throughout the meeting.

**All completed forms should be signed by both parties to be forwarded to the Vice Principal for filing in the employee's personnel file.**

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Interviewer:</b>	
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<b>Absence Details</b>	
First Date of Absence:	Return to Work Date:
No of Working Days Absent:	Today's Date:
Reason for Absence:	
No of absence occasions in the last 12 months = (1)	No of days absent in last 12 months = (2)
Bradford Factor Score	Calculation basis: Number of sickness occasions (1) in past twelve months multiplied by itself then multiplied by the total number of days absence in the past twelve months (2) = 1 x 1 x 2. Calculation : (1) =            x (1) =            x (2) =            Total Score =

## Discussion Information

### Greet

Welcome the employee and explain the reason for the Return to Work Process. Some employees may be suspicious and worried so make reference to following procedures as within the Staff Absence Policy. The purpose is to establish causes for absence and agree any further actions. The first meeting shall constitute an informal absence review. Subsequent meetings are formal and may be considered under the Disciplinary and Dismissals Procedure for Staff Policy. Include an explanation of the Bradford Factor calculations as part of this process.

**Establish**

In discussion with the employee, ensure that they are genuinely fit to return to all their duties and discuss restrictions/ recommendations from the Occupational Health Service (if applicable).

**Absence**

Determine what the reasons and/or causes for their absence were. Identify if there are any underlying health or other issues (include personal and work related) Follow up any comments with a risk assessment etc.

**Update**

Give the employee an update on what has happened in their absence (if applicable) eg departmental update, workforce/organisational/job related changes, etc. (Briefly detail any significant points discussed)

## Evaluation & Action

Take into consideration what the employee has told you and decide if any further action is required. Agree with the employee any action(s) you are going to take. If applicable, agree an action plan.

### Possible Action may be:

- Sickness Absence Monitoring Meeting now / next time
- Set attendance targets with review date
- Refer back to GP or to Occupational Health (unfit to return)
- Refer to Occupational Health – now / next time
- Phased Return (Occupational Health can provide advice)
- Short-term amendments to duties
- Review hours
- Review duties/work load/arrangements
- Work Risk Assessment required (advice available from Vice Principal if required)
- Training required
  
- Suggest permanent change to duties and/or hours
- No further action

### End positively

Reinforce to the employee that their contribution is valued and they are an important member of the team.

To be Signed by the Employee and Line Manager	
Employee Name (please print):	
Employee's Signature:	Date:
I confirm a Self Certificate Form has been completed and, if applicable, a Doctor's Fit for Work Note obtained from the employee.	
Line Manager Name (please print):	
Line Manager's Signature:	Date:

## A CHECKLIST OF POINTS TO COVER DURING MONITORING MEETINGS

Line Managers Checklist of Points to Cover at Sickness Monitoring Meetings (SMM)	1 <sup>st</sup> SMM	2 <sup>nd</sup> SMM	3 <sup>rd</sup> /Final SMM
Be clear about the purpose of the meeting (i.e. that it is informal/formal and that will be recorded and placed on the employee's personnel file) – to enable you to identify the causes of sickness absence and to agree an appropriate approach for addressing the issue.	✓	✓	
Be clear about the purpose of the meeting (i.e. that it is a formal meeting to make a decision about the employee's continued employment with the School).			✓
Re-cap on the main points covered at the previous Sickness Monitoring Meeting.		✓	✓
Express concern over the level of sickness absence/make reference to policy and trigger points.	✓		
Express ongoing concern over no/little improvement in sickness levels since last meeting.		✓	✓
Discuss dates and reasons for absence.	✓	✓	✓
Explore whether there are any underlying medical issues/contact with GP.	✓	✓	
Explore with employee why there has been no/little improvement in sickness levels. Ask employee what steps they have taken to address the problem. Have they visited their GP?		✓	✓
Explore whether there are any issues in or outside of work that are having a bearing on the employee's sickness record.	✓	✓	
Explain the impact of sickness on the Academy.	✓	✓	✓
Explore whether the employee or Academy could do anything to facilitate an improved attendance in the future.	✓	✓	
Determine whether a risk assessment is necessary.	✓	✓	
Discuss a referral to the Occupational Health Service/advice received back from the Occupational Health Service i.e. is there an underlying medical issue preventing this employee from attending work on a regular basis? Can Occupational Health identify anything that the employee or Department could do to facilitate an improved attendance?	✓	✓	
If there is an underlying medical condition, does the employee come under the Disability Discrimination Act. Consider whether there are any reasonable adjustments/changes in working practice/re-deployment options that would facilitate an improved attendance. Explore how you can aid/support their attendance.	✓	✓	
Make reference to any adjustments/changes in working practice that have been made since the last meeting to facilitate an improved attendance.			✓

<b>Line Managers Checklist of Points to Cover at Sickness Monitoring Meetings (SMM)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> SMM</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> SMM</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup>/Final SMM</b>
Be clear about the level of improvement expected.	✓	✓	
Outline of Occupational Health advice to identify whether there are any final options that could facilitate an improved attendance.			✓
Inform the employee that their employment could be at risk if sickness record does not improve. If at Stage 2, inform employee that if there is no improvement then this will result in you progressing to Stage 3 of this procedure where a decision to dismiss could be made.	✓	✓	
Agree action plan, support measures and review date.	✓	✓	
If all options have been fully explored and the employee's sickness record remains unsatisfactory, then in consultation with the Principal/ Vice Principal, managers should proceed with advising the employee that they are terminating the employee's contract of employment.			✓
Communicate the grounds for the dismissal, entitlement to notice, annual leave and right of appeal.			✓