

Staff Attendance  
Punctuality  
Absence Management  
Policy



Approved by LGBS during the term: Summer 2018  
Next Review date: Summer 2019

## Absence Management Policy

This Policy is intended to be read by all members of staff employed by Dulwich Hamlet Educational Trust at Dulwich Hamlet Junior School and The Belham Primary School.

It should be read in conjunction with the latest edition of the Staff Handbook. Any questions or comments should be directed to the School Business Manager of the respective schools.

### Aims

The purpose of this Policy is to support and help staff who are absent from work to achieve and maintain full attendance and to support and assist staff who are on long term sickness absence to return to work as quickly as is appropriate in their circumstances.

The secondary aim of the policy is to reduce staff absence and ensure that 'time off' is only granted for the reasons outlined in this policy. It is recognised that inconsistency in staffing has a detrimental effect on children's learning and the overall efficient running of the school.

As such this Policy seeks to minimise disruption and maintain standards. In taking steps to monitor and control absence we aim to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Trust and its staff.

This policy is designed to ensure all staff are aware of their obligations in the event of absence.

### Safeguarding Statement

Dulwich Hamlet Educational Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff to share this commitment.

### Equal Opportunities

At Dulwich Hamlet Educational Trust we will continuously strive to ensure that everyone in our school is treated with respect and dignity. Each person in our school will be given fair and equal opportunity to develop their full potential with positive regard to gender, ethnicity, cultural and religious background, marriage or civil partnership, sexuality or disability. Please refer to our Equalities Plan for further information.

### Procedure

This Policy refers to all absence during school term time. The governors of each school recognise all legal requirements and accept responsibility to cover all leave whether paid or unpaid as written in statute e.g. maternity or paternity leave.

In all circumstances the **Heads of School** are those responsible for decisions.

### Seeking Approval for Leave from Work

All staff will be required to follow the procedures for requesting leave of absence and for reporting absence. Authorised paid and unpaid absence from work for the reasons given in this policy requires prior approval.

Requests for paid or unpaid leave must be made in advance, in writing via school email with 'Request for Staff Absence' in the subject line, to the Head of School, copying in the SBM, with full reasons for the request.

This request will be responded to by school email with a copy to the SBM, and recorded on Scholar Pack and the employee's personnel file.

Requests for absence by the Heads of School should go to the Executive Head Teacher.

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Requests should be made as soon as it is known that it will be required, and not less than one full week in advance of the proposed absence, except in exceptional circumstance such as the death of a family member.

The appeal procedure is available for staff to use if a request is denied. In the first instance an appeal should be made to the Executive Headteacher and then to a committee of three governors.

Every circumstance cannot be covered in this Policy (see Appendix), so it should be considered as a guide. The Head's advice should be sought, in the first instance, by any member of staff who may be considering requesting leave of absence for any reason. Requests for leave of absence will be considered taking into account

- the principles of this policy,
- the best interests of the children and the school,
- treating staff in a fair, reasonable and consistent way,
- National and local terms and conditions of employment.

Where the agreements refer to relatives of the first degree, this is taken to mean - husband/wife, permanent partner, brother/sister, parent and child or the corresponding relatives-in-law. Additionally the Governing Body has decided to include grandparents or other relatives/carers who have taken on the main caring role or people who are not related but occupying a similar position in the family.

The following reasons are the most frequently requested therefore are outlined below, for all other requests please see table in **Appendix** for guidance.

### **Holidays**

The Heads and Governors do not consider request for leave during school terms for holidays to be appropriate, subject to individual contract terms.

### **Medical / Dental Routine Appointments**

It is expected that dental and medical appointments will be made out of school hours wherever possible. It is recognised that in some circumstances this is not possible, e.g. hospital appointment. However, appointments in work time should be kept to a minimum and cause as little disruption as possible and if appointments during school hours are judged to be unreasonable they will be unpaid and will contribute to a lower attendance percentage.

### **Medical Emergencies**

It is recognised that hospital consultant appointments sometimes cannot be made outside school hours and permission needs to be granted from the Heads.

### **Moving House**

Request for one day's leave will be considered by the Head of School.

### **Job Interviews**

All reasonable requests made as early as possible, will be allowed. Time off for viewing other establishments which are recruiting, will be considered by the Heads and may be paid

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or unpaid. Usually half a day will be granted, with pay; any further time will be at the Heads' discretion.

### **Time off for Dependants**

Please look at table in Appendix for guidance.

This policy should not be considered as a change to contracts of employment. It does not alter present allowances but seeks to clarify the situation with regard to discretionary leave so that we may act in a fair and equal manner to all employees regardless of position in school or number of contracted hours. This policy should be read alongside the following policies in the Staff Handbook:

- Maternity
- Paternity
- Shared Parental Leave and pay
- Sickness Absence
- Adoption
- Dependency

### **SICKNESS LEAVE - NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE**

Please follow procedures as outlined in the latest edition of the Staff Handbook:

- You should notify us personally and by telephone. E-mails and text messages are not an acceptable form of notification.
- You should provide us with the reason for your absence and brief details of the symptoms.
- You should try to give us some indication of your expected date of return. The notification procedures should be followed on each day of absence unless you are covered by a doctor's medical certificate.
- If you are unable to contact the named staff member, when you telephone, you should leave a contact number and someone will call you back within 30 minutes.
- ***It is not acceptable to leave a message with any other member of staff.***
- You will need to contact the school by 3pm on the day of absence, to let us know attendance/absence for the following day
- If your absence extends to more than seven calendar days, you must provide us with a medical certificate. Subsequent medical certificates must be provided to cover the whole of your absence.
- If your absence is to attend an appointment at the hospital, doctor or dentist then an appointment card must be produced.

### **RETURNING TO WORK**

You must telephone the named individual in the Staff Handbook, the day before you are due to return to work to enable us to reschedule any staffing arrangements. Failure to provide such notification (even if your medical certificate expires) may result in you being sent home from work for the day without pay.

- Following any absence, if your attendance falls below 94% you will attend an **Informal Review Meeting** (see below P6), where your absence and your current fitness for work can be discussed.

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## **FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE PROCEDURES**

If you fail to follow any of the above reporting procedures, pay may be delayed or not paid, irrelevant of your reason for absence. Regular failure to follow the Procedures will result in Capability and possible disciplinary action being invoked (please see below).

### **ABSENCE MONITORING FOR ALL**

We will monitor the attendance records of all our staff on a regular basis. Please note that Scholar Pack provides us with a running record of every staff member's percentage attendance over any period, and if attendance at any point during the academic year, falls **below 94%**, then the staff member will meet with the Head of School or SBM to discuss the issues which have caused this to occur. This is an informal meeting and is designed to understand the nature of the absence. (See below).

Three separate periods of absence within one term, or an equivalent period of time, will trigger a **Capability Review 'Formal Meeting' (see below)**, and summary notes of these meetings will be retained on the personnel file, in confidence.

### **PUNCTUALITY MONITORING FOR ALL**

It is expected that all staff arrive at the place of work in good time, so that they are able to be in the right place within the school, ready to commence the assigned tasks. There have been occasions when staff have arrived at their contracted time but still required to remove coats and bags, and prepare for the day. We recommend everybody allows sufficient time for travel delays to avoid any issues with punctuality, and failure to ensure good timekeeping may result in informal, leading to formal Capability Review Meetings (see below).

Issues associated with punctuality will be noted and retained on the personnel file.

Three separate periods of lateness within one term, or an equivalent period of time, will trigger a Capability Review 'Formal Meeting' (see below), and notes of these meetings will be retained on the personnel file, in confidence.

### **CYCLE OF REVIEW: THE PROCEDURES**

*(Please note: these procedures provide an overall framework to manage staff attendance but will be used flexibly according to individual circumstances and knowledge of the employee's work record)*

The intention of the overall Cycle of Review is to adhere to the expectations contained in this Policy: to discuss reasons for absence and poor punctuality, and ways in which attendance and punctuality can be improved. During the Cycle of Review, if there is no improvement over the longer term, then Capability/notice to dismiss action will occur.

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## **INITIAL INFORMAL REVIEW MEETING**

If attendance falls below 94% we will arrange a meeting at a convenient time and date and contain the information in an email. If it is not possible to hold a meeting, we will talk with you by phone. At the meeting or phone conversation, we will discuss your attendance percentage attendance figure, the reasons for your absence/s, any help or support we can offer to improve your attendance if relevant, and what improvement is necessary and expected from you.

If the absence is likely to be continuous over a long period of time, then the procedures for dealing with Long Term Sickness (detailed below) will be followed. Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed below).

Should the meeting **not** highlight any underlying health conditions for your absence/s, you will be informed that your percentage attendance level should improve and the intention will be to raise the percentage attendance from the current position.

**Medical Capability, Punctuality or Procedural Review Meetings** will be arranged at following the Formal Review Process as outlined below.

## **FORMAL REVIEW PROCESS**

If requested to attend any '**Formal Capability Review Meeting**' about attendance levels, poor punctuality or failure to follow procedures, you have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative if you wish, and you should make the necessary arrangements to have someone present. This should not delay the proposed meeting date which will be arranged approximately 2 -3 weeks after any previous meetings, depending on the period of time within the academic year.

### **Formal Capability Review Meeting**

We will confirm meeting arrangements at a convenient time and date by email. You will be provided with details of your absence record prior the meeting.

- At the meeting we will discuss your attendance record, the reasons for your absence/s, any help we can offer to improve your attendance, what improvement is necessary.
- Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed above and below in this document).
- If your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level and should no underlying health conditions be highlighted, you will be issued at the meeting with a **Formal Warning** for your level of absence or other factors (as above). You will have the right to appeal against this warning, details of which will be given in the letter detailing your warning.
- You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting following any further periods of absence.
- The Formal Warning will be removed from the personnel file after 12 months if there are no further occurrences.

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## Second Capability Review Meeting

*(This will follow when there are further periods of absence/poor punctuality or failure to follow procedures and your attendance is below 94%)*

We will confirm meeting arrangements at a convenient time and date by email. You will be provided with details of your absence record prior to the meeting.

- At the meeting we will discuss the issues that have triggered the meeting, any help we can offer and what improvement is necessary.
- Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed above and below in this document).
- If your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level, and there is no underlying health condition, you will be receive a **2<sup>nd</sup> Formal Warning** for your level of absence. You will have the right to appeal against this warning, details of which will be given in the letter detailing your warning.
- You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting following any further periods of absence.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Formal Warning will revert to the original Formal Warning after 12 months, if there are no further occurrences.

## Final (Third) Capability Review Meeting

*(This will follow when there are further periods of absence/poor punctuality or failure to follow procedures and your attendance is below 94%)*

We will confirm meeting arrangements at a convenient time and date by email. You will be provided with details of your absence record prior to the meeting.

- At the meeting we will discuss the issues that have triggered the meeting, any help we can offer and what improvement is necessary.
- Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed above and below in this document).
- If your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level, and there is no underlying health condition, you will receive a **Final Formal Warning** for your level of absence or failure to follow procedures around absence reporting. You will have the right to appeal against this warning, details of which will be given in the letter detailing your warning.
- The Final Formal Warning will revert to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Formal Warning after 12 months, if there are no further occurrences.

Any further incidents will result in a **Notice to Dismiss on the grounds of Medical Capability** for the reasons cited. You will have the right to appeal against this Notice, details of which will be given in the letter, detailing your warning. This may be because you feel that correct procedures have not been followed or that you have been unfairly discriminated against.

If the issues that have led to the **Notice to Dismiss on the grounds of Capability** are addressed during the following work period, the DN will remain in place, and be monitored,

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and a further meeting will only be scheduled if low attendance, punctuality or failure to follow procedures, are re-activated.

The **Notice to Dismiss on the grounds of Capability** will be removed after 6 months. If further “trigger” actions occur during the **Notice to Dismiss** period, Dismissal will follow with two weeks’ pay, in lieu of notice.

### **LONG TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE**

If you are off work sick for a continuous period of 4 weeks or more, we will contact you with a view to arranging an informal welfare/review meeting at a convenient time, date and location. We will meet you at your home, at work or at a location suitable to both parties. You have the right to be accompanied at the informal meeting by a friend or relative if you wish. The aim of the meeting is to keep you in touch with events at work, to discuss your absence and offer any relevant support.

We aim to keep in regular contact with you and hold regular meetings over your period of absence.

Dependent upon the circumstances of your absence, we may, when appropriate, ask your permission to contact a medical professional for a report on your incapacity. This will take the form of an Occupational Health Referral and will be recorded on your personnel file.

Upon receipt of this report, we will meet again with you to discuss fully the contents of the report and any implications arising from it. We will determine what support and/or reasonable adjustments we can make to assist you in your return to work in the future.

If it is evident from the report and our discussions with you that a return to work is not possible in the foreseeable future, we may have to consider dismissal, but this would be a last resort. If the decision is made to dismiss, you will be paid in lieu of notice. You will have the right to appeal against the decision if you feel it was unfair and details of how to appeal will be detailed in the dismissal letter.

### **UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS**

If you have been absent for a continuous period of four weeks or longer, or during any of the work place meetings, it is determined that you have an underlying health condition which is affecting your ability to attend work regularly, we may, dependent upon your condition, request a medical report to determine what help, support or reasonable adjustments may be necessary to aid your attendance at work.

This may be either your GP, anyone else who is treating you or we may consult an Occupational Health Advisor, to determine the extent of your incapacity.

Upon receipt of this Report, we would meet with you further to discuss it, and any implications arising. We would consider what support we could offer and any reasonable adjustments that could be made to assist your attendance at work.

It may be necessary to hold regular meetings over a period of time to consider how your illness or condition is progressing.

Whilst it is the Trust’s aim to offer support and help to enable you to return to work, if no solution can be found to facilitate a return to work within an acceptable timescale, we may have to consider termination of employment on the grounds of incapacity.

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## **Disability and Sickness Absence**

The majority of disabled people do not require any more time away from work than other employees. Although an impairment may impact on a person's day to day activities, it does not necessarily impact on their general health. Accordingly, the absence of a disabled member of staff will be dealt with under the provisions of this policy and procedure, where appropriate.

Nevertheless, under the Equality Act 2010 there is a need to recognise that employees with a disability may need to be away from work to either receive treatment for their disability or that they may be absent from work as a result of their disability. In either case accurate recording is essential to ensure that disability related absence can be clearly identified as distinct from other absences. It is important to establish at an early stage whether absence is disability related; occupational health advice will be sought as appropriate.

## **Disability Related Leave**

Disability related leave may be granted in circumstances where an employee, as part of their treatment for a disability, takes time off for therapy, hospital appointments, rehabilitation, assessment or treatment. It is reasonable that an employee be allowed this type of leave as it is part of managing their disability and plays an important part in keeping them fit for their role. Disability related leave may be considered as a 'reasonable adjustment'.

Generally, disability related leave is for a fixed period and will be covered by appropriate documentation, a copy of which should be provided to the line manager in advance of the appointment.

Disability related leave will be recorded separately from sickness absence and should not be used by employees to cover periods of sickness absence whether or not the absence relates to the persons' disability.

## **Disability Related Absence**

There will be occasions when a disabled employee needs to take sickness absence as a result of their disability. In accordance with best practice, disability related absence will be recorded separately from non-disability related absence.

Both disability related and non-disability related absence will be counted for the purposes of sick pay and for any action required as part of this policy. However, recording the absences separately will assist managers in taking appropriate action and will enable them to fully consider the application of 'reasonable adjustments'. In such cases this may include extending the absence triggers. Each period of sickness will, to a certain extent, be unique and consideration will need to be given to the amount of disability related absence that is 'reasonable' and the extent to which the absence triggers can be extended.

## APPENDIX

### Reasons for leave with Pay

Reasons for leave with Pay	Teachers	Non-teaching staff
<b>Sickness</b>	<b>See Staff Handbook</b>	<b>See Staff Handbook</b>
Cancer Screening	For reasonable periods where attendance in school time cannot be avoided.	For reasonable periods where attendance in school time cannot be avoided.
Times of severe weather	Permission to leave early should not be unreasonably refused.	Permission to leave early should not be unreasonable refused. Lost hours should be made up where possible.
Public Transport strike	1 day if no other means of travel is available.	1 day if no other means of travel is available.
Jury Service or attendance as a witness in Court proceedings	For the required period subject to the employee claiming for loss of earnings.	For the required period subject to the employee claiming for loss of earnings.
Election duties	Leave of absence for staff appointed by the returning officer to assist at parliamentary or local elections.	Leave of absence for staff appointed by the returning officer to assist at parliamentary or local elections.
For ante-natal care	The right to paid off time to attend ante-natal care on production of evidence of appointments. See Maternity Policy	The right to paid off time to attend ante-natal care on production of evidence of appointments. See Maternity Policy
Parental Leave (including Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental Leave, Dependants Leave)	Staff Handbook	Staff Handbook
IVF Treatment	Discretion of the Head of School	Discretion of the Head of School
Own Wedding	At the discretion of the HoS	At the discretion of the HoS
Illness of a close relative i.e. partner/spouse, or child below the age of 14	1 <sup>st</sup> day is paid, up to a maximum of 3 times in a year. See Staff Handbook	1 <sup>st</sup> day is paid, up to a maximum of 3 times in a year. See Staff Handbook
Death or critical illness of a close relative i.e. partner/spouse, parent (or other relative/carer who brought up the employee), child, or sibling.	Up to 5 working days only at the Head's discretion	Up to 5 working days only at the Head's discretion
House move	1 working day with as much advance notice as possible.	1 day
For officials of Trade Unions to perform IR and Safety Representatives duties/undertake approved training	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regular release, and/or</li> <li>2. Occasional release, and/or</li> <li>3. Consultative meetings convened by the LA</li> </ol>	Authorities shall provide the necessary facilities to Trade Unions including paid leave of absence to carry out their duties.

For members of another school's Governing Body	Up to a maximum of 4 half-days per annum depending upon the reasonableness of the request.	Up to a maximum of 4 half-days per annum depending upon the reasonableness of the request.
Lecturing in professional capacity on condition that all fees to be paid to school	At the discretion of the Governing Body	At the discretion of the Governing Body up to a maximum of 12 working days.
Sitting examinations relating to professional development	Employees are entitled to be paid leave of absence for the purpose of sitting for examinations concerned with the teacher's professional development to the benefit of the school.	Employees are entitled to paid leave of absence for sitting for approved examinations. Additional leave may be granted for final revision for approved examinations.
Attendance at approved conferences	At the discretion of the Governing Body subject to conference being of benefit to school and the teacher's professional development.	At the discretion of the Governing Body subject to conference being of benefit to school and the staff member's professional development.
Potential redundancy	Reasonable time to seek alternative employment.	Reasonable time to seek alternative employment.
Interviews for other posts	See P.3 of this policy	Discretion of Head.

#### Reasons for Leave without Pay

Reasons for leave without pay	Teachers	Non-Teaching staff in schools
Graduation ceremony – employee's own partner, son, daughter or close relative	1 day at discretion of Head and additional time at the discretion of Governing Body.	1 day at discretion of Head and additional time at the discretion of Governing Body.
House move – in excess of 1 day	1 day at discretion of Head and additional time at the discretion of Governing Body.	At the discretion of the Governing Body.
Special family flights where spouse is in the armed forces	1 day at discretion of Head and additional time at the discretion of Governing Body.	At the discretion of the Governing Body.
Hospital/ante-natal appointments for children where both parents wish to attend	At the discretion of Head of School	At the discretion of Head of School
Court hearings – other than those covered under 'With Pay' sections – including divorce proceedings, custody of children, maintenance payments and other Court appearance where teacher is defendant or involved in non-criminal proceedings.	At the discretion of Head of School	At the discretion of Head of School
Religious devotion days	At the discretion of Head of School	At the discretion of Head of School
Funeral – other than close relatives as in 'With Pay' section	At the discretion of Head of School	At the discretion of Head of School

Attendance on courses for personal development not considered beneficial to the school	At the discretion of Head of School	At the discretion of Head of School
Weddings – Employees' relatives/close friends	At the discretion of Head of School	At the discretion of Head of School
Sabbatical	The length of time may be agreed at discretion of the Head Teacher and the Governing Body.	The length of time may be agreed at discretion of the Head Teacher and the Governing Body.
Any other special circumstances	At the discretion of the Head of School.	At the discretion of the Head of School.

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## ABSENCE MANAGEMENT – THE PROCESS UNDER MEDICAL CAPABILITY PROCEDURES

TRIGGERS: ATTENDANCE FALLS BELOW 94%; PUNCTUALITY; NOT FOLLOWING PROCEDURES RELATED TO ABSENCE REPORTING



Informal Meeting with Head of School/Senior Leadership



Either: **Close monitoring** or Occupational Health Referral or No further action

TRIGGERS: ATTENDANCE FALLS/REMAINS BELOW 94%; PUNCTUALITY; NOT FOLLOWING PROCEDURES RELATED TO ABSENCE REPORTING



First Formal Review with Head of School



Either: **Formal Warning** and/or Occupational Health Referral or Close Monitoring

TRIGGERS: ATTENDANCE FALLS BELOW 94%; PUNCTUALITY; NOT FOLLOWING PROCEDURES RELATED TO ABSENCE REPORTING



Second Formal Review with Head of School



Either: **2nd Formal Warning** and/or Occupational Health Referral

TRIGGERS: ATTENDANCE FALLS BELOW 94%; PUNCTUALITY; NOT FOLLOWING PROCEDURES RELATED TO ABSENCE REPORTING



Final Formal Review with Head of School



**Final Warning**

Any further incidents will result in a **Notice to Dismiss** which could lead to dismissal with 2 weeks paid notice if triggers continue.