



Absence Management Policy

North Kesteven Academy
2025-2027

Introduction Date: Summer Term 2025

To be Reviewed: Summer Term 2027



North
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Academy

Think Excellence

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Statement of Intent

Staff at North Kesteven Academy are paid on the basis of satisfactory attendance and performance within their job role. Attendance at work is therefore accepted as the norm at North Kesteven Academy. The Academy recognises that there will be occasions when employees will have genuine and acceptable reasons to be absent from work and where this occurs, will provide the appropriate support and assistance to staff. However, all staff must realise that any absence will cause operational difficulties for colleagues and management, and will undermine the quality and efficiency of the education experience offered by the Academy. This is particularly important in an Academy setting where the frequent absence of a member of staff may have a detrimental impact on the progress of groups or individual students.

The aim of this policy is therefore to minimise absence levels across the Academy, whilst also providing fair and reasonable support to those employees who are absent for legitimate reasons, with the aim of assisting their return to work at the earliest opportunity. The policy aims to ensure that all members of staff are treated fairly and consistently. This policy has been adopted by the Head and Board of Governors, and all SLT are fully committed to ensuring it is applied fairly and consistently across the Academy. It does not form of any employee's contract of employment and may be withdrawn or amended at any time.

We aim to ensure that:

- All policies, rules and procedures concerning absence are communicated clearly to all staff;
- Senior Leadership Team and line managers apply the procedures fairly and consistently;
- The HR Department will maintain computer records, based on information received from line managers, indicating the duration and stated reason for all periods of absence. This information will be used to monitor absence levels, and to indicate where further intervention by management may be required;
- The Academy will regularly communicate the absence management policy and procedure clearly to all staff and will ensure that all staff know where to access a copy. The HR Department will periodically produce statistics about absence levels and targets across the Academy;
- Line managers will interview all staff on their return to work from absence, regardless of its duration. The purpose of this interview is to explore the causes of the absence, to facilitate the individual's return to work, and to identify any reasonable and practical steps to reduce the likelihood of further absence;
- The HR Department will provide support and guidance to SLT and line managers in ensuring consistency in dealing with absence and any related issues, and, where appropriate, in advising on how individual absence issues should be handled;
- In cases where a member of staff's absence level exceeds specified "trigger" levels, the HR Department, in conjunction with line managers, will be required to take formal action. This may include conducting formal absence interviews and issuing formal warnings, as set out in the Academy's disciplinary and capability procedures. In some cases, excessive absence may result in termination of employment on the grounds of capability or conduct. The Academy's first priority will always be to achieve satisfactory levels of absence for any individual;
- Where a member of staff is absent on extended sick leave, the HR Department will contact the individual on a regular basis, including conducting periodic home visits, with the aim of facilitating the individual's return to work at the earliest reasonable point. This may include making reasonable adjustments to the individual's job role, working day, or hours.;
- Where appropriate, the Academy will seek advice from its occupational health advisers in medical issues relating to individual absence;
- Where appropriate, the Academy will seek permission from individual staff with whom there are concerns over absence levels to obtain relevant medical reports;
- In dealing with individual absence issues the Academy aims to act reasonably at all times, taking full account of all the circumstances surrounding the issue.

In implementing this policy, the Academy will take full account of the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act.

1. Notification of Sickness

Teaching Staff

The Academy and staff recognise that the key priority if a member of the teaching staff is unable to attend work is to arrange cover of that individual's teaching commitments as quickly as possible, to minimise disruption to students. If a member of teaching staff is unable to attend work they should telephone **the Cover Manager, on 01522 881441 before 7.30am**. This direct number carries a 24 hour answerphone. The Cover Manager will arrange cover where necessary for that individual, and notify the HR Department and any other relevant staff of the absence. The individual should indicate during **this** conversation the length of time they anticipate being absent from work.

Support Staff

A member of the support staff who is unable to attend work should telephone the HR Department on **01522 881464, before 8.00am**. This direct number carries a 24 hour answerphone. The HR Department will notify the individual's line manager and any other relevant staff of the absence. The individual should indicate during this conversation how long they anticipate being absent from work.

In the event of an employee (both Teaching and Support staff) having to leave work during their working day, it is the responsibility of the employee to notify their Head of Department or Human Resources before signing out at reception. Failing to follow the process could result in unpaid leave, as the absence would be handled as unauthorised.

2. Certification of Sickness

For sickness absence lasting seven days or less (including Saturdays and Sundays and any non-working days) the member of staff should complete a self-certification form immediately on return to work. This must be counter-signed by the member of staff's line manager and submitted to the HR Department within 3 days of return to work.

On the eighth day of sickness the employee should obtain a '**Statement for Fitness for Work' (medical certificate)** and submit this to the HR Department without delay.

3. Communication whilst absent

Any member of staff absent due to sickness or injury is required to maintain regular contact with Academy, so far as is reasonably practical. Contact from the Academy will be kept to a minimum to enable the employee's recovery, and will be limited to the SLT, Human Resources, or the employee's line manager.

4. Return to Work

Every member of staff is required to have a meaningful discussion with their line manager after every episode of absence. The aim of this discussion is to establish the reason for absence, update the member of staff, enquire about their welfare, and identify and address any work-related issues that may have contributed to the absence.

The discussion should be recorded on the "Return to Work meeting" form located on the Q drive, and submitted to the HR Department within 3 days of returning to work.

5. Trigger points for further action

The Academy has identified and will utilise a specific trigger point indicating when further action needs to be taken regarding an individual's level of absence. This trigger point is intended to provide clear guidance on handling recurrent absence; however, each case will be treated on its merits. For example, if there are good reasons to believe that a specific period of absence is not legitimate, the Academy may initiate investigatory or

even disciplinary action immediately, regardless of the individual's previous absence record. If the reasons for the absence (short or long term) are legitimate and known to be temporary (for example an individual with a problematic but short term medical condition) it may be appropriate to defer any action until the specific issue is resolved.

Usually, the trigger point will refer to an individual's level of absence. However, on some occasions an identified pattern of absence within a particular area or department may trigger further investigation or action by the Academy.

Trigger Point

Three separate absences or 12 days sickness absence in a 12 month rolling period.

The Academy will as part of its absence management recording also identify any significant patterns of absence, e.g regularly taking off certain days of the week or weeks of the year. The Academy also recognises that such patterns may indicate underlying health issues such as alcohol or substance abuse.

Where a trigger point has indicated that further action needs to be taken by the Academy the following staged procedure will apply:

6. Formal Absence Interview

Where a member of staff's absence level meets the Academy's trigger points, the employee will be invited to attend a formal absence interview with their line manager, and the HR Department. The employee may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative if they wish.

At this interview the employee will be provided with a list of their absences, with reasons, and advised that their attendance at work is a cause for concern. The reasons for these absences will be explored with the member of staff to see if there are any underlying reasons for the absences (for example personal difficulties, or an underlying illness that has not yet been identified). In the majority of cases, it is anticipated that this meeting will explain and alleviate any concerns regarding the employee's level of absence.

Following a full discussion of all and any circumstances regarding the reason for the absences, the employee may be referred to Occupational Health, if the absences are indicative of an underlying medical problem. Once a report from Occupational Health has been obtained, the employee will be invited to meet their line manager and the HR Department again to conclude the Formal Absence Interview. At this reconvened meeting, any support that can be offered to the employee will be identified.

Where no medical issue is identified, and the line manager and HR Department are satisfied that the issue is one of absenteeism, the employee will be clearly advised that their level of absence is unacceptable, and that there must be an immediate and sustained improvement. The timescale during which this improvement must take place will be clearly communicated to the employee. They will be advised that their attendance will be closely monitored and that if it does not improve then the Academy's disciplinary procedure may be invoked, and that they may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Where an underlying health issue is identified, where appropriate the employee will be dealt with as a member of staff with a disability or long-term ill health issue. Relevant support and assistance will be offered to the member of staff to help them to improve their attendance at work. This may include referral to Occupational Health, changes to job role, structure or hours of work, etc.

The member of staff will be advised in writing of the main points of the meeting.

7. Failure to Improve

It is anticipated that the vast majority of attendance concerns will have been resolved at the above stage. Where this is not the case, and the employee's level of attendance does not improve to the level required, the member of staff will be invited to attend a further review meeting with the HR Department and the SLT member responsible for their area of work. The employee may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative if they wish. During this meeting the reasons for the failure to improve attendance will be explored and all and any relevant circumstances will be discussed. At the end of this meeting the HR Department and SLT member may take any of the following courses of action:

- Continue to monitor the situation and review informally;
- Request the Headteacher to convene a formal disciplinary investigation under the terms of the Academy's disciplinary procedure, on the basis of the employee's conduct;
- Request the Headteacher to convene the Academy's Capability Procedure on the basis of capability due to ill health. This may include referring the employee to Occupational Health and/or requesting a medical report from the professional responsible for their clinical care. Any subsequent Capability process will be carried out based on the medical information available to the Academy at the time.