

*'...those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.'* Isaiah 40:31

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Multi Academy Trust Policy

Common Trust Policy, Use as Published

Managing Absence and Ill Health  
(Policy and Procedure)

Date adopted by Trust Board: 27/04/2016

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## Contents

1 Policy Statement.....	3
2 Scope .....	3
3 Adoption Arrangements and Date .....	3
4 Responsibilities of The MAT and the Academy .....	4
5 Responsibilities of the Employee.....	4
6 Delegated Responsibility .....	4
6.1 Informal Action .....	4
6.2 Formal Action.....	4
6.3 Dismissal Decisions .....	5
6.4 Matters relating to the Headteacher/Principal .....	5
7 Timescales .....	6
8 Right to Representation .....	6
9 Absence Monitoring .....	6
10 Notification of Absence .....	6
11 Absences up to and including 7 calendar days.....	7
12 Absences of more than 7 calendar days.....	7
13 'Fit Note' Provisions.....	7
14 Sick Pay Entitlement .....	8
15 Sick Pay Requirements .....	8
16 Contact during a period of absence .....	8
17 Location of meetings .....	9
18 Referral to Occupational Health.....	9
19 Return to Work Meetings.....	10
20 Reasonable Adjustments and supporting a return to work .....	10
21 Short Term Absence .....	11
21.1 Informal Action .....	11
21.2 Monitoring of Attendance following Informal Action .....	12
21.3 First Formal Absence Review Meeting .....	12
21.4 Hearing to consider unsatisfactory attendance .....	13
21.5 Appeal.....	15
22 Long Term Absence .....	16
22.1 Informal Action .....	16
22.2 First Formal Absence Review.....	16
22.3 Second Formal Absence Review .....	17
22.4 Hearing to consider dismissal on the grounds of capability due to ill health .....	17
22.5 Appeal.....	18
23 Non-attendance at formal meetings and hearings .....	19
24 Absence during the probationary period .....	20
25 Absence / poor performance related to an ongoing medical condition or disability .....	20
26 Absence arising from management action to address performance / conduct concerns.....	20
27 Ill Health Retirement .....	20
28 Medical Suspension.....	20
29 Time off for Medical Appointments .....	20
30 Time off for Elective Procedures .....	21
31 Absences Related to Drug & Alcohol Dependency.....	21
32 Communicable Diseases.....	21
33 Accidents at work or due to a Third Party.....	21
34 Absences arising from recreational activities outside the workplace.....	22
35 Disclosure of formal sanctions in employment references.....	22
36 Minuting Meetings and Record Keeping .....	22
37 Confidentiality and Data Protection.....	22
38 Suspected non-genuine absence.....	22
39 Advice and Support to Employees.....	23
<b>Appendix A: Guidance for Hearings and Appeals.....</b>	<b>24</b>

## **1 Policy Statement**

This policy and procedure has been developed by Schools Personnel Services for use in Academies in Kent. As a service provider for Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Multi Academy Trust Ltd (hereafter referred to as the MAT), follows the principles laid down in that guidance which has been adapted to reflect the MAT as the employer of staff across all member academies.

The MAT is committed to supporting the health, well-being, and attendance of all Employees. However, the MAT also expects a high level of attendance from all employees and requires all employees to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance in our efforts to support the development of the Children in our care.

We recognise that on occasions Employees may be absent from work due to ill health and that health issues may also impact on performance in the workplace.

We are committed to supporting an Employee during periods of absence with the aim of assisting their return to work and maintaining the required levels of performance. We also recognise our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Advice may be sought from an occupational health advisor or personnel provider in the management of ill health issues.

An Employee will be advised of the possible consequences of their absence, including if their employment is at risk.

The MAT will seek to balance the needs of The MAT and its Academy with the needs of the Employee. Where an Employee is unable to discharge the duties of their post due to ill health and all reasonable alternative options have been exhausted, consideration may be given to terminating employment.

This procedure explains:

- How The MAT will manage absence and ill health issues in a fair and consistent manner
- What is expected from the Headteacher/Principal and Employees with regards to the reporting and management of absence and ill health.

It does not address absences for reasons other than personal sickness. Non-sickness related absences are covered by other procedures.

## **2 Scope**

This Policy and Procedure applies to all Employees of the MAT.

## **3 Adoption Arrangements and Date**

This procedure was adopted by the MAT for all Academies on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016 and supersedes any previous Absence and Ill Health Procedure.

This policy will be reviewed by the MAT every 3 years or earlier if there is a need highlighted by our personnel provider or required by any associated legislation. This will involve consultation with the recognised unions

## **4 Responsibilities of the MAT and the Academy**

- To ensure all Employees are aware of the absence management procedures
- To ensure sickness absence is accurately recorded, monitored and reviewed effectively
- To take appropriate management action where absence and ill health related underperformance are causing concern
- To make suitable arrangements to discuss absence and the impact of this – including absence review meetings and return to work discussions
- To discuss / identify with Employees support and strategies for improving attendance and work performance or facilitating a return to work
- To keep in regular contact with an absent Employee and make them aware should their employment be at risk
- To consider termination of employment only after other potential options have been explored
- To provide a working environment conducive to enabling the Employee to perform safely
- To take reasonable action to maintain Employee's confidentiality in matters relating to health.

## **5 Responsibilities of the Employee**

- To ensure attendance meets the required standards
- To make his / her Headteacher/Principal aware of any health issues that may be impacting on their ability to maintain good attendance and performance
- To comply with The MAT's absence notification and certification requirements
- To attend meetings in connection with the management of absence issues (i.e. return to work meetings, absence review meetings, Occupational Health appointments)
- To work with their Headteacher/Principal to identify support and strategies for improving attendance or facilitating a return to work.

## **6 Delegated Responsibility**

Although the MAT board is the employer of staff within member Academies, in normal circumstances, the Headteacher/Principal as ultimate line manager will take the lead regarding matters of ill health and absence. This may be delegated to staff other than the Headteacher/Principal where appropriate. References to the role of the Headteacher/Principal in the policy and procedure include their nominee.

The academy must ensure that they inform the MAT of any instances where informal and formal action likely to be taken against an employee. This should be shared at the earliest possible opportunity.

### **6.1 Informal Action**

Informal action may be delegated to line managers who are not the Head/Principal where appropriate.

### **6.2 Formal Action**

Formal hearings to consider matters short of dismissal will be considered by the Headteacher/Principal or may be delegated to another manager.

Where matters are heard by another manager - appeals against any sanction imposed will be heard by the Headteacher/Principal. Where the Headteacher/Principal has considered the matter – appeals will be heard by a panel made up of Governors from the Local Governing Body (LGB).

### **6.3 Dismissal Decisions**

In each Academy, responsibility for dismissal decisions has been delegated to the Headteacher/Principal, therefore formal hearings to consider dismissal should be heard solely by the Headteacher/Principal.

A panel of one or more governors may be convened to hear the matter in situations where it is not appropriate for the Headteacher/Principal to perform this function.

Appeals will be heard by a panel of governors who have had no prior involvement in the matter under consideration.

It will be usual for a governor panel to be comprised of not less than two members, although this may vary depending on the circumstances.

Staff governors should not be a member of a governor panel.

The following table sets out the provisions which would normally apply.

<b>Informal Action taken by</b>	<b>Formal hearing heard by</b>	<b>Appeal heard by</b>
Line Manager	Another more senior Manager or Headteacher/Principal - for matters short of dismissal  Headteacher/Principal – where dismissal is a possible outcome	Headteacher/Principal (if not already involved in formal hearing) or One or more Local Governors (ideally three not previously involved in the matter)
Headteacher/Principal	One or more Local Governors (ideally three)	One or more Local Governors (ideally three)

### **6.4 Matters relating to the Headteacher/Principal**

Where the Headteacher/Principal is absent the same principles in relation to reporting, certification and management will apply and will be addressed by the Chair of the LGB.

Informal action may be delegated to the Chair of the LGB.

Formal hearings will be heard by a panel which will include governors who have had no prior involvement in the matter under consideration.

Appeals will be heard by a further panel of one or more governors who have had no prior involvement in the matter under consideration.

Staff governors should not be a member of a governor panel.

<b>Informal Action taken by</b>	<b>Formal hearing heard by</b>	<b>Appeal heard by</b>
Chair of the LGB	2 Local Governors and the Chief Operations Officer (COO)	2 Local Governors and a Member of the Trust Board

In instances where there are insufficient governors available to sit on a hearing or appeal panel, The MAT may co-opt other individuals suitable to hear the case where vacancies are available on the LGB.

## **7 Timescales**

Concerns regarding ill health and absence will be addressed without undue delay.

The timescales stated later in this document are for guidance and may vary depending on the circumstances of the case.

For the purpose of this procedure 'working day' will normally refer to the 195 days of the Academies year for teachers employed under the terms of the MAT Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

For support staff employed on a term time only basis working days will normally refer to the days worked under their contract or for staff employed on contracts outside of the Academies term will mean all days excluding weekend and bank holiday days.

## **8 Right to Representation**

An Employee is entitled to be accompanied to a formal hearing or appeal by either a workplace colleague or Trade Union Representative.

A workplace colleague or Trade Union representative is also able to attend formal meetings held under this procedure, including formal absent review meetings.

Due and careful consideration will also be given to any request from an Employee to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or Trade Union representative at informal meetings. However it should be noted that the presence of a representative does not make the meeting formal and will be at the discretion of leader of the meeting.

## **9 Absence Monitoring**

In order to manage attendance effectively, each Academy will record, monitor and review absences on an individual at local level. The MAT board will also monitor overall attendance in member academies.

## **10 Notification of Absence**

Employees should report sickness absence to their Headteacher/Principal or other nominated person by telephone as soon as possible on their first day of absence before the start of the working day and no later than 1 hour before their start time. Contact should be made by the Employee in person and not by a third party, unless unavoidable.

Employees should state:

- The reason for their absence / nature of their illness
- The estimated period of absence.

If the Employee does not contact their Headteacher/Principal by the required time the Academy should attempt to contact the Employee by telephone.

Repeated failure to follow these notification requirements will be addressed in accordance with The MAT's Disciplinary Procedures.

## **11 Absences up to and including 7 calendar days**

Employees will be required to complete and submit a self-certification form on return to work for all periods of sickness absence not exceeding seven days, inclusive of rest days, public holidays and Academy closure periods.

Where an Employee attends work but later goes home sick during the day – pay will not be deducted and this will not be regarded as a sick day for contractual sick pay purposes. However such absences will be recorded and considered for absence monitoring purposes.

## **12 Absences of more than 7 calendar days**

A Statement of Fitness for Work or 'fit note' is required if a period of absence lasts for eight days or more inclusive of rest days, public holidays and Academy closure periods.

The following conditions apply to the provision of 'fit notes':

- 'Fit notes' must be signed, stamped and dated by a qualified medical practitioner
- 'Fit notes' must be received by the Headteacher/Principal or other designated person as soon as practically possible after the 8<sup>th</sup> calendar day of absence
- 'Fit notes' will only be accepted for sick pay purposes from the dates specified and certified by the doctor.
- Subsequent 'fit notes' must be submitted in a timely manner to cover absence if it extends beyond the period of the initial certificate, including Academy closure periods, weekends, bank holidays and non-working days
- Where an Employee is admitted to a medical centre for treatment, 'fit notes' need only be submitted on entry and on discharge
- Exceptionally, The MAT may request an Employee to provide a 'fit note' for a period of sickness absence not exceeding seven days. In such cases The MAT will meet the cost of any 'fit note' being issued

## **13 'Fit Note' Provisions**

Should a 'fit note' indicate that an Employee is 'not fit for work' they should remain on sick leave until the expiry of the note. There is not a requirement for the Employee to be signed 'fit for work' by a medical practitioner before returning.

Should the Employee feel fit to return to work prior to the expiry date of the note, the Academy will give this request due consideration and may undertake a workplace risk assessment to establish whether the Employee is fit to return to work early. The Academy reserves the right to ask that the Employee remains on sick leave until the expiry of the note should they feel it is not appropriate for the individual to return.

Should a 'fit note' indicate that an Employee 'may be fit for work', the Academy will discuss with the Employee ways of helping them get back to work. This may include agreeing a phased return to work, amended duties or workplace adjustments for a temporary period.

If it is not possible for the Academy to provide the support an Employee needs to return to work, or an Employee feels unable to return, then the statement will be used in the same way as if the GP advised that the Employee was 'not fit for work'.

## **14 Sick Pay Entitlement**

The contractual sick pay entitlement for teachers is in accordance with the Burgundy Book / as set out in the contract of employment

The contractual sick pay entitlement for support staff is in accordance with the Blue Book / as set out in the contract of employment.

In exceptional circumstances The MAT has discretion to extend contractual sick pay. This will be considered on a case by case basis.

Statutory sick pay will be paid to qualifying staff in accordance with statutory provisions.

## **15 Sick Pay Requirements**

Payment of sick pay is conditional upon meeting both statutory and MAT requirements concerning absence notification and medical certification. Appropriate certification is required for the entire period of absence including Academy closure periods and non-working days.

Failure to follow these requirements or provide certification in a timely manner may result in the absence being regarded as unauthorised and in exceptional circumstances The MAT reserves the right to withhold pay.

The making of false sickness declarations will be addressed in accordance with The MAT's Disciplinary Procedure.

## **16 Contact during a period of absence**

The MAT requires Employees to maintain reasonable contact with their associated Academy during any period of absence, presenting medical certificates in a timely manner and attending review meetings as requested.

Where an absence is for three calendar days or less it is expected that the Employee will contact the Academy each day, unless agreed otherwise.

Where an absence lasts more than three calendar days, the Employee must keep their named contact updated with the situation at agreed intervals until a return date is known.

If the absence is likely to be longer term it is expected that the Headteacher/Principal and Employee will discuss how best to maintain contact at agreed intervals. Consideration will also be given on how best to keep the Employee updated with Academy news and events during their absence.

In certain circumstances it may not be appropriate for the Employee and their Headteacher/Principal or line manager to speak (e.g. in instances where the absence is due to work related stress). Consideration may be given to identifying another appropriate manager to act as a contact point or to facilitate meetings.

Only in exceptional circumstances will the Headteacher/Principal consider a person other than the Employee such as a trade union representative being the point of contact with The MAT.

## **17 Location of meetings**

Meetings in connection with the management of health issues will usually take place on the Academy site. However, a reasonable alternative venue away from the Academy site may be arranged if this will assist the Employee.

## **18 Referral to Occupational Health**

Where health issues are impacting on an Employee's attendance or performance, the academy should seek advice from an Occupational Health Advisor or other appropriate health advisor in order to inform management action or support.

The MAT advises academies to usually make a referral to an Occupational Health Advisor in the following circumstances:

- During a period of longer term continuous absence. A referral will usually be made no later than the 4th week of a period of continuous absence - but may be made earlier, if appropriate
- Following frequent or recurring short term absence which is giving rise to concern. As a guide a referral may be made in instances where there have been 3 periods of short term absence within a 6 month period – although this may vary depending on individual circumstances
- Where an injury or illness may have an impact on the Employee's ability to undertake their job role
- Where an Employee has a degenerative condition or disability which is impacting on their ability to undertake their job role
- When an application for ill health retirement is made.

The advice of an Occupational Health Advisor may be sought to:

- To identify how an Employee's health or medical condition may impact on their attendance or ability to undertake their job
- To ascertain when or if an Employee will be fit to return to work in the foreseeable future
- To provide guidance on what support or adjustments could be made to facilitate a return to work
- To provide guidance on any adjustments which may support a disabled Employee in the workplace
- To provide guidance on the Employee's ability to attend formal meetings and investigations under any other procedure whilst absent
- To advise how an Employee may be able to improve their health and wellbeing.

An Occupational Health Advisor may refer to the Employee's GP or other medical specialist for further information regarding the Employee's medical condition.

It is expected that all Employees will consent to a referral being made to an Occupational Health Advisor when reasonably asked to do so. Where consent is refused, the academy, with support from the MAT Chief Operations Officer (COO), may make decisions about the management of an ill health issue based on the available information and without the guidance of an Occupational Health Advisor

A referral to an Occupational Health Advisor may be made via a face to face meeting or in certain instances by letter or email.

Any written report provided by an Occupational Health Advisor will be shared with the Employee. On receipt of the report from the Occupational Health Advisor a review meeting will usually be convened.

If an Employee's absence becomes long term the Academy may request further advice from an Occupational Health Advisor, as necessary.

## **19 Return to Work Meetings**

Employees may be required to meet with their Headteacher/Principal or other delegated manager on their return to work, regardless of the duration of their absence. The nature of the meeting will depend on the circumstances.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Discuss the reason and cause of the absence
- To consider any concerns regarding attendance or patterns of absence
- Confirm that the Employee is fit to return
- Discuss and agree any support that the Employee may need to return to work and sustain a successful return, including recommendations made by a GP or Occupational Health Advisor
- To update the Employee on anything they may have missed during their absence.

In complex cases, cases where disability is a factor and instances where an Employee has been absent from work for some time – it may also be useful for a trade union representative or workplace colleague to attend this meeting.

A written record of the return to work meeting will be made and kept on the Employee's personnel file for absence monitoring purposes.

Depending on the reason and length of the absence the Headteacher/Principal may agree further follow up meetings to help ensure that the Employee makes a successful and sustained return to work.

## **20 Reasonable Adjustments and supporting a return to work**

The Academy will seek to provide all reasonable support to enable an Employee to make a successful and sustained return to work following a period of absence or to maintain their performance in the workplace.

Due consideration will be given to any reasonable and practicable adjustments recommended in a 'fit note' or by an Occupational Health Adviser or requested by an Employee, as required by the Equality Act 2010.

When considering possible adjustments the Academy will need to balance the needs of the Employee with what is realistic and practicable given the size and resources at the Academy.

The degree to which an Employee will need support and the nature and duration of any adjustments will be determined by the circumstances and will arise from discussion between the Employee and the Headteacher/Principal.

Adjustments may include consideration of:

- A phased return to work
- Adjustments to the working environment

- The outcome of any risk assessment
- A temporary alteration of duties or pattern of work
- Provision of additional equipment to assist the Employee in their duties
- Providing time off for medical treatment or appointments
- Arranging temporary additional support in the workplace
- Redeployment to another role in the MAT.

Any agreed supportive measures will be confirmed in writing.

Where a phased return is agreed there may be circumstances in which the Academy will consider whether it is appropriate either to pay the Employee their full contractual hours or the hours actually worked during this period. Each case will be considered on its own merits and the arrangements for payment will be confirmed in writing with the Employee. The Academy will seek guidance from the MAT personnel provider regarding payment during phased returns to work.

## **21 Short Term Absence**

### **21.1 Informal Action**

In instances where repeated or persistent short term absences are causing concern, the Headteacher/Principal will seek to address this informally at an early stage by meeting with the Employee. Although discretions should be used at all times, the MAT considers 10 days absence within a 6 month period to be sufficient cause for informal action to be taken.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Advise the Employee that their level of attendance is unacceptable and discuss how the level of absence is impacting on the individual's performance and the Academy.
- Explore reasons for absence and give the opportunity for the Employee to raise any health or other concerns arising from within or outside the workplace that may be impacting on their attendance
- Identify any support that the academy may be able to provide or any action the Employee can take to improve or sustain attendance
- Agree any follow up action including making a referral to an Occupational Health Advisor or counselling service or undertaking a risk assessment where appropriate
- Explain the MAT's expectations regarding attendance, agree an action plan or attendance targets and timescale for improvement
- Advise the Employee that should an acceptable level of attendance not be achieved and sustained – formal action up to and including the termination of employment may be considered
- Agree when / how attendance will be monitored and reviewed.

The MAT reserves the right to move straight to a Formal Absence Review Meeting where the circumstances warrant, including instances where concerns about the Employee's short term absence have previously been addressed formally.

## **21.2 Monitoring of Attendance following Informal Action**

In most instances it is anticipated that the level of attendance will improve and informal monitoring will continue to ensure satisfactory attendance is sustained. However, in circumstances where an Employee's attendance does not show acceptable improvement, the Academy may move to a first formal absence review meeting.

In instances where it is suspected that the reason for the absence is not genuine, the matter may be treated as a conduct issue and be addressed under The MAT's Disciplinary Procedure.

## **21.3 First Formal Absence Review Meeting**

Where attendance does not show acceptable improvement a first formal absence review meeting will be convened.

An Employee will be given written notification of the first formal absence review meeting and will be advised that a formal warning may be an outcome.

The Employee may be accompanied to this meeting by a workplace colleague or trade union representative.

This meeting will be conducted by the line manager / Headteacher/Principal.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Explore the reasons for continuing absence and the impact this is having on the individual's performance and the Academy
- Give the Employee the opportunity to respond to the concerns about their attendance and make any relevant representations or present any mitigating factors
- Consider any relevant advice received from Occupational Health or whether such advice should be sought
- Review progress towards attendance targets and set further targets and timescales for improvement
- Consider the impact of any support / workplace adjustments which have been put in place and any further support which may be of benefit
- Consider whether the Employee will be able to achieve and maintain a satisfactory level of attendance
- Advise the Employee that should an acceptable level of attendance not be achieved and maintained – the termination of employment may be considered
- Agree when / how a further meeting will be held to review attendance. The review period may vary depending on the circumstances of the case but will usually be within 4-12 weeks.

The outcome of this meeting may be:

- To continue a further period of formal monitoring in which the Employee will need to achieve and sustain a satisfactory level of attendance
- To adjourn the meeting to seek further information or advice e.g. from an Occupational Health Advisor or explore alternative options such as ill health retirement or redeployment, where appropriate

- To issue a first or, if the seriousness of the attendance concerns warrant, a final formal written warning on the grounds of unsatisfactory attendance.

The Headteacher/Principal should provide the Employee with written confirmation of what was discussed and the outcome of the meeting usually within 5 working days of the decision being made.

Where a formal written warning is issued the outcome letter should specify:

- The reason for the warning and how long this will remain 'live'
- The required improvement in attendance that is required and the timescale to achieve this
- Any agreed workplace adjustments / supportive measures
- When a further review of attendance will take place
- Advise the Employee that should an acceptable level of attendance not be achieved or maintained – further formal action, including the termination of employment, may be considered
- Advise the Employee of their right of appeal against a formal warning.

An Employee may appeal in writing against any formal warning within 5 working days of receipt of the written outcome.

#### **21.4 Hearing to consider unsatisfactory attendance**

*The arrangements for hearings are set out in further detail in Appendix A*

Should attendance not improve to an acceptable level or should satisfactory attendance not be sustained within the review period, the Employee will be advised in writing of the requirement to attend a hearing to consider unsatisfactory attendance.

The Employee will be given written notification of the date, time and venue of the hearing. This will usually be not less than 10 working days' notice. The notification will advise the Employee of the case to be considered and possible outcomes of the hearing – including that dismissal may be an outcome.

The Academy will provide the employee with all relevant documents which will be referred to during the hearing with the notification letter and in any case no later than 10 working days before the hearing.

The Employee has the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a workplace colleague or trade union representative.

The Employee is required to provide, no later than 5 working days before the hearing:

- The name of their trade union representative or workplace colleague
- Any relevant documents they wish to be considered.

During the hearing the Employer will present the case for a formal warning or dismissal and the Employee will be given the opportunity to respond.

In reaching a decision, the manager hearing the case / panel may consider:

- The length of the Employee's employment and attendance record

- The impact of the Employee's attendance on their workplace performance, the Academy and whether this can be sustained
- Whether any progress has been made towards attendance targets
- Whether there is any identifiable medical condition which is preventing the Employee from achieving good attendance
- Any specialist advice that has been received regarding the Employee's condition, and their current and future ability to undertake the job role
- The impact of any measures / reasonable adjustments that have been put in place to support the Employee
- Whether all alternative options have been discussed – including redeployment and ill health retirement, where appropriate

The outcome of this meeting may be:

- To continue a further period of formal monitoring in which the Employee will need to achieve and sustain a satisfactory level of attendance
- To recommend further information or advice is sought (e.g. from an Occupational Health Advisor) or to explore alternative options such as ill health retirement or redeployment, where appropriate
- To issue a first or, if the seriousness of the attendance concerns warrant, a final formal written warning on the grounds of unsatisfactory attendance if such a warning has not already been issued
- To dismiss the Employee with notice on the grounds of unsatisfactory attendance or capability due to ill health.

The Headteacher/Principal should provide the Employee with written confirmation of what was discussed and the outcome of the meeting usually within 5 working days of the decision being made. The Employee may appeal against the decision within 5 working days of receipt of the outcome.

Where dismissal is an outcome, the notification letter should:

- Specify the reason for the dismissal, termination date and any notice period
- Advise the Employee of their right of appeal.

Where a sanction short of dismissal is given, the outcome notification letter should specify:

- The reason for the warning and how long this will remain 'live'
- The required improvement in attendance that is required and the timescale to achieve this
- Any agreed workplace adjustments / supportive measures
- When a further review of attendance will take place
- Advise the Employee that should an acceptable level of attendance not be achieved or maintained – further formal action, including the termination of employment, may be considered
- Advise the Employee of their right of appeal against a formal warning.

It will be deemed sufficient for the Academy to issue written confirmation of the outcome of the hearing to the Employee's last known address.

## 21.5 Appeal

*The arrangements for appeals are set out in further detail in Appendix A*

Although there is no statutory right of appeal, the MAT recognises the best practice advice offered by ACAS. Therefore an Employee may register their appeal in writing within 5 working days of receipt of the written outcome to the Clerk to the Local Governing Body with clear details as to why the appeal should be considered.

An appeal may be made on one or more of the following grounds:

- Unfairness of the decision
- That the sanction imposed was unreasonable
- That new evidence has come to light
- Significant procedural irregularities.

In instances where the grounds for appeal are not stated, the Academy will ask the Employee to confirm these to enable all parties to give due consideration of the issues prior to the appeal meeting.

Any supporting information must be submitted by the Employee no later than the deadline for the receipt of an appeal.

The Academy will provide the Employee with copies of any documents which will be referred to during the appeal in advance and usually no later than 5 working days before the appeal hearing.

An appeal hearing will be convened at the earliest opportunity, usually within 10 working days of receipt.

A workplace colleague or trade union representative may accompany an Employee to an appeal.

The purpose of the Appeal is to review the original decision based on the basis of the grounds for appeal presented by the Employee. The outcome may be

- To uphold the previous decision in full
- To uphold the previous decision in part – but reduce the level of the sanction imposed or amend other elements of the decision
- To uphold the Employee's appeal in full and withdraw any sanction.

The panel may not impose a higher level of sanction than reached previously.

The Employee will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal, usually within 5 working days of the decision being made.

Written confirmation of the outcome of the hearing will be sent to the Employee's last known address.

The decision of the appeal panel is final and there is no further right of appeal.

## **22 Long Term Absence**

### **22.1 Informal Action**

The Headteacher/Principal should ensure that they inform the MAT COO of any staff who are experiencing periods of long term absence.

The Headteacher/Principal will seek to address this informally at an early stage by meeting with the Employee. A meeting will usually take place within the first 4 weeks of any period of absence - but may be earlier if appropriate.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Explore reasons for absence and give an opportunity for the Employee to raise any health or other concerns arising from within or outside the workplace that may be impacting on their attendance
- Consider the likely duration of the absence
- Explain how the continuing absence is impacting on the individual's performance and The MAT
- Identify any support or adjustments that the Academy may be able to provide or any action the Employee can take to facilitate or expedite a return to work
- Make a referral to an Occupational Health Advisor or counselling service, undertake a risk assessment or consider any other follow up action that may be appropriate
- Consider whether the Employee will be able to achieve and maintain a satisfactory level of attendance
- Agree when a further review meeting will take place.

Should an Employee return to work before the review date the Academy may continue to support and monitor the situation informally to ensure that a successful and sustained return is made.

### **22.2 First Formal Absence Review**

Should the Employee remain absent from work, after an agreed interval the Headteacher/Principal will convene a Formal Absence Review meeting with the Employee.

The review period may vary depending on the circumstances of the case but the meeting will usually be held after 6-8 weeks of absence or once advice is received from an Occupational Health Advisor.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Discuss the impact of the absence on the individual and the Academy
- Consider any advice received from Occupational Health
- Consider whether the Employee will be able to return to work in the foreseeable future
- Consider the Employee's views on continuing in employment
- Consider other options which may be available such as Ill Health Retirement and Redeployment

- Identify any support or adjustments that the Academy may be able to provide or any action the Employee can take to facilitate or expedite a return to work
- Advise the Employee that if they are unable to return to work within a reasonable period consideration may be given to the termination of employment on the grounds of ill health
- Explain that if the Employee is unlikely to be in a position to return to work in the foreseeable future – the situation will be reviewed after an agreed period.

The Employee may be accompanied to this meeting by a workplace colleague or trade union representative.

In normal circumstances termination of employment would not take place until contractual sick pay has expired – however in instances where there is no prospect of a return to work or the Employee is permanently unfit to undertake the duties of the post, the Academy reserves the right to move immediately to a hearing to consider the case for dismissal on the grounds of capability due to ill health.

The Headteacher/Principal will provide the Employee with written confirmation of what was discussed and the outcome of the meeting usually within 5 working days.

### **22.3 Second Formal Absence Review**

A second review period and formal absence review meeting may be convened if required. Such a meeting will follow the same format as a First Formal Absence Review meeting.

A further review period(s) and absence review meeting(s) may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

However, if having reviewed the case, the Headteacher/Principal determines that the Employee:

- Is not currently fit for work and is unlikely to be able to return to work or sustain a return within a reasonable period of time;
- Is not currently capable of discharging the duties of the post and is unlikely to be able to do so within a reasonable period;

and

- All other appropriate options have been considered;

A hearing may be convened to consider the termination of employment on the grounds of capability due to ill health.

### **22.4 Hearing to consider dismissal on the grounds of capability due to ill health**

*The arrangements for hearings are set out in further detail in Appendix A*

The Employee will be given written notification of the date, time and venue of the hearing. This will usually be not less than 10 working days' notice. The notification will advise the Employee of the case to be considered and possible outcomes of the hearing – including that dismissal may be an outcome.

The Academy will provide the employee with all relevant documents which will be referred to during the hearing with the notification letter and in any case no later than 10 working days before the hearing.

The Employee has the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a workplace colleague or trade union representative.

The Employee is required to provide no later than 5 working days before the hearing:

- The name of their trade union representative or workplace colleague
- Any relevant documents they wish to be considered.

During the hearing the Employer will present the case for dismissal and the Employee will be given the opportunity to respond.

In reaching a decision, the manager hearing the case / panel may consider:

- The length of the Employee's employment and attendance record
- The impact of the Employee's ill health on attendance / workplace performance
- The length of the absence and impact of the Employee's ill health on the Academy and whether this can be sustained
- Whether or not it is envisaged the Employee may be able to return to work and if so when
- Any specialist advice that has been received regarding the Employee's condition, current and future ability to undertake the job role and anticipated timescales for return
- The impact of any measures / reasonable adjustments that have been put in place to support the Employee, including the findings of any risk assessment
- Whether all alternative options have been discussed – including redeployment and ill health retirement.

The panel should provide the Employee with written confirmation of what was discussed and the outcome of the hearing within 5 working days of the decision. The Employee may appeal against any sanction within 5 working days of receipt of the notification of the outcome.

Where dismissal is an outcome the notification letter should:

- Specify the reason for the dismissal, termination date and any notice period and
- Advise the Employee of their right of appeal against the dismissal.

Written confirmation of the outcome of the hearing will be sent to the Employee's last known address.

Where an Employee is not dismissed, appropriate next steps and further review date may be confirmed in writing with the Employee.

## **22.5 Appeal**

*The arrangements for appeals are set out in further detail in Appendix A*

Although there is no statutory right of appeal the MAT recognises best practice advice offered by ACAS. An Employee may register his / her appeal in writing within 5 working days of receipt of the written outcome to the Clerk to the Governing Body or nominated person with clear details as to why the appeal should be considered.

An appeal may be made on the following grounds:

- Unfairness of the decision
- That the sanction imposed was unreasonable
- That new evidence has come to light
- Significant procedural irregularities.

In instances where the grounds for appeal are not stated The MAT will ask the Employee to confirm these to enable all parties to give due consideration of the issues prior to the appeal hearing.

Any supporting information must be submitted by the Employee no later than the deadline for the receipt of an appeal.

The Academy will provide the Employee with copies of any documents which will be referred to during the appeal in advance and usually no later than 5 working days before the appeal hearing.

An appeal hearing will be convened at the earliest opportunity, usually within 10 working days of receipt.

A workplace colleague or trade union representative may accompany an Employee to an appeal.

The purpose of the appeal is to review the original decision on the basis of the grounds for appeal presented by the Employee. The outcome may be:

- To uphold the previous decision in full
- To uphold the previous decision in part – but reduce the level of the sanction imposed or amend other elements of the decision
- To uphold the Employee’s appeal in full and withdraw any sanction

The panel may not impose a higher level of sanction than reached previously.

The Employee will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal, usually within 5 working days of the decision being made.

Written confirmation of the outcome of the hearing will be sent to the Employee’s last known address.

The decision of the appeal panel is final and there is no further right of appeal.

### **23 Non-attendance at formal meetings and hearings**

Where an Employee or their representative is unavailable to attend they should inform the Academy at the earliest opportunity.

If an Employee’s representative is unavailable, a hearing or appeal may be deferred by up to 5 working days from the date of the original meeting.

In some instances it may not be possible for the Employee to attend meetings due to the nature of their illness. The Academy will seek to postpone meetings where it is mutually reasonable and practical. Other than in the most exceptional circumstances will more than one postponement be granted.

The Academy reserves the right to hold meetings in the Employee’s absence where all reasonable efforts to secure their attendance have been unsuccessful. In this event the Employee will be given the opportunity to make written representations or to be represented by a workplace colleague or trade union representative.

Should the Employee not attend and no representations be received the Headteacher/Principal or panel will make a decision as to the outcome based on the available information.

#### **24 Absence during the probationary period**

The Academy will monitor attendance during an Employee's probationary period. Any concerns will be managed in accordance with the probationary period guidance and without recourse to this full procedure.

#### **25 Absence / poor performance related to an ongoing medical condition or disability**

In instances where an Employee's disability or ongoing medical condition has an impact on performance in the workplace advice may be sought from an Occupational Health Advisor in the first instance to identify measures that can be put in place to support the Employee. This may include consideration of reasonable workplace support and adjustments under the provisions of the Equalities Act 2010 and / or redeployment to an alternative role.

Regular informal review meetings will be arranged to monitor the situation.

Should there be an ongoing impact on performance these concerns may be addressed through The MAT's Capability Procedure.

#### **26 Absence arising from management action to address performance / conduct concerns**

In instances where absence arises directly from management action to address performance and or conduct concerns – the Academy should seek immediate advice from an Occupational Health Advisor on how to support the Employee in the management of the absence and / or progress the performance or conduct issues.

#### **27 Ill Health Retirement**

If an Employee is unable to return to work due to continuing ill health an application for ill health retirement may be appropriate. Referrals for ill health retirement will be made in accordance with the provisions of the Teachers' Pension Scheme or the Local Government Pension Scheme (for Support Staff).

#### **28 Medical Suspension**

In some circumstances an Academy reserves the right to suspend Employees in accordance with their duty of care on medical grounds, pending medical advice, should their presence at work be deemed to be detrimental to the health, wellbeing and safety of the individual, colleagues or pupils. Any such suspension will be confirmed in writing, be for a limited period of time and reviewed regularly.

Such suspensions are made on contractual pay and do not count against an Employee's sick leave entitlement or pay.

#### **29 Time off for Medical Appointments**

Prior approval must be sought for time off for medical appointments during working hours.

Wherever possible, routine medical appointments should be made outside of working hours. Should this not be possible the Academy will allow reasonable paid time off to attend such appointments, where the request is supported by an appointment card or letter. Whenever possible, appointments should be made at the beginning or end of the working day to minimise absence during working hours.

The MAT reserves the right to require an Employee to reschedule non urgent appointments where their absence would have an adverse impact on the operation of an Academy.

Time off for medical appointments will not be recorded as sickness absence.

### **30 Time off for Elective Procedures**

Sick leave cannot be taken for elective procedures such as IVF treatment or cosmetic surgery.

However, where an employee is undergoing elective procedures, the MAT will support Academies seeking to offer employees flexible working arrangements to attend appointments. These will always be considered at the discretion of the Headteacher/Principal. Alternatively unpaid leave or annual leave (in the case of employees contracted all year round) may be requested for such absence. An Employee should make the Headteacher/Principal aware of the need for any time off under this provision as soon as practicable.

Should the consequences of the treatment make the Employee unfit for work this would be regarded as sickness absence in which instances the usual absence reporting and certification procedures would apply.

In the case of treatment or procedure to correct or prevent sickness absence arising from a diagnosed medical condition – treatment will not usually be regarded as sickness absence and authorised absence will be granted. Following the treatment or procedure any time off which is necessary may be regarded as sickness absence and should be supported by a valid 'fit note'.

### **31 Absences Related to Drug & Alcohol Dependency**

Absences related to a declared drug or alcohol dependency will be managed as an ill health issue in the first instance. Guidance may be sought from an Occupational Health Advisor and appropriate support and management action taken.

Instances of misconduct resulting from the use of alcohol or drugs will be addressed under the MAT disciplinary procedures.

### **32 Communicable Diseases**

Should an Employee believe that they have come into contact with a disease that could present a risk to public health they should inform the Academy and not attend work if any symptoms are experienced.

The Employee should seek immediate advice from their GP and, if advised that their presence in the workplace presents a risk to themselves or others, remain off work until the GP advises it is appropriate for them to return.

Should their GP advise that the Employee remain off work, such an absence will be regarded as sickness absence.

Should there be an infectious disease in the workplace which may place certain Employees at particular risk – the Academy will discuss with those individuals how such risks can best be minimised. In certain circumstances this may include a temporary period of authorised paid absence.

### **33 Accidents at work or due to a Third Party**

Employees should notify the Headteacher/Principal or other appropriate person of any accident or injury that occurs due to no fault of their own during the course of their work and follow the procedures for reporting and recording such incidents.

Support staff will receive normal contractual sick pay in these circumstances but this should be recorded separately to other sickness absence.

Teachers who are absent following an accident / injury at work will be paid in accordance with the provisions set out in the Burgundy Book.

Employees should notify the Academy of accidents / injuries where damages may be recoverable from a Third Party. An Employee who is absent from work as a result of an accident and receives damages in respect of loss of pay from a third party claim will be required to refund to any sick pay paid to them in relation to the incident.

### **34 Absences arising from recreational activities outside the workplace**

Employees should consult with the Headteacher/Principal about high-risk recreational activities that may result in absence from the workplace to determine whether their entitlement to sick pay may be affected.

### **35 Disclosure of formal sanctions in employment references**

Should an Employee have an unexpired formal sanction on file relating to attendance – this will be disclosed, upon request, in any reference provided by the Employer to a prospective Employer

### **36 Minuting Meetings and Record Keeping**

All absences will be recorded. Notes may be taken of all discussions and formal / informal meetings held with an Employee to discuss attendance and ill health issues. Where notes are taken a copy will be made available to the Employee.

Minutes will be taken at hearings and appeal meetings and shared with the Employee at the earliest opportunity. The Employee will have the opportunity to check the minutes and comment on the accuracy of the minutes. Where there are discrepancies between the Employer and Employee that cannot be resolved both version of the minutes will be held on record.

Covert recordings of meetings or hearings are expressly prohibited. Any recording of a meetings or hearing must be with the prior consent of all parties.

All records will be treated as confidential and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, which provides individuals with the right to request and have access to certain data.

### **37 Confidentiality and Data Protection**

The MAT and the member Academy will respect the confidentiality of all information relating to an Employee's health and handle sensitive personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **38 Suspected non-genuine absence**

Where it is suspected that an absence is not genuine or that false sickness declarations have been made the Academy may, after appropriate investigation, address the matter through disciplinary procedures.

### **39 Advice and Support to Employees**

Employees are advised to seek support from their Trade Union Representative or Professional Association with regards to absence issues. Employees may address questions about this procedure to the Headteacher/Principal or other delegated staff member.

## **Appendix A: Guidance for Hearings and Appeals**

### **General**

Hearings and Appeals should take place at a reasonable time and place usually during the Employee's normal working hours and, in the case of Employees who work term time only, during the School term. These arrangements may be varied by mutual agreement.

Consideration should be given to the venue for the hearing. There should be adequate rooms for the parties and arrangements to ensure that the hearing is conducted with discretion and confidentiality maintained. A venue away from the School site may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

The precise procedure to be followed will vary depending on the particular circumstances of each case, but in general the following will apply:

### **Role of the Panel / Manager Hearing the Case**

It is the role of the panel / manager hearing a case to consider the evidence presented and decide whether on the balance of probabilities:

- The case against the Employee has been established, and
- Whether it is appropriate and reasonable to issue a formal warning or dismiss the employee.

Should an Employee appeal the outcome of the hearing it is the role of the panel / manager considering the appeal to review the original decision on the basis of the grounds for appeal presented by the Employee and consider whether the original outcome was within a range of reasonable responses given the circumstances.

If the case is to be heard by a panel, a chair will be identified who will have responsibility for facilitating the hearing.

### **The Role of the Representative**

The Employee has the right to be accompanied to a hearing or appeal meeting by either a workplace colleague or recognised trade union representative.

The representative may address the hearing to put and sum up the Employee's case, respond on behalf of the Employee at the hearing and confer with the Employee during the hearing. The representative does not have the right to answer questions on the Employee's behalf, address the hearing if the Employee does not wish it or prevent the Employer from explaining their case.

### **The Role of the HR Advisor**

The School may request that a HR Advisor attends a hearing or appeal meeting whose role is to advise the panel on the procedure and any points of employment law.

A further HR Advisor may also be in attendance to support the School in the presentation of their case.

The HR Advisor may be allowed to ask questions and clarify issues on behalf of the party they are supporting.

## **Procedure for Hearings**

- The manager hearing the case / chair of the panel will introduce those present and their roles, explain the case to be considered, the procedure to be followed and the format of the hearing.
- The Schools' representative presents their case including and referring to written submissions / evidence. The Employee and their representative and panel may ask questions of the School's representative.
- The Employee or their representative presents their case including presenting any mitigating circumstances. The School's representative and panel may ask questions of the Employee and their representative.
- Adjournments may be requested by both parties or by the manager / panel during the hearing.
- Both parties have the opportunity to sum up their cases, with the Employee or their representative having the final word.
- The hearing will then be adjourned whilst the panel deliberates over the evidence. If further clarification is required both parties may be recalled and the hearing reconvened so that all parties may hear any additional evidence.
- The hearing is reconvened and the outcome is communicated verbally to the Employee. This should also be confirmed in writing. On occasion it may not be possible for the panel to reach a decision on the day of the hearing in which case the hearing may be reconvened or all parties may agree for the outcome to be communicated in writing within 5 working days of the decision being made.

## **Procedure for Appeals**

- The manager hearing the case / chair of the panel will introduce those present and their roles, explain the case to be considered, the procedure to be followed and the format of the meeting.
- The Employee or their representative shall put the case in support of the grounds for appeal, including any mitigating circumstances. This may include referring to written submissions and evidence. The School's representative and panel may ask questions of the Employee and their representative.
- The School's representative presents the case for upholding the previous manager / panel's decision and refer to written documentation. The Employee and their representative and panel may ask questions of the School's representative.
- The manager hearing the case / panel will invite both parties to sum up their cases, with the Employee or his/her representative having the final word. The hearing will then be adjourned whilst the panel deliberates over the evidence.
- Adjournments may be requested by both parties or by the panel during the appeal hearing. If new evidence is presented the appeal may need to be adjourned while this is investigated.
- The appeal hearing will then be adjourned whilst the panel deliberates over the evidence. If further clarification is required both parties may be recalled and the hearing reconvened so that all parties may hear any additional evidence.
- The appeal hearing is reconvened and the outcome is communicated verbally to the Employee. This should also be confirmed in writing. On occasion it may not be possible for the panel to reach a decision on the day of the hearing in which case the appeal may be reconvened or all parties may agree for the outcome to be communicated in writing within 5 working days of the decision being made.