

Staff Attendance Support & Management Policy

This policy is applicable to the Wonder Learning Partnership (WLP)

Important: This document can only be considered valid when viewed on the Wonder Learning Partnership website. If this document has been printed or saved to another location, you must check that the version date on your copy matches that of the document online.

The Wonder Learning Partnership welcomes the support of the recognised trade unions in seeking to implement this policy in a fair and consistent manner and actively encourages employees who are members of a trade union to seek the support of their trade union representative at the earliest opportunity.

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Note: Where reference is made to 'Manager' within this policy, this could mean Headteacher/Head of School, People Lead, Line Manager, Curriculum Leader, Business Manager, Trust or Local Governor, subject to delegation and authority for decision making within the Trust named above.

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Introduction

This policy sets out our procedures for reporting sickness absence and for the management of sickness absence in a fair and consistent way.

Sickness absence can vary from short intermittent periods of ill-health to a continuous period of long-term absence and have a number of different causes (for example, injuries, recurring conditions, or a serious illness requiring lengthy treatment).

We wish to ensure that the reasons for sickness absence are understood in each case and investigated where necessary. In addition, where needed and reasonably practicable, measures will be taken to assist those who have been absent by reason of sickness to return to work.

This policy does not form part of any colleague's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time. We may also vary the procedures set out in this policy, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case.

As part of the application of this policy, WLP will collect, process and store personal data and special categories of data in accordance with our data protection policy. We will comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation (being the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018) and any implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time, in relation to how we collect, hold and share special category personal data. Records will be kept in accordance with our Workforce Privacy Notice, our Records Management Policy and in line with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation.

Scope and purpose

This Policy covers all colleagues at all levels and grades regardless of status. This policy does not apply to contractors, consultants, agency workers or any self-employed individuals working for WLP.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that colleagues understand the expectations of WLP in terms of attendance at work. In applying this policy, we aim to ensure that attendance is managed appropriately and consistently and that colleagues receive relevant support.

Definitions

Short-term sickness absence is any absence that last between half a day and 20 days (four working weeks).

Long-term sickness absence is any absence that lasts for a continuous period of longer than four working weeks.

Disabilities

We are aware that sickness absence may result from a disability. At each stage of the sickness absence meetings procedure (set out below in this policy), particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the requirements of a job or other aspects of working arrangements that will provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.

If you consider that you are affected by a disability or any medical condition which affects your ability to undertake your work, you should inform the Headteacher/Head of School and/or HR.

Colleagues with a disability are encouraged to maintain a Disability Passport, which outlines agreed reasonable adjustments. This document will be reviewed periodically and used to ensure consistency in support, especially during changes in role or management.

Staff absence reporting procedure.

All colleagues are required to follow the reporting procedure set out below for any unplanned absences.

If you are taken ill or injured while at work, you should report this to your line manager or the Headteacher/Head of School. Managers should contact the Headteacher/Head of School to plan for anyone who is unwell to be accompanied home and/or to receive medical treatment where necessary.

In cases where a colleague is hospitalised, a nominated representative (such as a family member) may liaise with WLP on their behalf. WLP will make reasonable efforts to maintain appropriate contact and provide support during such periods.

If you cannot attend work for any reason, you should normally telephone the following as early as possible and no later than 7:15 am:

Academy:	Contact:	Role
Melbourne Primary School	Victoria Burdett	Headteacher
Pocklington Junior School	Kelly Foxton	Headteacher
Stamford Bridge Primary School	Nicola Massey	Headteacher
Woldgate School	Lauren Adams	Headteacher
Partnership Services Team	Luke Sloman	Chief Operating Officer

All colleagues should provide the following details:

- The nature of your absence, illness or injury.
- The expected length of your absence from work.
- Contact details.
- Any outstanding or urgent work that requires attention, including information in relation to classes that needs covering.

Contact by text message or social media such as What's app is not acceptable.

The Contact will ensure that:

- Any sickness absence that is notified to them is recorded and reported to the appropriate People Lead.
- Arrangements are made, where necessary, to cover work and to inform colleagues whilst maintaining confidentiality.

You may be contacted during your absence by the Headteacher/Head of School, Senior Leadership, your line manager or People Lead who will want to enquire after your health and be advised, if possible, as to your expected return date. For absences of more than three days, flexible contact arrangements can be put in place to support staff.

Teaching staff are not required to set cover work in the event of illness-related absence.

To ensure we are doing all we can to support pregnant colleagues, a pregnant colleague will be asked to attend a return-to-work interview when returning to work after any period of absence. However, any sickness absence by a pregnant colleague for a pregnancy-related reason will not be considered when checking if the need for formal action under our sickness absence management procedure has been triggered.

Evidence of incapacity

All colleagues returning from an unplanned absence must complete an Absence Return form.

For sickness absence of up to seven calendar days, you must self-certify.

For absence of more than a week you must obtain a certificate from an eligible healthcare professional (a 'Statement of Fitness for Work') stating that you are not fit for work and the reason(s) why. This should be forwarded to the People Lead as soon as possible. If your absence continues, further medical certificates must be provided to cover the whole period of absence.

Statements can be obtained from your GP or other qualified healthcare provider. If you require further guidance on how to obtain a statement, please contact the People Lead.

If your healthcare professional provides a certificate stating that you 'may be fit for work' you should inform the Headteacher/Head of School or People Lead immediately. We will discuss with you any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your healthcare professional's advice. This may take place at a return-to-work interview. If appropriate measures cannot be taken, you will remain on sick leave, and we will set a date to review the situation.

Where we are concerned about the reason for absence, or frequent short-term absence, we may require a medical certificate for each absence regardless of duration. In such circumstances, we will cover any costs incurred in obtaining such medical certificates, for absences of a week or less, on production of a doctor's invoice.

Where a colleague is absent immediately prior to an Academy closure period, they will continue to be deemed as being absent for the purposes of recording sickness and statutory and/or contractual sick pay during the Academy closure period, unless they provide a fit note indicating they are fit to return to work. The Academy will cover the cost of a fit note if applicable.

Fit notes can be obtained from your GP or other qualified healthcare professional. If you need more help obtaining a fit note, please contact People Lead.

If you are undergoing an elective or cosmetic surgery or procedure for which you will be absent from work, then any entitlement to sick pay (as set out below) will be subject to receipt of satisfactory medical evidence. This medical evidence will need to be in the form of a report from your doctor or a specialist confirming that you are undergoing the procedure on medical advice. You may be required to take annual leave for any absence related to a purely elective procedure.

Where absence is because of an infectious disease the Academy reserves the right to obtain medical evidence to ascertain whether the infection was directly attributable to the workplace.

Exclusions from the Attendance Management policy and procedure

The following appointments are not recorded as sickness for the purposes of the attendance management policy:

- GP appointments
- Dental appointments

- Hospital appointments
- Medically prescribed treatment appointment
- Any form of absence that is not related to the sickness of the employee

Where these prevent attendance at work, evidence of appointments must be seen and approved by managers in advance. It is expected the employee will take all reasonable steps to attend the above appointments whilst avoiding disruption to the workplace, subject to circumstances e.g. in holidays, the employees own time or at the start or end of their working day/shift.

Sickness absence which is as a direct consequence of pregnancy will be recorded as absence but will not be included in calculating absence for the purpose of attendance management procedures. Sickness absence which is a direct consequence of a disability is still recorded as absence, but managers need to consider reasonable adjustments in individual cases.

Absences arising out of an accident, assault, injury or disease whilst undertaking the duties of the post will be recorded as absence and will only be excluded in calculating absence for the purpose of attendance management procedures or the criteria for incremental progression where the Trust acknowledges liability. However, all such absences will be subject to investigation in accordance with the Trust's terms and conditions and Health and Safety policy.

Unauthorised absence

Cases of unauthorised absence will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Absence that has not been notified according to the sickness absence reporting procedure will be treated as unauthorised absence.

If you do not report for work and have not telephoned the Headteacher/Head of School to explain the reason for your absence, the Headteacher/Head of School or a member of senior leadership or People Lead will try to contact you, by telephone and in writing if necessary. This should not be treated as a substitute for reporting sickness absence.

Sick Pay

You should refer to your contract for details of the sick pay to which you are entitled.

If a period of sickness absence is, or appears to be, occasioned by actionable negligence, nuisance or breach of any statutory duty on the part of a third party, in respect of which damages are or may be recoverable, you must immediately notify the People Lead of that fact and of any claim, compromise, settlement or judgement made or awarded in connection with it and all relevant particulars that we may reasonably require. If we require you to do so, you must cooperate in any related legal proceedings and refund to us that part of any damages or compensation you recover that relates to lost earnings for the period of sickness absence as we may reasonably determine, less any costs you incurred in connection with the recovery of such damages or compensation, provided that the amount to be refunded to us shall not exceed the total amount we paid to you in respect of the period of sickness absence.

Failure to properly report your absence, undertake medical examinations as set out in paragraphs 41 to 45 or to provide medical or self-certification could lead to your pay being suspended.

For the purposes of sick pay calculations, absences will be recorded in days. Where partial days are involved, calculations will be prorated accordingly to ensure accurate entitlement and consistency.

Staying connected during sickness absence.

If you are absent on sick leave you should expect to be contacted from time to time by your line manager, and/or the Headteacher/Head of School and/or People Lead to discuss your wellbeing, expected length

of continued absence from work and any of your work that requires attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and will be kept to a reasonable minimum. It is the joint responsibility of both WLP and the colleague to maintain contact. For absences of more than three days, flexible contact arrangements can be put in place to support staff.

If you have any concerns while absent on sick leave, whether about the reason for your absence or your ability to return to work, you should feel free to contact your line manager and/or the Headteacher/Head of School and/or People Lead at any time.

We offer access to confidential counselling, which is available on request from the People Lead.

Medical examinations

We may, at any time in operating this policy, ask you to attend a medical examination by our Occupational Health provider and/or a doctor nominated by us.

You will be asked to agree that any report produced in connection with any such examination may be disclosed to us and that we may discuss the contents of the report with our advisers and the relevant doctor.

Failure to agree to a reasonable request may result in decisions being made in the absence of any medical information. In some circumstances disciplinary action may be taken where you do not cooperate with the sickness absence process.

In the event of a difference of opinion between a colleague's GP or other healthcare professional and the school's occupational health advisors, regarding a colleague's fitness for work, functional capacity or the existence of an underlying medical condition contributing towards persistent absences, the OH advisor's advice will normally take precedence. In some cases, an independent medical advisor may be asked to give a second opinion.

This process is in line with our Workforce Privacy Notice which sets out how we will gather, process, and hold special category personal data of individuals during employment.

Return to work interviews.

If you have been absent on sick leave for 3 days or more, we may arrange for you to have a supportive return-to-work interview with the People Lead, Headteacher, line manager or other appropriate person. A return-to-work interview enables us to confirm the details of your absence. It also gives you the opportunity to raise any concerns or questions you may have, and to bring any relevant matters to our attention.

Where your doctor has provided a certificate stating that you 'may be fit for work' we will usually hold a return-to-work interview to discuss any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your healthcare professional's advice.

Returning to work from long-term sickness absence

We are committed to helping and supporting colleagues to return to work from long-term sickness absence. As part of our sickness absence meetings procedure, we will, where appropriate and possible, support returns to work by:

- Obtaining medical advice.
- Making reasonable adjustments to the workplace, working practices, and working hours, including a time-limited phased return to work.

- A phased return to work will often be a recommendation of an occupational health advisor or the colleague's GP. Colleagues will receive their full pay during a phased return of up to 4 weeks. In the event a colleague requests that the phased return is extended beyond 4 weeks, a dialogue will be held with the colleague in regard to a temporary contractual change being made to their working hours to accommodate the request, and their pay adjusted accordingly.
- A phased return to work will typically begin at 50% of normal working hours in the first week increasing to 75% in the third week and 100% by the fourth week. Adjustments may be based on individual circumstances and medical advice, with the aim of supporting a sustainable return to full duties.
- Considering redeployment; and/or
- Agreeing a return-to-work programme with everyone affected.

In addition to phased returns, colleagues returning from a period of illness may be offered a range of support including access to occupational health services, counselling, flexible working arrangements and other reasonable adjustments to aid recovery and reintegration into the workplace.

If you are unable to return to work in the longer term, we will consider whether you are entitled to any benefits under your contract.

Terminal Illness

Where a colleague is suffering from a terminal illness, we will endeavour as far as possible to accommodate their wishes and to provide additional support where feasible. This includes discussion of the possibility of ill-health retirement or facilitating conversations with the relevant pension scheme.

While we will support colleagues who wish to continue working, colleagues with a terminal illness should bear in mind that there may come a time when they will be unable to continue working. In this case, the Headteacher/Head of School will discuss the options with the colleague, with the support of HR.

The colleague's line manager will talk to the colleague about whether to inform their colleagues, and if so, when, and how to do so with the colleague's permission.

The organisation provides access to counselling services to assist during this difficult time.

Absence meetings procedure

We may apply this procedure whenever we consider it necessary, including, for example, if you:

- Have been absent due to illness on a number of occasions in line with the following triggers for actions:
 - 3 or more occasions **and/or** 8 days in any rolling 6-month period*
 - 4 or more occasions **and/or** 12 days in any rolling 12-month period*
 - 5 or more occasions **and/or** 20 days in any rolling 18 months period*

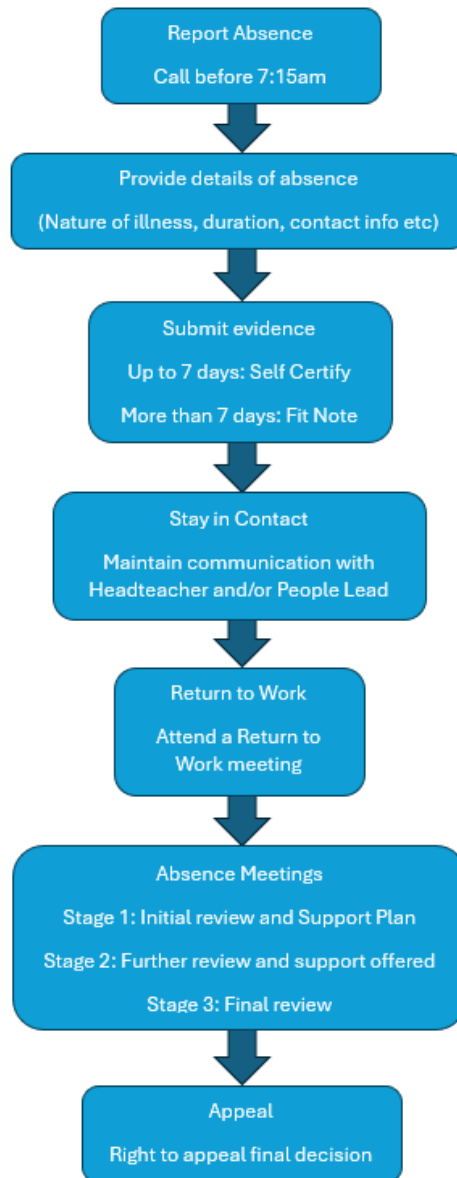
*An occasion is defined as a period of absence that may be consecutive days, single days or half days. This includes intermittent absences and longer periods of absence. Recurrent absences with the same illness in short succession (i.e. one week) may be considered as one occasion subject to discussion regarding underlying medical cause for absence. Rolling periods refer to the 6 or 12 months previous to the latest absence.

The number of absence days (not occasions) above will be pro-rata'd for part time colleagues and consideration will be given to adjusting triggers for colleagues with a disability. Pregnancy related absences will be discounted when calculating triggers.

- Have discussed matters at a return-to-work interview that require investigation; and/or
- Have been absent for more than 10 working days. This will prompt a review meeting, but not automatic progression to stage 1 unless appropriate following a full review of circumstances.

Where a colleague has been absent for more than 20 working days, this will usually be treated as long term absence. The review period following a stage 1 meeting may be extended to allow a fair opportunity for improvement upon return to work. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with HR and Occupational Health.

Trigger points are not automatic thresholds for formal action but prompts for conversation, review, discussion and offer of support. Consideration will be given to the context of each absence, including underlying health conditions, disability, or pregnancy-related illness.



The policy may still be applied where the colleague persistently falls just below the trigger points and where the absence is perceived to be a cause for concern.

Unless it is impractical to do so, we will give you five days written notice of the date, time, and place of a sickness absence meeting. We will put any concerns about your sickness absence and the basis for those concerns in writing or otherwise advise why the meeting is being called. A reasonable opportunity for you to consider this information before a meeting will be provided.

This meeting will be conducted by the Headteacher/Head of School or their nominee and will normally be attended by the People Lead. You may bring a companion with you to the meeting.

You must take all reasonable steps to attend a meeting. Failure to do so without good reason may be treated as misconduct. If you or your companion are unable to attend at the time specified, you should immediately inform the Headteacher/Head of School or People Lead who will seek to agree an alternative time.

A meeting may be adjourned if your Headteacher/Head of School or People Lead is awaiting receipt of information, needs to gather any further information or consider matters discussed at a previous meeting. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any added information obtained before the meeting is reconvened.

Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, the reasons for it, and of the right of appeal will be given to you in writing within five days of a sickness absence meeting (unless this time scale is not practicable, in which case it will be provided as soon as is practicable).

Formal warnings issued for sickness will remain live for a period of 12 months from the date of issue, during which time further absences beyond the review period would be dealt with either at the next stage of the procedure or by an extension of the current live warning. If further absences occur shortly after the end of the 12-month period (or any extended warning), we reserve the right to deal with the matter at the same stage of the procedure and not return to earlier stage.

If at any time, your Headteacher/Head of School considers that you have taken or are taking sickness absence when you are not unwell, they may refer matters to be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Right to be accompanied at meetings

You may bring a companion to any meeting or appeal meeting under this procedure.

Your companion may be either a trade union representative or a work colleague. You should provide their details to the Headteacher/Head of School or People Lead, in suitable time before it takes place.

Colleagues are allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay to function as a companion. However, they are not obliged to function as a companion and may decline a request if they so wish.

We may at our discretion permit other companions (for example family members) where this will help overcome difficulties caused by a disability or difficulty understanding English.

Some companions may not be allowed: for example, anyone who may have a conflict of interest, or whose presence may prejudice a meeting. Companions should not normally work at another academy, unless no one reasonably suitable is available at the academy where you work.

A companion may make representations, ask questions, and sum up your position, but will not be allowed to answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during a meeting.

Stage 1: Initial Review Meeting

This will follow the procedure set out above on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at review and support meetings.

The purposes of the Initial Review Meeting may include:

- Discussing the reasons for absence.
- Considering what, if any, measures or support might improve your health and/or attendance. A support plan should be considered as part of this meeting and process and may be overseen by another appropriate colleague (line manager etc). This may include reasonable adjustments and/or Occupational Health reviews etc.
- When you are on long-term sickness absence, determining how long the absence is likely to last.
- Where you have been absent on a number of occasions, determining the likelihood of further absences.
- Considering whether medical advice is required or, if already obtained, what that advice is.
- Determining a way forward, action that will be taken and a timescale for review (normally three months), and/or a further meeting under the sickness absence procedure.

Issuing a written warning that your employment may be at risk if your attendance does not improve, or you do not return to work.

Stage 2: Further Review and Support Meeting

Depending on the matters discussed at the first stage of the sickness absence procedure, a further meeting or meetings may be necessary if your attendance remains unsatisfactory. Arrangements for meetings under the second stage of the sickness absence procedure will follow the procedure set out above on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at sickness absence meetings.

The purpose of further meetings may include:

- Discussing the reasons for and impact of your ongoing absence(s).
- Considering what, if any, further measures or support might improve your health and/or attendance. A support plan should be reviewed/considered as part of this meeting and process and may be overseen by another appropriate colleague (line manager etc). This may include reasonable adjustments and/or Occupational Health reviews etc.
- Where you are on long-term sickness absence, discussing how long your absence is likely to last.
- The impact of any support already offered, and what support may be available going forward
- Where you have been absent on a number of occasions, discussing the likelihood of further absence.
- If it has not been obtained, considering whether medical advice is required. If it has been obtained, considering the advice that has been given and whether further advice is required.
- Considering your ability to return to or remain in your job in view both of your capabilities and the needs of the school and any adjustments that can reasonable be made to your job to enable you to do so.
- Considering redeployment opportunities and whether any adjustments can reasonably be made to assist in redeploying you.
- Where you can return from long term sick leave, whether to your job or redeployed job, agreeing a phased return to work programme.
- If it is considered that you are unlikely to be able to return to work from long-term absence, whether there are any benefits for which you should be considered.
- Determining a way forward, action that will be taken and a timescale for review (normally three months), and/or a further meeting(s). This may, depending on steps we have already taken, including warning you that you are at risk of dismissal if your attendance does not improve or you do not return to work.

Issuing a final written warning that your employment may be at risk of dismissal if your attendance does not improve or you do not return to work.

Stage 3: Final Review and Support Meeting

Where you have been warned that you are at risk of dismissal and the improvement has not been made, we may invite you to a meeting under the third stage of the absence procedure. Arrangements for this meeting will follow the procedure set out above on the arrangements for and right to be accompanied at Review and Support Meetings.

The purposes of the meeting will be:

- To review the meetings that have taken place, the matters discussed, and warnings issued.
- Where you remain on long-term sickness absence, to consider whether there have been any changes since the last meeting under stage two of the procedure, either as regards your return to work or opportunities for return or redeployment.

- To review the impact of any support plan implemented, including reasonable adjustments and Occupational Health input.
- To consider any further matters that you wish to raise.
- To consider whether there is a reasonable likelihood of you returning to work or achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time.
- To consider if ill health retirement is a possibility where medical advice is clear it is unlikely that a colleague will be fit to return to their role soon.
- To consider the possible termination of your employment where all other options have been exhausted.
- Termination will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Appeals

You may appeal against the outcome of any stage of this procedure, and you may bring a companion to an appeal meeting.

An appeal should be made in writing, stating the full grounds of appeal, to the Headteacher/Head of School within five days of the date on which the decision was sent to you.

Unless it is not practicable, you will be given five days written notice of an appeal meeting. In cases of dismissal the appeal will be held as soon as possible. Any new matters raised in an appeal may delay an appeal meeting if further investigation is required.

You will be provided with written details of any added information which becomes known before an appeal meeting. You will also be given a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the meeting.

Where practicable, an appeal meeting will be conducted by a more senior colleague such as the Chief Operating Officer.

Depending on the grounds of appeal, an appeal meeting may be a complete rehearing of the matter or a review of the original decision.

Following an appeal, the original decision may be confirmed, revoked, or replaced with a different decision. The final decision will be confirmed in writing, if possible, within five days of the appeal meeting. There will be no further right of appeal.

The date that any dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of an appeal. However, if the appeal is successful, the decision to dismiss will be revoked with no loss of continuity or pay.

Additional considerations and linked policies

WLP will consider a range of options to support colleagues returning from sickness absence, including flexible working, redeployment and ill health retirement. These options will be explored in line with relevant policies, including the flexible working policy and ill health retirement.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety Policy, Flexible Working Policy and Code of Conduct.

Appendix 1 – Equality and Diversity screening

Purpose of screening

This screening is designed to assess the impact of the WLP Staff Attendance Support & Management Policy on individuals and groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. It ensures that the policy promotes fairness, eliminates discrimination and supports inclusivity across WLP.

Protected characteristics considered

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Screening Questions

Screening Question	Response	Comments/Actions
Does the policy affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of a protected characteristic?	No	The policy applies equally to all colleagues. Adjustments are made for disability and pregnancy-related absence.
Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	No	Monitoring will continue to ensure no disproportionate impact.
If the answer to any of the above is yes, can this impact be justified?	N/A	N/A
Does the policy include reasonable adjustments for disabled colleagues?	Yes	Reasonable adjustments are considered at all stages of the absence process.
Does the policy promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	The policy is designed to support all colleagues fairly and consistently.
Is the policy likely to have a positive impact on fostering good relations?	Yes	Clear procedures and support mechanisms promote trust and transparency.

Conclusion

The WLP Staff Attendance Support & Management Policy has been screened for equality and diversity considerations. No adverse impacts have been identified. The policy supports WLP's commitment to promoting equality, eliminating discrimination, and fostering an inclusive working environment.

Screened by: Luke Sloman, Chief Operating Officer

Date of screening: March 2026