



WEST ESSEX SCITT



Absence Policy

Overview

It is a requirement of the West Essex SCITT Initial Teacher Training programme that trainees attend all training provided, including training days at The Alderton Junior School and school placement days. Any trainee missing days in school or training days without extenuating circumstances or medical reasons, will be viewed as acting unprofessionally. This may ultimately affect the trainee's ability to demonstrate achievement of the Teachers' Standards.

This policy aims to enable West Essex SCITT to exercise its duty of care and responsibilities in relation to ensuring that its trainees pursue their studies with diligence and avail themselves of the educational opportunities made available. It recognises that in such an intensive, one-year course absence, for whatever reason, leads to missed learning opportunities which may impact on the ability to provide evidence relating to the successful demonstration of the Teachers' Standards at the end of the course. It is, therefore, expected that a trainee will be regular and punctual in attendance at all centre and school-based sessions prescribed by the course.

This policy encompasses, with minor adaptations, approaches to the management of absence commonly used in the teaching profession as a whole.

ITT criteria states that the minimum period of time to be spent training in schools for a **primary graduate non-employment based (i.e. tuition fee funded/unsalaried) programme** is 120 days (24 weeks). Trainees who have extended periods of absence and/or frequent occasional absences may be required to complete an additional assignment in respect of academic work missed and, in extreme cases, the course period may be extended. Any trainee experiencing regular absences and/or a prolonged absence of more than a week from the programme will need to discuss the effect of this disruption to their training with their Lead Mentor and/or the West Essex SCITT Director as such absences may affect the trainee's ability to meet the Teachers' Standards within the normal time frame of the course. If a tuition fee funded/ unsalaried trainee is unable to complete the minimum required time in school due to prolonged absence or illness, the West Essex SCITT would be unable to award them QTS and they may be required to continue their training in the following academic year.

In the case of **salaried** trainees who experience regular and/or prolonged absence, if the trainee is clearly meeting the expected standards and has sufficient evidence to show that they are adequately meeting the Teachers' Standards, despite the absence, the West Essex SCITT Director may allow the trainee to be awarded QTS.

Attendance and Professional Expectations

Trainees are required to attend all training sessions and school based INSET. If, for an unavoidable reason, a trainee is absent from a training session or INSET he/she/they is responsible for obtaining details of the training from the provider and/or information from lead mentors about any tasks.

Trainees should not expect release from the planned Initial Teacher Training Programme activities to:

- attend special events at his/her/their placement school- training takes precedence
- attend medical appointments- these should be arranged to avoid training days
- attend school visits prior to an interview- these should be arranged to avoid training days

On school placement days trainees are expected to be punctual and to observe the hours of work of their placement school. On Initial Teacher training days, sessions normally begin at 9.00 and finish at 15:30. Trainees may be expected to remain at The Alderton Junior School for longer on training days, at the discretion of tutors, in order to take part in file scrutiny and academic surgeries. Trainees are expected to make themselves available for all sessions.

Notification of Absence

The contact for all matters to do with absence is Vanessa Smullen, SCITT Manager.

Each trainee will provide details of a named representative (usually Next of Kin) who will contact, or can be contacted by, West Essex SCITT in relation to the trainee's absence from the course.

A trainee will notify the provider of any absence from the course, whether the absence relates to school placement or central training, no later than 10.00 on the first day of any period of absence. If, by that time, the provider has not been informed of an absence, the provider will contact the trainee or the named representative to confirm the safety of the trainee and ascertain why he/she is not in attendance.

If after ten working days the provider is unable to contact the trainee or the named representative, the provider will invoke a suspension of studies, informing Student Finance England (SFE) through a Change of Circumstances (COC) submission should one be required. This may have an impact on any maintenance loans and bursaries that have been arranged. If there is no contact in the following ten working days, the trainee will be deemed to have withdrawn from the course and the relevant authorities will be informed.

Absence due to illness

Illness on a school placement day

- If, through illness, a trainee feels unable to attend a **school placement day** they should contact the school following the procedures outlined in the placement school's Absence Policy. It is important that the school are aware of the absence before the start of the school day. Trainees should also contact the West Essex SCITT Manager by email on the first day of absence and on return to school.
- Should a trainee be expecting a lead mentor visit on his/her/their day of absence then it is also essential that he/she/they inform them as soon as possible and the visit must be rearranged at the earliest convenience.

Illness on a training day (Wednesdays)

- If a trainee is unable to attend a training session through illness he/she should contact **the West Essex SCITT Manager by email** on each day of absence.

Self-certificated absence

There is a limit for self-certification of six days within the course as a whole.

Medically stated sickness

If a trainee is absent for more than five days, a medical certificate or statement signed by a doctor must be sent to the provider as soon as practicable. If the trainee remains ill when the note expires, further medical evidence will be required.

If the absence continues for a prolonged period (more than 15 working days) or a date for the return to study exceeds 15 working days from the beginning of the absence, the provider will notify the trainee in writing that it is suspending the trainee's study from that 15 day point. If the trainee is in receipt of finance from Student Finance England (SFE) a Change of Circumstances form (COC) will be submitted to SFE by the provider suspending studies on medical grounds effective from that date.

If a trainee is subject to an ongoing illness such as depression, arthritis, unstable diabetes or asthma, a trainee should submit a form for mitigation together with a medical certificate which explains the extent of the illness and the likely effect on their progress through the course before the 15 working day deadline. The situation will be referred to the provider to determine whether the trainee should be considered for deferral on medical grounds.

Convalescence

The nature of the course does not easily allow for light duties or other ways of reducing the workload. However, the provider will ensure that on return to the course a trainee has a few days' respite to become fully fit before carrying out important assessments.

A trainee returning to work after an extended period of absence may be required to submit to a medical examination by Occupational Health professionals to determine whether and what staged return to the course should be implemented.

Attendance Records

An attendance spreadsheet will be updated and managed by the West Essex SCITT Manager. This will be used to maintain up to date records of attendance for each trainee. Attendance records will be used to determine if trainees have completed sufficient training days to achieve QTS as well as for writing professional references and to monitor the professional requirements of the West Essex SCITT regarding trainee attendance.

Maternity Leave

The nature of this one year course means maternity leave as such is not available but the provider will aim to exercise what flexibility is possible within the course structure to enable the trainee to achieve QTS. The length of absence anticipated means that the course will have to be extended into a second year providing there is no substantial change in the requirements for QTS anticipated. A trainee who becomes pregnant after being offered a place or during the first half term of the course can apply to have the course deferred for one year only, subject to there being no substantial change to the requirements for QTS during the deferment. Any trainee requesting maternity leave must complete the course within six terms. One of those terms must be the final term of an academic year. There may be some implications for a trainee receiving finance from SFE.

The preferred plan is for a trainee to return in the second year two weeks before the anniversary of the date of commencement of maternity leave.

The trainee should notify the provider as soon as is practicable but not later than 14 weeks (unless there is good cause) before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) that she wishes to be absent for maternity.

Absence on account of illness which is attributable to the pregnancy, including absence on account of miscarriage, and which occurs outside the period of absence for maternity, shall be treated as ordinary sickness absence and shall be subject to the conditions normally governing such leave, provided it is covered by a doctor's statement.

Maternity leave should not normally be taken earlier than 11 weeks before the EWC.

When maternity leave begins, the provider will write to the trainee to formally suspend the trainee's studies, informing the SFE through a COC where required and record the trainee as dormant on the DMS.

The trainee will inform the provider of the date of birth of the child.

The trainee may not return to study less than two weeks after the birth of the child. Thereafter, the trainee should discuss with the provider when she intends to return to study and a timeframe for the completion of the course be agreed.

Where a trainee does not make contact with the provider, the provider may write to the trainee no earlier than 21 days before the anniversary of the commencement of maternity leave, asking her to confirm the date of birth and her intention to return to work. The trainee or her representative must respond within 14 days of receiving the request. If there is no response, the provider will withdraw the trainee from the course.

If requiring student finance, the trainee will need to apply for finance (as a returning student repeating Year 1) for the second academic year. At the beginning of the first term, the trainee will continue to have her studies suspended and SFE informed through a COC. A further COC will be completed when the trainee returns to the course.

For a trainee paying fees through an SFE loan, the fee structure means that the trainee must be present in Term 3 of one of the years in question. If that is not the case, the provider has the right to request 25% of the total tuition fees direct from the trainee.

Paternity Leave

The nature of this one year course means paternity leave as such is not available but the provider will aim to exercise what flexibility is possible to allow a short period of absence within the course structure to enable the trainee to achieve QTS. If the length of absence anticipated is significant, the course is likely to have to be extended into a second year for which there may be financial implications. See compassionate leave below.

Medical Appointments

A trainee should inform the provider of any appointments for which he/she/they needs to take leave, being prepared to offer further evidence if requested. The difficulty of obtaining GP and hospital appointments is acknowledged and these will be honoured wherever possible though a trainee should attempt to ensure follow up appointments do not impact unnecessarily on attendance on the course. Other routine medical appointments should not be made during the working day.

Leave of Absence

From Placement School

Permission must be sought from the Headteacher of the trainee's placement school, in advance, if a trainee needs to miss time in school due to personal reasons (e.g. funeral, hospital appointment, job interview). **All such absences must be reported to the West Essex SCITT Manager by email.**

From Training Days at The Alderton Junior School

Permission must be sought from the West Essex SCITT Director, in advance, for a trainee to miss training sessions. It is a requirement of the course for professional reasons that the trainee attends all training sessions unless there are medical reasons or permission has been granted by the West Essex SCITT Director. **All such absences must be reported to the West Essex SCITT Manager by email.**

For absences longer than two consecutive days, or for a cumulative total of more than five days, the request will require the additional approval of the Accounting Officer. It is expected that an application will be made for leave of absence, in writing, at least two working days before the absence occurs.

The following outlines the rationale for decisions relating to common requests for leave of absence. They should not be seen as an exhaustive list, but serve as an indication as to how leave of absence decisions will be expedited.

Graduation ceremonies: Absence of one day to attend a graduation ceremony for a first degree will be granted. Any requests for travelling time associated with this would not be expected to exceed half a day in total.

Interviews: All reasonable requests will be honoured. Decisions relating to absence for interviews abroad or in places involving extra days for travel will be limited to a cumulative maximum of three working days in the year.

Visits to schools before application/interview: All reasonable requests will be honoured. Decisions relating to absence for interviews abroad or in places involving extra days for travel will be limited to a cumulative maximum of three working days in the year.

Visits to schools prior to employment: One day will be granted before the end of the final teaching experience. A further day may be granted after this date and before the course ends. Additional days requested by the school employing the trainee after the course may be granted at the discretion of the provider.

Compassionate Leave

In the event of such emergencies as bereavement, serious accident or illness of an immediate family member/dependant, up to three working days will be allowed for the death of a father, mother, brother or sister and up to five working days leave on the death of a husband, wife, partner, son or daughter.

Requests for additional compassionate leave, or in the case of a cumulative total of more than ten working days, must be referred to the Accounting Officer.

Private and Personal

A maximum of two days at any one time will be granted for the purposes of urgent and unforeseen personal business which does not come under the scope of compassionate leave or to fulfil an important and significant personal commitment which cannot be undertaken at any other time.

Statutory Leave of Absence: up to a cumulative total of five working days during the course will be allowed. However, given the intense nature of the course, trainees will be advised that membership of bodies requiring such absence should be reviewed.

Holidays: the intensive nature of the course means that holidays, including those booked before commencement of the course, should not be undertaken.

If a provider wishes to allow holiday leave, for example to attend a family wedding, it should be noted that SFE may be informed and an adjustment to any maintenance loans may follow.

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