



# AVANTI SCHOOLS TRUST

## COVID 19 ABSENCE POLICY

**August 2020**

*Review date: December 2020*

## 1. SCOPE OF COVID SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Trust is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment for both its staff and pupils and wishes to support the Government's campaign for a healthy lifestyle and a healthy nation.
- 1.2 To this end, this policy sets out steps that the Company is taking in order to tackle the coronavirus outbreak, alongside expectations that are placed upon employees.

## 2. INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES

- 2.1 We strongly encourage all employees to follow these guidelines from the World Health Organisation on infection control, both whilst at work and in their daily lives.

This includes:

- (a) frequently cleaning their hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
- (b) when coughing and sneezing, covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue, throwing this tissue away immediately and washing their hands
- (c) avoiding close contact with anyone who has fever and cough.

## 3. IF YOU DEVELOP SYMPTOMS

- 3.1 If you begin to display symptoms of the virus, you must follow government guidance to find out what to do next, which may involve internet and phone services. You should not go to your doctor's surgery. You must also notify your absence contact at the earliest opportunity
- 3.2 In this policy, "**Absence Contact**" means:
  - (a) your line manager if you are a Principal;
  - (b) your Principal if you are a member of the teaching staff or School Business Manager;
  - (c) your Principal or the School Business Manager if you are a member of support staff;
  - (d) our Head of HR if you are a member of central Trust staff; or

- (e) the Trust Chair if you are our CEO.

## **4. YOUR OBLIGATIONS**

### **EMPLOYEES WHO CONTRACT THE VIRUS**

- 4.1 If you contract the virus, you should take and follow medical advice on the length of your sickness absence. Employees who contract the virus or who are self-isolating for more than 7 days can now apply for an isolation note through a new online service. <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>. You should inform your Absence Contact as soon as possible.

### **SENDING EMPLOYEES HOME/REQUIRING EMPLOYEES NOT TO ATTEND WORK**

- 4.2 If we are concerned that you may have been exposed to the virus, even though you are not displaying symptoms, we may take the decision to send you home/require you not to attend work. This may occur if, for example, you inform us that you have been in close contact with someone else who has, or may have, the virus. This is treated as a period of leave for medical reasons and you will be paid. Only The Trust can determine periods of leave for medical reasons and this will be reviewed continuously in line with Government guidance. It is not considered a disciplinary sanction; the period of leave will be in recognition of the possibility that your continued presence in the workplace poses a risk of spreading the virus. If, during this period of leave, you develop symptoms, you should follow Government guidance on what to do next, which may include using internet or telephone services, and follow our normal sickness reporting procedures. You will then be treated as being on a period of sickness absence.

### **PERIODS OF SELF-ISOLATION**

- 4.3 Where government policy dictates that employees are required to self-isolate if they have recently returned from certain countries even if they have no symptoms, this means that you must stay at home and not have contact with other people. In the event that this applies to you, you must not attend work during the isolation period. If you did not already inform us of travel to such countries beforehand, you must inform us before your intended return to work. Your manager will keep in contact with you during this period. Where feasible, we may consider whether you can work from home during this period, or whether we can agree a period of paid annual leave with you. Where no other agreement is made for this time off work, the absence will be unpaid.

## **ATTENDANCE AT WORK**

- 4.4 Unless you have followed our usual reporting procedures in relation to sickness absence, are in self-isolation following Government guidance, or not attending work under our specific instruction, you are expected to attend work as normal.

## **TEMPORARY CLOSURE**

- 4.5 As time progresses, it may become clear that the Trust is temporarily unable to continue its operations as normal. In this scenario, we may be forced to close all, or part, of the Trust temporarily until such a time as we are able to resume operations. Whilst we will do everything we can to ensure that this does not happen, we may be left with no option but to reduce your hours or place you on lay off or short time working. This will be discussed and agreed on an individual basis with employees. The Trust will seek to provide you as much notice as is reasonably practicable for any temporary shortage of work.

## **5. RETURN TO WORK DISCUSSIONS**

- 5.1 After every absence your Absence Contact must, before you begin to undertake duties, discuss with you:
- (a) the reasons for your absence (see 5.5 below);
  - (b) the appropriate notification has been completed;
  - (c) your fitness to work; and
  - (d) whether there are any issues which require particular support from us.
- 5.2 A record of this discussion should be placed on your personnel file.
- 5.3 Your Absence Contact may use the return to work discussion as an opportunity to bring you up to date with developments at work during your absence.
- 5.4 It is expected that a return to work discussion would normally last no more than 10 minutes.
- 5.5 Absence Trigger points will not be affected by illness or time off due to Covid 19.

## **6. SICKNESS PAY**

- 6.1 Employees who have coronavirus or cannot work because they are self-isolating are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from day one. This includes individuals who may be a carrier of COVID-19 but may not have symptoms and people in the same household as those who display COVID-19 symptoms, and those who have been told to self-isolate by the test and trace service.
- 6.2 For those isolating for 14 days following notification from the test and trace

service you must provide Avanti Schools Trust a copy of the notification. This will allow the trust to reclaim the SSP.

- 6.3 You will receive SSP for every day you are off work (4<sup>th</sup> day onwards for any other illness)
- 6.4 Please see your employment contract for additional information on your specific possible additional sick pay allowance.

## **7. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

- 7.1 We would like to remind employees that, if they have any worries or concerns about any aspect of the current situation, they have access to a confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service on **0800 030 5182**.

This policy will be continuously reviewed in line with Government guidance.