

Guiding Principles

This policy aims to enable Mid Essex ITT 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 (two years if a part-time trainee) 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. Failure to sustain attendance of 95% or above (at school, Core Training and Subject Expert Training) jeopardises the trainee's ability to demonstrate competence against the Teachers' Standards.

This policy encompasses, with minor adaptations, approaches to the management of absence commonly used in the teaching profession as a whole. This policy is applicable to all Mid Essex ITT trainees.

1. Notification of absence

1.1 The contact for all matters to do with absence is admin@midsexteachertraining.com as well as the trainee's own Course Tutor.

1.2 A trainee will, before the course commences, provide the contact details for a named representative who will contact, or can be contacted by, Mid Essex ITT, in relation to the trainee's absence from the course.

1.3 Trainees must inform their placement/employing school of any absence and the reason for that absence (as would any other employee). This must be in line with the placement school's absence policy with the correct staff members notified, including the placement school's mentor, Professional Tutor, Head of Department and classroom teacher by the placement school's designated absence notification time and through the correct means, for example, the designated absence line.

1.4 A trainee will notify Mid Essex ITT of any absence from the course, whether the absence relates to school placement or central studies, no later than 7.30am on the first day of any period of absence. If, by that time, Mid Essex ITT has not been informed of an absence, we will contact the named representative to confirm the safety of the trainee and ascertain why they are not in attendance.

1.5 If after ten working days Mid Essex ITT is unable to contact the trainee or the named representative, we 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.

1.6 If the trainee fails to follow the notification of absence procedure, this may be treated as a professionalism concern.

2. Sickness absence

2.1 Self-certificated absence

2.1.1 For absences of seven consecutive days (including weekends) or fewer, a trainee will be required to complete the self-certification absence form obtainable from Mid Essex ITT. These must be returned to admin@midsexteachertraining.com on return to placement or central training.

2.2 Medically stated sickness

2.2.1 If a trainee is absent for more than seven consecutive days, a medical certificate or statement signed by a doctor must be sent to Mid Essex ITT as soon as practicable.

2.2.2 If the trainee remains ill when the note expires, further medical evidence will be required.

2.2.3 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, Mid Essex ITT 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.

2.2.4 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 Mid Essex ITT to determine whether the trainee should be considered for deferral on medical grounds.

2.2.5 Mid Essex Initial Teacher Training and the placement school may, as appropriate, require a referral to an Occupational Health Advisor where a trainee's absence or other issues indicate a potential health concern. In these circumstances, the trainee will be advised of the process and the reasons for this referral. The purpose of the referral is to explore options to support the trainee to minimise absence.

2.3 Convalescence

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

2.3.2 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 work should be implemented.

3. Maternity leave

3.1 General: The nature of this one-year course (two years if part-time) means maternity leave as such is not available but Mid Essex ITT 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 The trainee should notify Mid Essex ITT 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.

3.4 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.

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

3.6 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.

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

3.8 The trainee may not return to study less than two weeks after the birth of the child.

3.9 Thereafter, the trainee should discuss with Mid Essex ITT when she intends to return to study and a timeframe for the completion of the course be agreed.

3.10 Where a trainee does not make contact with Mid Essex ITT, we 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, Mid Essex ITT will withdraw the trainee from the course.

3.11 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.

3.12 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.

4. Paternity leave

4.1 The nature of this one-year course (two years if part-time) means paternity leave as such is not available but Mid Essex ITT 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.

5. Medical appointments

5.1 A trainee should inform Mid Essex ITT and the Professional Tutor at the school placement of any appointments for which they need 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.

5.2 Other non-urgent routine medical appointments (e.g. dentist, doctor, hospital, elective procedures) should not be made during the working day, including Core Training and Subject Expert Training, wherever possible.

6. Leave of absence

6.1 Leave of absence for other reasons may be granted by the Director and the school.

6.2 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 Director and the school. It is expected that an application will be made for leave of absence, in writing, using the agreed proforma, at least two working days before the absence occurs.

6.3 In the case of absence included in private and personal or compassionate categories, a completed absence form should be submitted to Mid Essex ITT on the return to study.

6.4 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.

6.4.1 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.

6.4.2 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.

6.4.3 Visits to schools before application/interview will be authorised at the Director's and placement school's discretion.

6.4.4 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 Mid Essex ITT and in agreement with the Professional Tutor at the placement school.

6.4.5 Attendance at Core Training and Subject Expert Training and any other central training takes priority over other school commitments. Core Training and Subject Expert Training sessions cannot easily be replicated and they make up the core of the trainees' pedagogical and subject training. Although trainees are actively encouraged to take part in school activities, trips and training, it is politely requested that trainees do not miss Core Training and/or Subject Expert Training to attend such events.

6.4.6 Should trainees miss a Core Training session, they will be expected to complete the trainee catch-up form and the work that was set during this session and return to their Course Tutor by the following Thursday. Trainees will also be required to do the same during Subject Expert Training.

7. Compassionate leave

7.1 In the event of such emergencies as bereavement, serious accident or illness of an immediate family member/dependant, compassionate leave will be granted by the Course Director on a discretionary basis.

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

8. Private and personal

8.1 Leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of exceptional, urgent and unforeseen circumstances 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.

8.2 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.

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

9. Lateness

9.1 Trainees are expected to attend school-based activities and central training activities on time. They must let the relevant staff members know if they are going to be late and why, including their mentor and Professional Tutor.

9.2 If the trainee is persistently late and late to more than 10% of school based or central training activities, then Stage 1 of the procedure outlined below will be invoked.

10. Stages of the Procedure

10.1 Stage 1

10.1.1 Inform trainee in writing when they are close to the 5% absence with an offer of an informal meeting to provide support.

10.1.2 Inform the trainee of procedures that will be followed.

10.2 Stage 2

10.2.1 A formal meeting with the Director and Course Tutor will follow to discuss the possible course of actions which will include:

- a) Continuing with improved attendance/punctuality

- b) Extending the training programme
- c) Deferring
- d) Withdrawal from the training programme

10.2.2 A Cause for Concern plan with specific attendance targets based on the above meeting will be drawn up.

10.3 Stage 3

If attendance falls to 90%, the Management Committee will discuss the matter; and unless there are exceptional mitigating circumstances the trainee may be removed from the course or extensions may be required at the end of the course to achieve QTS.

10.4 Appeal

The trainee will have the right of appeal against a decision of a Mid Essex ITT committee. Please refer to the Trainee Appeals Policy and Process for further information.