Mid Essex ITT – Trainee Absence and Lateness Policy

Reviewed: June 2026 (Updated for September 2026 delivery)

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 (or two years where the trainee is following a part-time route), absence, for whatever reason, leads to missed learning opportunities. These missed opportunities may have a negative impact on the trainee's ability to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate the Teachers' Standards successfully at the end of the course.

It is therefore expected that trainees will attend regularly and be punctual in attending all centre-based and school-based sessions prescribed by the programme.

Mid Essex ITT expects all trainees to maintain a minimum of 90% attendance across all elements of the programme, including school placements, Core Training and Subject Expert Training. Where attendance falls below this level, there is a significant risk that the trainee may not be able to demonstrate competence against the Teachers' Standards in full.

This policy encompasses, with minor adaptations, approaches to the management of absence commonly used within the teaching profession. It is underpinned by the Staff Absence Policy adopted across Bridge Academy Trust schools and applies to all Mid Essex ITT trainees.

1. Notification of Absence

1.1

The contact for all matters relating to absence is admin@midessexteachertraining.com. Trainees must also ensure that their Course Tutor is informed of any absence.

1.2

Before the course commences, each trainee will provide the contact details of a named representative. This individual may be contacted by Mid Essex ITT in situations where the trainee cannot be reached directly regarding their absence.

1.3

Trainees must inform their placement or employing school of any absence and provide a clear reason for that absence. Notification must be made in line with the placement school's absence procedures. Trainees are expected to notify all relevant staff members, including their mentor, Professional Tutor, Head of Department and classroom teacher, using the school's designated systems and within expected timescales.

1.4

In addition to notifying the placement school, trainees must notify Mid Essex ITT of any absence from the course, whether this relates to school placement or centre-based training. This must be

completed no later than 7:30am on the first day of absence. If Mid Essex ITT has not been informed by this time, contact will be made with the named representative to confirm the trainee's safety and establish the reason for absence.

1.5

If, after ten working days, Mid Essex ITT is unable to contact either the trainee or the named representative, the trainee's studies will be formally suspended. Where applicable, Student Finance England will be informed through a Change of Circumstances submission. If there is no contact for a further ten working days following suspension, the trainee will be deemed to have withdrawn from the course and the relevant authorities will be informed.

1.6

Failure to follow the notification of absence procedures may be treated as a professionalism concern and may be addressed through Mid Essex ITT procedures relating to conduct and professional behaviour.

2. Sickness Absence

2.1 Self-certificated absence

2.1.1

For absences of six consecutive days or fewer, the trainee must complete a self-certification of absence form, which is available from Mid Essex ITT.

2.1.2

There is a maximum allowance of six days of self-certificated absence across the duration of the course.

2.1.3

Placement schools may require a trainee to attend a return-to-work meeting following any period of absence, including short-term absence, in line with standard school procedures.

2.2 Medically certificated sickness

2.2.1

In line with national guidance, trainees must provide a 'fit note' if they have been absent due to illness for more than seven consecutive days. This includes weekends and bank holidays. Guidance on obtaining a fit note can be accessed via https://www.gov.uk/taking-sick-leave

2.2.2

If the trainee remains unwell after the initial fit note expires, further medical evidence must be submitted to cover the continued period of absence.

2.2.3

Where absence continues for more than fifteen working days, or where the anticipated return date exceeds this period, Mid Essex ITT will formally notify the trainee in writing that their studies are being suspended from that point. Where appropriate, a Change of Circumstances form will be submitted to Student Finance England to reflect this suspension.

2.2.4

Where a trainee experiences an ongoing or long-term medical condition, such as depression, arthritis, unstable diabetes or asthma, they must submit appropriate medical evidence alongside a mitigation form. This documentation should clearly outline the nature of the condition and its potential impact on the trainee's progress. Mid Essex ITT will consider whether deferral or additional support arrangements are required.

2.2.5

Mid Essex ITT, in conjunction with the placement school where appropriate, may require the trainee to attend an Occupational Health assessment. The purpose of such an assessment is to identify appropriate support strategies and determine any reasonable adjustments that may enable the trainee to continue successfully with their training.

2.3 Convalescence

2.3.1

Due to the intensive nature of the programme, there is limited scope for reduced workloads or light duties. However, Mid Essex ITT will make reasonable adjustments on a short-term basis to support a trainee returning from illness, allowing them to regain full capacity before undertaking key assessment activities.

2.3.2

A trainee returning after a prolonged period of absence may be required to undergo an Occupational Health assessment to determine whether a staged return to training is appropriate.

3. Maternity Leave

3.1 General

The structure of this intensive programme means that formal maternity leave is not available in the same way as in employment settings. However, Mid Essex ITT will seek to exercise flexibility wherever possible within the programme structure to enable the trainee to achieve Qualified Teacher Status.

In most cases, the length of absence associated with maternity will require the course to be extended into a subsequent academic year, provided there is no substantial change in statutory requirements for QTS.

A trainee who becomes pregnant after being offered a place, or during the early part of the programme, may request to defer their place for up to one year. Such a request will be considered subject to programme continuity.

All trainees requesting maternity-related absence must complete the course within a maximum of six terms. One of these terms must be completed in the final term of an academic year. There may also be financial implications where funding is provided through Student Finance England.

3.2

The preferred arrangement is for the trainee to return during the following academic year, typically two weeks prior to the anniversary of the start of maternity absence, to allow appropriate reintegration.

3.3

The trainee must notify Mid Essex ITT of their intention to begin maternity-related absence as soon as practicable and no later than 14 weeks before the expected week of childbirth, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

3.4

Absence resulting from pregnancy-related illness, including miscarriage, which occurs outside of the formal maternity absence period, will be treated as sickness absence. Such absence must be supported by appropriate medical evidence and will be subject to the procedures outlined in Section 2 of this policy.

3.5

Maternity-related absence should not normally begin earlier than 11 weeks prior to the expected week of childbirth, unless medically advised.

3.6

Once maternity absence begins, Mid Essex ITT will formally notify the trainee in writing that their studies are being suspended. Where applicable, Student Finance England will be informed through a Change of Circumstances submission, and the trainee's status will be updated accordingly on internal systems.

3.7

The trainee must notify Mid Essex ITT of the date of birth of their child as soon as reasonably practicable.

3.8

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

3.9

Following this period, the trainee must engage with Mid Essex ITT to agree a return date and a structured plan for completion of the programme.

3.10

Where a trainee does not maintain communication during the maternity absence period, Mid Essex ITT may write to the trainee, no earlier than 21 days prior to the anniversary of the start of maternity

absence, requesting confirmation of their intention to return. The trainee or their representative must respond within 14 days. Failure to respond may result in withdrawal from the course.

3.11

Where the trainee is in receipt of Student Finance England funding, they will be required to reapply for funding in the subsequent academic year. Their studies will remain suspended until they formally return, at which point a further Change of Circumstances submission will be made.

3.12

Where tuition fees are paid through a Student Finance England loan, the fee structure requires attendance during Term 3 of one academic year. If this requirement is not met, Mid Essex ITT reserves the right to request up to 25% of the total fees directly from the trainee.

4. Paternity Leave

Due to the intensive nature of the programme, extended paternity leave is not normally possible. However, Mid Essex ITT will seek to accommodate a short period of absence where feasible. Where a longer absence is required, this may result in an extension to the training programme.

5. Medical Appointments

5.1

Trainees must inform both Mid Essex ITT and the Professional Tutor at their placement school of any medical appointments requiring absence. Evidence may be requested where appropriate.

5.2

Wherever possible, trainees should arrange routine or non-urgent medical appointments outside of training time in order to minimise disruption to the programme.

6. Leave of Absence

6.1

Leave of absence for reasons other than sickness may be granted at the discretion of the Director and the placement school.

6.2

For absences longer than two consecutive days, or for a cumulative total of more than five days, the request will require additional approval from both the Director and the placement school.

Requests must be made in writing using the agreed proforma and submitted at least two working days in advance wherever possible.

6.3

In cases of private, personal or compassionate absence, a completed absence form must be submitted to Mid Essex ITT on return to the course.

6.4

The following examples provide guidance for common requests. They are not exhaustive but indicate how decisions will be made.

6.4.1 Graduation ceremonies

Absence of one day will be granted to attend a first-degree graduation ceremony. Reasonable travel time may also be permitted, typically not exceeding half a day.

6.4.2 Interviews

All reasonable requests to attend interviews will be supported. Requests involving travel may be approved up to a maximum of three days cumulatively across the course.

6.4.3 School visits prior to application

Absence for visits to schools prior to application or interview may be granted at the discretion of the Director and placement school.

6.4.4 Visits to employing schools

One day will normally be granted prior to the end of the final teaching placement, with further flexibility considered before the end of the course where necessary.

6.4.5 Core Training priority

Attendance at Core Training and Subject Expert Training takes priority over all other commitments. These sessions form the central delivery of the curriculum and cannot easily be replicated.

Although trainees are encouraged to take part in wider school activities, they should not miss Core or Subject Expert Training sessions to do so.

6.5 Catch-up expectations

Where sessions are missed, trainees must:

- complete the catch-up form
- complete all associated work
- submit this to their Course Tutor by the following training session

6.6 Holidays

The intensive nature of the course means that holidays, including those arranged before the course began, must not be taken during the training programme unless these were agreed and discussed at interview.

7. Compassionate Leave

7.1

In cases such as bereavement, serious illness or emergency involving a close family member or dependant, compassionate leave may be granted at the discretion of the Director.

7.2

Requests for extended compassionate leave, or where cumulative absence exceeds ten working days, must be referred to the Director for further consideration.

8. Private and Personal Leave

8.1

A maximum of two days at any one time may be granted for urgent and unforeseen personal business which cannot be arranged outside training time.

8.2

Statutory leave of absence of up to five days cumulative across the course may be permitted.

Trainees are advised that membership of organisations requiring statutory leave should be reviewed due to the intensive nature of the programme.

8.3 Holidays

Holidays are not permitted during the course under any circumstances outside of the calendar.

9. Lateness

9.1

Trainees are expected to attend all school-based and centre-based sessions punctually. If a trainee is likely to be late, they must inform the relevant staff, including their mentor and Professional Tutor, as soon as possible.

9.2

Where a trainee is persistently late, particularly if lateness exceeds 10% of sessions, this will trigger Stage 1 of the formal procedure.

10.1 Stage 1 – Monitoring and Early Support

Where attendance or punctuality begins to give rise to concern, or shows a declining trend over time, the trainee will be informed in writing. This will often be identified through:

- ongoing attendance monitoring
- mentor feedback
- early progress review conversations
- evidence gathered for Internal Monitoring Points

At this stage, attendance may typically have fallen below approximately **95%**, or show a clear downward trend, even if still above the minimum expectation.

An informal discussion will be offered to explore any underlying factors that may be affecting attendance. These may include workload, well-being, health or personal circumstances.

At this stage:

- expectations for attendance and professional conduct will be clearly restated
- early barriers to engagement will be identified and addressed where possible
- proportionate support strategies will be agreed
- attendance will be monitored over a defined period leading into the next review point

The purpose of this stage is to ensure that early concerns are identified and addressed before they impact progress towards the Teachers' Standards.

10.2 Stage 2 – Formal Support and Improvement Planning

Where attendance does not improve, or where concerns persist following Stage 1, the trainee will be invited to a formal meeting with the Course Tutor and/or Director.

This stage is typically reached where:

- attendance falls to approximately 90–94%, or
- there is a repeated or ongoing pattern of absence or lateness, regardless of overall percentage

At this point, there is likely to be a clearer impact on:

- engagement with training
- evidence gathered towards the Teachers' Standards
- progress reflected in IMP reporting

At the meeting:

- the pattern, frequency and impact of absence will be reviewed in detail
- the trainee will be given the opportunity to explain any ongoing issues
- the implications for successful progression to the next stage of the course will be made explicit

Following the meeting, an Individual Support plan will be implemented. This will:

- set clear, measurable attendance expectations
- identify specific support actions and adjustments where appropriate
- align expectations with upcoming IMPs
- establish formal review points

At this stage, the emphasis remains on improvement; however, it will be made clear that continued concerns may affect progression towards meeting the Teachers' Standards.

10.3 Stage 3 – Formal Review and Outcome Decision

Where there has been insufficient improvement following Stage 2, or where attendance falls below the minimum expected level, the matter will be referred to the Leadership Team for formal review.

This stage will typically include scenarios where:

- attendance falls below 90%, or
- absence significantly impacts the trainee's ability to:
    - engage meaningfully with the programme
    - complete statutory requirements (including school-based days)
    - demonstrate secure progress in IMP reports

The review will consider:

- the overall attendance profile across the programme
- the trainee's engagement with support strategies and agreed actions
- progress against the Teachers' Standards/ MEITT Assessment Indicators
- readiness to meet the expectations of the next stage or final assessment

At this stage, attendance is considered in direct relation to whether the trainee is able to:

- continue progressing appropriately through the programme, and
- ultimately meet the Teachers' Standards at IMP3

Following this review, a formal outcome will be determined. This may include:

- continuation on programme with clear conditions for improvement
- extension of the training period to allow sufficient evidence to be gathered
- deferral to a later cohort
- withdrawal from the programme (in exceptional circumstances)

Decisions will be clearly communicated, with a full rationale, and will be aligned with the trainee's capacity to be recommended for QTS.

10.4 Appeal

Trainees have the right to appeal any formal decisions made under this policy. Appeals must be submitted in line with the Mid Essex ITT Appeals Policy and within the published timescales.