





WILLOW DENE School Development Plan 2024-25

To review school level processes for managing staff absence with our growing workforce, to support staff wellbeing and ensure a timely and consistent response

 The financial context for special schools is becoming difficult as a result there is no flexibility in increasing cover budgets. The cost of staffing is high value and cover costs have been high. The impact of staff absence on teachers and teams is significant as they continue to manage their class teams with high levels of absence.

 The policies relating to staff attendance are reviewed within the context of Willow Dene and consistently applied. All staff including leaders understand the parameters and how policy applies to them. Related systems and processes are applied in a timely way so that feedback is useful. Teachers and teams feel well supported in encouraging good attendance within their team.

AUTUMN 2024

What? (action)	Why? (is the change needed)	Success (what will it look / sound like?)	Evaluation (sources of impact feedback)
Whole staff meeting to discuss the financial context of the school, the implications of staff absence and absence parameters.	Not all staff are aware of the current financial landscape and how this relates to their attendance.	All staff have an increased awareness of how staff absence impacts on the financial situation of the school and their role in this.	QA schedule. Meeting records.
Reading and research into how large organisations effectively manage staff absence.	Improve knowledge about effective staff absence management in organisations where there are large staff numbers.	There is a good knowledge base about what other organisations do and this has been utilised to good effect where relevant.	Strategic core minutes.
Retraining of senior leaders on how to conduct sickness absence and return to work meetings.	There is varying consistency in the process and outcomes of sickness and return to work meetings.	Sickness absence and return to work meetings are sharply focused on improving attendance and wellbeing.	Training records.
Agree key actions relating to key aspects of Willow Dene procedures including return to work system, notification of return to work.	Currently there are gaps in systems which mean that attendance and issues that affect wellbeing are not always addressed promptly.	Procedures are fit for purpose and there are no gaps that allow for unaddressed absence. The school supports individual staff wellbeing as promptly as possible.	Meeting minutes.
Liaise with EPM about what constitutes exceptional circumstances.	There are a wide variety of circumstances affecting staff lives which are not easy to categorise.	There is professional and independent advice about how to apply exceptional circumstances in Willow Dene context	Meeting minutes.

		which can be used to improve procedures.	
Identify gaps in our current systems, including alerts for staff approaching thresholds, timely identification of staff who have not had return to work meetings, staff who are long term sick.	For some staff, high absence has not been addressed due to gaps in current systems. This may also mean that opportunities to support wellbeing have been missed.	Gaps in our current systems and procedures are closed so that they are effective as possible.	Meeting minutes. System changes. Staff briefings.
Explore alternative options for leave requesting, and trial use of BROMCOM.	Paper based systems create issues with lost information and delays.	Reduce reliance on paper-based systems and therefore improve timeliness.	System changes. Staff briefings. BROMCOM records.
Meeting with associated leaders and admin / HR staff to ensure there is clarity in roles and responsibilities.	There is overlap between roles. Workload is not evenly distributed or distributed in the most efficient way.	Leaders and HR / admin staff have clarity about their responsibility in relation to staff absence and that this supports wider staff understanding.	Meeting minutes. Job descriptions. Staff briefings.
Communication through designated time in briefing meetings.	We know that regular communication first hand through briefings is impactful.	Profile of the core priority remains high and frequent messaging ensures that expectations are embedded.	Staff briefings.
Positive reinforcement through highlighting staff who have exemplary attendance.	Our focus on improving attendance may mean that exemplary attendance is neglected.	Positive role models are highlighted, and staff receive positive feedback where applicable.	Staff briefings.
Develop an approach which ensures that questions related to occupational health referrals are sharply focused.	Not many occupational health reports give enough relevant detail for us to make a difference to attendance or decide effective measures to support staff members.	Occupational health reports are framed around the focused questions that we ask during the referral and are therefore more useful.	Correspondence with occupational health.

SPRING 2025

What? (action)	Why? (is the change needed)	Success (what will it look / sound like?)	Evaluation (sources of impact feedback)

SUMMER 2025

What? (action)	Why? (is the change needed)	Success (what will it look / sound like?)	Evaluation (sources of impact feedback)