



Monkfrith School

## **Staff Absence Policy**

It is in the interests of everyone working at Monkfrith School to maximise attendance levels.

The school values the contribution its employees make, so when a member of staff is unable to be in work for any reason, their contribution is missed.

We recognise that keeping employees at work and helping them get back to work as soon as practical, following a period of sickness absence, can maintain an employee's health and well-being.

Absence impacts upon teaching and learning within our school and it takes its toll on colleagues who must take on additional work.

This policy recognises:

- the statutory entitlement to unpaid time off to attend to urgent matters related to dependants
- national and local agreements
- best practice which seeks to maintain good working relationships between staff and school management
- the operational needs of the school

It is intended that this policy will provide a clear and workable framework to enable requests for leave of absence for staff working in schools to be reasonably and fairly handled. This policy recognises that the operational needs of the school are a clear priority in any decision making and there may be times when the Headteacher has to refuse a request for leave.

It should be noted that there might be occasions when circumstances arise that are not identified in this policy. In such circumstances the decision regarding leave of absence remains within the discretion of the Headteacher (or the Chair of Governors in the case of the Headteacher requesting leave of absence). Each case will be judged on its own merits and circumstances. The granting of time off in one case will not necessarily set a precedent for other cases. It is recommended that in such circumstances the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) contacts the school's HR Advisor for further advice.

Any suspected abuse of the policy by staff at the school will be dealt with under the school's Disciplinary procedure.

Except in emergency situations, where an oral request may be granted, all requests for leave of absence under these provisions should be made in writing to the Headteacher with sufficient notice to allow written approval to be given to the employee. A description of the circumstances and whether or not the request was granted, should be kept on the member of staff's personnel record at the school.

Care will be taken in applying this policy to ensure compliance with equality legislation and avoidance of potential discrimination.

Staff annual leave and sick leave absences will be in accordance with the relevant conditions of service for teachers and support staff.

Part time/job share employees are entitled to request leave under the same conditions as their fulltime colleagues, on a pro-rata basis.

### **Scope**

This policy has been adopted by the Governing Body of Monkfrith and applies to all members of school staff. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant documents on contractual terms and conditions (e.g. the Burgundy Book and the Green Book) which cover the terms and conditions of specific groups of staff. Nothing in this document seeks to override those particular provisions.

Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee's contract of employment. The school asks that each employee take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance.

### **Absence Notification and Monitoring**

If staff are sick they must follow the procedure set out in the Staff Handbook.

The Headteacher is required to record and report all staff absence. The Governing Body may ask for an annual confidential report on absence, taking into account both number of days and frequency of absences.

### **Adoption Leave**

The statutory rights to parental and adoption leave are explained in the relevant compliance guidance documents.

### **Ante-natal appointments**

The Maternity Regulations provide the right for all women to take paid time off to attend antenatal care. Antenatal care includes appointments with the Midwife, GP, hospital clinics, relaxation classes and parentcraft classes.

Except for the first appointment, employees should show an appointment card or other documents showing that an appointment has been made.

The partner of a pregnant woman is entitled to take unpaid time off work for up to two antenatal appointments, capped at 6.5 hours per appointment.

### **Compassionate Leave**

Paid compassionate leave may be granted in the following circumstances:

- Sudden, serious illness of immediate family – up to 5 days paid leave
- Death of an immediate family member – up to 5 days paid leave
- Serious immediate family problem – up to 5 days paid leave

Immediate family members are limited to: parents, siblings, children, partner/spouse or person you are carer for.

In some cases, a longer period of absence may be approved, on an unpaid basis.

### **Domestic Problems/Emergencies**

Time off work for domestic problems or serious domestic emergencies, i.e. situations which must be resolved immediately, such as burglary, fire, flood, storm etc. – those situations which pose a risk to the employee's home if not resolved immediately will be granted as paid leave for up to one day.

Other non-emergency domestic situations (e.g. breakdown of household appliance or boiler) may be authorised as unpaid leave with agreement from the Headteacher.

### **Examinations**

Staff attending examinations approved by the school to obtain professional qualifications relevant to their role and approved by the Headteacher should be allowed paid leave to attend such examinations. Revision or study leave for such examinations is left to the discretion of the Headteacher to determine whether this will be paid or unpaid time off.

### **Job Interviews**

All staff under notice of redundancy may take reasonable paid leave to attend selection interviews for jobs.

Where staff are applying for employment in other schools it is likely to mean an interview will be held within term time. The Headteacher has discretion to allow reasonable paid leave for such interviews. Requests to take leave to attend an interview must be made to the Headteacher in advance of the event.

There is an increasing tendency for prospective employers to engage in extended interview processes and invite candidates to undertake preliminary visits. The Headteacher will grant paid leave of absence for one day to visit a new school once a colleague has been successful at interview. In the case of the Headteacher attending interviews, leave of absence will be granted by the Chair of Governors.

### **Jury service/witness**

Employers are required by law to allow time off work for jury service. The employer cannot apply for deferral or excusal on the behalf of the employee, only the person summoned for jury service may ask for a deferral or excusal based on their own personal circumstances. In the public sector employers are strongly recommended to support staff called on for public duties and services. Employees in schools are therefore given paid leave to undertake their jury service so there is no detriment to them.

We would ask staff, who have been called for jury service, to discuss with the Headteacher the suitability of timing before accepting the request.

### **Maternity Leave**

The school follows the LA policy.

### **Medical Appointments**

Employees are expected to make appointments outside normal working hours wherever possible. However if necessary paid time off to attend medical appointments will be granted but will be recorded as a sickness absence as per the school's Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedure. Staff attending such appointments must seek the permission of the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher before attending. The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher will request to see hospital appointment letters.

Paid time off should be permitted for the purpose of cancer screening which will be treated like any other medical appointment.

Fertility treatment - employees requesting time off for fertility treatment will in general be supported. The specific needs of the employee for time off will need to be addressed, and the various provisions for leave set out in this policy will be used to enable this to happen where reasonable. This may mean taking time off for medical appointments and making full use of compassionate leave. The compassionate leave may be paid or unpaid depending on the specific circumstances. In any event the situation should be treated with sensitivity. Sickness absence resulting from the treatment should be counted against the employee's sick leave entitlement in the usual way. The nature of the treatment may mean that absences cannot always be planned in advance but it is reasonable to expect staff to give as much notice of the need for time off as is possible.

### **Moving house**

One day's paid leave of absence is granted in any 12 month period subject to the agreement of the Headteacher.

### **National sporting fixtures**

Staff are granted reasonable paid time off where they are a national representative in sporting event. This is recommended not to exceed 10 working days in an academic year but governing bodies have discretion to grant additional days based on individual cases.

### **Non-Attendance at school which is not recorded as "absence"**

There are a number of occasions when staff may not be present in school and which would not count as recorded absence. These will include; agreed training events (refer to staff development policy); meetings with outside agencies or parents; management of school sports fixtures; school approved visits and other authorised school business.

### **Other Personal Reasons**

It is recognised that there may be other personal reasons for requesting leave of absence such as attendance at a child's graduation ceremony, attendance at a friend or relation's funeral (other than immediate family), or a "once in a lifetime" visit. Such leave may be granted at the Headteacher's discretion; it will normally be unpaid and subject to adequate notice so that replacement staff can be employed if necessary.

### **Parental Leave**

The school follows the LA policy.

### **Paternity Leave**

The school follows the LA policy.

### **Public Duties**

An employee who is a member of another local authority or other public body, including a managing or governing body of an educational establishment maintained by a local Authority, should be granted paid leave of absence to attend to their official duties. The granting of such leave will depend on the requirements of the service and what is reasonable in the circumstance. The school will also consider how much time off has already been permitted and the effect of the employee's absence on the school.

### **Religious Festivals and Holy days**

Regulations do not require employers to provide time or facilities for religious or belief observance in the workplace. However, where necessary up to two days paid leave of absence may be granted for the purpose of official holy days.

It is recommended that schools consider whether employee requests for additional breaks in a working day for religious observance are reasonable and practical but where any such breaks agreed it should be unpaid.

### **Residential Visits**

Staff who accompany children on the residential trips to Kingswood or the Isle of Wight may claim a day off in lieu by arrangement with the Headteacher. Staff who accompany children overnight to Moat Mount may claim a half day off in lieu. These days can not be added to the end or start of a school holiday.

### **Sick children of staff**

We appreciate that some families do not have immediate local support, therefore the first day of an absence will be paid, giving staff time to make alternative childcare arrangements. Should staff need to take further time off this will be unpaid. This agreement is limited to three occurrences during an academic year – any further days will normally be unpaid. These occurrences include accompanying children to medical or hospital appointments.

Staff also have a statutory right to unpaid time off to make arrangements for the care of a dependent child. If it is impossible to make appropriate arrangements for the care of sick children using the arrangements at above, the staff in this school may, after discussion with the Headteacher take reasonable additional unpaid leave to care for sick children. This arrangement applies to all staff with dependent children. For the care of seriously ill children also see paid *compassionate leave* paragraphs above.

### **Staff Sick Leave**

Please see school Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure

### **Time off to accompany a fellow employee in a disciplinary or grievance situation**

Reasonable paid time off will be granted to accompany a fellow worker at a disciplinary or grievance hearing.

### **Trade union and professional association duties**

Union Representatives are entitled to reasonable paid time off to do their union work as long as the union is:

- independent
- officially recognised by the employer to represent union members in negotiations on things like pay and terms and conditions

Examples of trade union duties reps have the right to paid time off for are:

- negotiating pay, terms and conditions
- helping union members with disciplinary or grievance procedures including meetings to hear their cases
- going with union members to meetings with their line manager to discuss flexible working requests
- discussing issues that affect union members like redundancies or the sale of the business

Reps are not allowed paid time off to attend union meetings or go to meetings with union officials. Instead, employers should allow unpaid time off for these activities. Reps aren't allowed any time off for industrial action.

### **Time Off In Lieu**

A part time member of staff who has worked additional hours may prefer to arrange time off in lieu rather than receive additional hours payment. Such an arrangement must be agreed in advance with the Headteacher; consideration will be given to the impact on pupils and colleagues.

### **When leave of absence may not be granted**

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples which would not be granted leave of absence, paid or unpaid, except in very exceptional circumstances:

- Collecting a friend or relative from an airport or other travel terminus
- Transporting a child to university

- Supervising or otherwise dealing with home repairs or maintenance, including car servicing, except in the case of an emergency (for example, dealing with a water leak)
- Dealing with other personal issues such as the arrangement of house or car insurance
- Leaving school early prior to a school holiday in order to catch a flight or other connection (or arriving back after the start of a new term)

### **Leave without Permission/Unauthorised Absence**

#### **Requesting leave at short notice**

The Headteacher will try to accommodate staff who request leave at very short notice because of an emergency arising. S/he, however, may decide that a member of staff is absent from work without authorisation if the reason for absence cannot be evidenced afterwards. Any members of staff who take leave, which has not been previously approved, may be subject to disciplinary action.

#### **Unauthorised Absence**

1. Where an employee is absent without explanation or contact, pay will be stopped.
2. If an acceptable explanation is given to the Headteacher, pay can be reinstated at a later date.
3. The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher should make reasonable efforts to make contact by telephone advising the employee that if he/she fails to make contact with work, contact will be made with their nominated next of kin.
4. If the employee is subsequently contacted, the Headteacher should take into account the length of absence and the employee's explanation in deciding what, if any, action needs to be taken.
5. If despite reasonable efforts it proves impossible to contact the employee, on the fifth day of absence the Headteacher will send a letter by recorded delivery asking the employee to attend an investigation meeting.
6. The letter will refer to the attempts to contact the employee and seek an explanation for their absence at an investigation meeting, set 5 days following the expected date of delivery. The letter will also explain that a continued absence is a breach of their contract of employment, which could lead to disciplinary action being taken, and an outcome of this could be dismissal from the school. It will be made clear in the letter that failure to make contact or attend the investigation meeting will result in a conduct hearing being arranged.

#### **Special Leave Appeal**

Employees who feel that an application for leave has been unreasonably refused have the right of appeal against the decision to the Governing Body.