

Elmsett C. of E. V.C.P. School

Staff Absence and Attendance Policy



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1. SCOPE

This policy statement applies to all employees at Elmsett School who come under the control of the governing body.

2. AIMS & PRINCIPLES

Elmsett School recognises the importance of health and wellbeing for all employees; however there are times, when employees are not well enough to attend work.

All employees have a contractual duty to attend work unless they are unable to do so through sickness or injury, or other statutory entitlement to time off. The absence management policy has been designed to ensure that the impact of absence at work is minimised, whilst ensuring that employees are treated fairly and consistently.

Everyone in the school feels the impact of ill-health and absence. It can significantly affect how the school performs and affects the service we provide to pupils. In this context we have procedures for managing absence and attendance, as detailed in this policy.

Elmsett School is committed to proactively managing attendance, and believes that it is the responsibility of the school, trade union representatives and employees to work together to promote the management of absence and ill-health and to promote well-being. It should not be forgotten, however, that employees must be treated with respect and dignity at all times, within an environment of a person-centred approach balanced with the needs of the school and its pupils.

The governing body aims to:

- Maintain high levels of attendance;
- Minimise disruption to the education of pupils;
- Treat employees' absence in a consistent, fair and sensitive manner;
- Provide a reasonable and safe working environment, appropriate welfare support, and advice on general health issues
- Enhance Employee relations
- Ensure prompt action is taken
- Recognise where relevant training is necessary

The School's principles are:

- Good attendance is recognised and valued
- All absences are treated as genuine, unless there is reason to doubt this
- The absence management procedure is designed to be proactive and support rather than punitive
- Management of absence will be dealt with in a non-discriminatory way
- Individuals will be treated with respect and in confidence, in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and the Access to Medical Reports Act
- Open communication between managers and employees is greatly encouraged

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Governing Body** will monitor and review this policy from time to time, delegate to the Headteacher the necessary discretion to operate absence management procedures and arrangements, and ensure that fair and consistent standards are applied to the management of absence. The Chair of Governors will authorise any requests for absence from the Headteacher.

The **Headteacher** (with the assistance of senior staff) is responsible overall for the day-to-day management of sickness absence. They will also ensure that all management employees have appropriate training/coaching on this policy and its guidelines to ensure consistency of its application. The Headteacher is also responsible for ensuring that all employees have a return to work meeting on their first day back from every absence, regardless of its duration, and that the relevant forms are completed and then passed to the Bursar/Business Manager in a timely manner for recording and monitoring absence.

The **Bursar/Business Manager** will ensure that the school has suitable arrangements for enabling employees to notify absence, for communicating information about absence in a timely manner for payroll and other necessary purposes, and for following up absence in appropriate circumstances – in line with the Schools' HR team's guidance.

Employees have a duty to attend for work unless they are unable to do so through sickness or injury, or unless their absence has been otherwise approved. They have a responsibility to report their own absence through sickness or other emergency using the school's procedures, and to produce medical evidence as required.

4. PROCEDURES AND ARRANGEMENTS IN CASES OF ABSENCE

Notification of absence

In all cases of absence, **teachers** should contact the Headteacher on [07943844793] at the earliest opportunity; where possible the day before the absence or at 7.30am on the morning of your first day of absence stating why you are absent and when you expect to return. If the phone is not answered please leave a message with your name, brief reasons for absence and contact telephone number, for the Headteacher to call you back if required.

Support staff should contact the school office at the earliest opportunity; where possible the day before the absence or at 8.00am on the morning of your first day of your absence stating why you are absent and when you expect to return.

Unless you are seriously ill or incapacitated it is unacceptable to have a friend or relative call on your behalf. If your absence continues you or your representative must contact the above named regularly to update on your continuing absence. Text messaging or e-mailing are not considered appropriate forms of communication in this instance.

The person receiving the call should:

- find out the general reason for the absence
- find out if at all possible how long the absence is likely to last

- arrange for the employee to confirm when they will be returning to work or, if that is not possible, to update the school on their progress
- ensure the person responsible for arranging temporary cover is informed.
- In cases of extended periods of sickness the Headteacher will put in place suitable arrangements for keeping in touch with the employee who is absent or, where this is not practicable, an appropriate representative of the employee's family.
- Where absence arises from an incident at work, details should be reported through the school's incident reporting procedures.
- Teaching staff are also required in all cases of absence, if the employee is fit enough, to discuss any activities that need to be picked up in their absence/work set or lesson plans, with the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity, particularly for long-term absence.

Non-notification of absence

If an employee does not contact the Headteacher by the required time, the Headteacher will attempt to contact the employee at home. If they do not receive any answer they may decide to contact next of kin. Not following the notification of absence procedure may lead to more formal action being taken.

Self-certification and Medical practitioner's certificate

You must provide the appropriate certificates referred to below at the relevant times, and complete all absence recording documents upon your return, at your return to work meeting. Failure to notify the school as set out below may result in disciplinary action. The school reserves the right and will proactively monitor those employees who are absent through sickness on a regular basis.

You should produce the following written evidence of absence in a timely manner and ensure that appropriate certificates are provided for the whole of your absence:

- Self-certification/return to work form for every occasion of absence
- Medical practitioner's certificate:
 - on 8th calendar day of absence; or
 - When requested, where an unacceptable pattern of absence has occurred (at the schools expense); or
 - For absence before or following annual or public holidays, at the discretion of the school (at the school's expense)

The school reserves the right to request that you to undertake a medical examination by a medical practitioner and/or specialist via the County Council's Occupational Health service.

Further details of our Occupational Health Policy including your rights regarding consent and access to medical reports can be obtained from the school.

Payment for absence

During periods of sickness the County Council operates both statutory sick pay and occupational sick pay provisions appropriate to employees' conditions of service. Payment will only be made for occupational sick pay if the reporting procedure is followed correctly.

Monitoring and Recording of absence

The Headteacher will use return to work meetings as appropriate to monitor sickness absence. Records will be kept on all absence and reported to SCC in line with data protection regulations.

Health, Safety & Wellbeing

The Governing Body will make available to employees appropriate counselling, welfare and wellbeing arrangements to promote and maintain the health of employees.

Disability Related Leave

Any request for time off for reasons related to an employee's disability (e.g. for therapy or rehabilitation) will be considered sympathetically and in the context of the employee's statutory rights.

As appropriate, we will arrange for consultation with the County Council's Occupational Health Consultants in relation to individual sickness absence or any general work related health issues identified at school.

Trigger Points

Trigger points have been agreed, to enable managers to monitor absence levels. The School's senior leadership team will continuously monitor these levels, and will investigate with the employee any levels or patterns of absence which cause concern and decide whether any action (informal or otherwise) is required.

In any event, absence that reaches any of the following trigger points will be investigated in every instance:

- Three periods of absence or ten working days or more absence in a rolling 3 month period
- Four periods of absence or fifteen working days absence in a rolling six month period
- Five plus periods of absence or 20 working days or more absence in a rolling 12 month period
- All long-term absences (over 20 working days)
- Unacceptable patterns of absence (e.g. regular Friday and or Monday absences)
- Unauthorised absence

It should be noted that the above trigger points do not prevent earlier intervention if appropriate. Any employee, who the school finds to be abusing the above, will be subject to disciplinary procedures, which may lead to possible dismissal.

Contact during absence

The school is committed to maintaining appropriate contact throughout long-term absences to ensure the successful and sustained re-integration of the employee back to the workplace. Employees are expected to co-operate with the school's policy on keeping in touch during long-term absence, and to provide medical reports if they exist.

For longer term absences, contact will include some discussion around:

- The likely prognosis for the employee's condition/illness (and any medical certification details)
- Any further investigations/medical intervention underway/anticipated, and likely timescales
- What support they are receiving, i.e. counselling, CBT
- Anything the school could do to help during their absence
- An agreed means and regularity of contact, i.e. weekly/fortnightly by phone/email
- How much (if at all) the individual would like to be updated on work issues during their absence. For example, would they like the school newsletters sent to them?

Employees are expected to co-operate with attempts to manage and support sickness absence

Line managers or a nominated person will keep in regular contact with any of their employees who are absent. If this is not appropriate, the employee may wish to nominate a different person, which will need to be agreed.

Guidelines on contact with employees from the school:

- Minor illness: If the minor illness is likely to end within seven days further contact is not usually necessary.
- Traumatic injury or sudden illness: Discretion until the longer prognosis is known. Contact usually made after 1 week, if no further communication from the employee has been forthcoming.
- Planned treatment: The school may arrange with employees individually on visits to the hospital or at home.
- Stress: Contact within 2 weeks. Discretion will be exercised until the longer-term prognosis is known.

Having no contact during long-term absence is not acceptable. If the employee will not speak to their line manager or the Headteacher other options will be explored, including contact from another manager and/or making use of an intermediary such as a colleague, family member, trade union official, or a member of the Schools' HR team.

Contact during long-term absence will be reviewed and adjusted jointly with the employee as appropriate.

Records will be kept of all conversations and details of any provisions that have been put in place.

If the employee is taking medication that may impair their judgment or mobility or any other faculty required to perform their duties, the employee should discuss this with their line manager, Headteacher or nominated person to explore options. Medical advice may need to be sought from Occupational Health.

Referral to Occupational Health

The County Council's Occupational Health Service is available to provide advice and guidance to schools on matters of employees' health. The Headteacher will seek advice from the Schools HR Advisor regarding referrals to Occupational Health. Referrals will be made by the School – it is not open to an employee to self-refer. The school will not contact employees' general practitioners.

The support and guidance of Occupational Health can be sought at any stage. Normally, however, the Headteacher will refer an employee who has been absent for 4 weeks or longer, unless the nature of the medical condition is clear and the prospect of a return to work well defined, e.g. a broken limb or routine surgery. Employees who have frequent short term absences can also be referred if, after discussion, it appears that a medical report would be useful.

The Occupational Health Physician's report will give information about the employee's medical condition and its possible effects on employment – s/he does not offer diagnosis or treatment.

This report may also be used to establish:

- The reason for and likely duration of absence
- When you will be able to return to work
- What, if any, treatment is being prescribed
- Whether and what reasonable adjustment need to be made to your job and/or working environment
- Whether you are capable to continue in your job

The Headteacher, with support from the Schools' HR Advisor, will then decide what action is appropriate in the light of the report and any other relevant information. Employees will receive a copy of the Occupational Health Physician's report, and the report will be discussed with the employee. In some cases the Occupational Health Physician may require a further meeting with the employee or may undertake to monitor the recovery process and suggest what assistance may be appropriate for a return to work.

Occupational Health will always be consulted if it appears that there may be a prospect that the employee will be unfit to return to work through ill-health.

Return to Work Interviews

A Return to Work Interview will be held after every period of absence to confirm that their record of absence is correct, and enable the employee to raise any remaining health or other issues that need addressing with the school's support. This meeting will be documented in order to assist with recording and monitoring of absence and filed in your personnel file.

Strategies for return to work where the employee will resume full duties eventually might include:

- Preliminary visits to the school
- Phased or therapeutic return

- Light duties for a short period

It is the schools intention to consider all reasonable rehabilitation measures and adjustments as appropriate to enable its employees to return to work.

Schools will discuss all options with the Schools' HR Team and as appropriate with Occupational Health consultants, prior to implementation.

Formal procedures

The school takes seriously disingenuous absence, and if it is proven or reasonably suspected, disciplinary procedures will be invoked.

Poor attendance records will also be dealt with in the appropriate way, and in serious cases the school may have to consider your continuing employment.

Ultimately, unacceptable and unsustainable absence levels may lead to dismissal.

Rehabilitation and Wellbeing

The School wishes to maximise the attendance of all employees and as such will focus on the rehabilitation of employees on long-term sickness absence, or those with long-term conditions but still at work, to ensure that all employees can return and remain in work. We want to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing is effectively cared for and to prevent, where possible, conditions worsening. Rehabilitation will hopefully aid recovery and improve the prospects of a speedy and lasting recovery and return to work.

All reasonable adjustments, whether temporary or permanent, will be considered, medical advice sought where appropriate, and advice taken from the School's' HR advisors in all such instances.

All employees will be treated fairly and consistently with dignity and respect. Consideration will be given to the Equality Act 2010 and any other statutory obligations, in all instances.

Whilst the School's trigger levels will be taken into account, the School will adopt a case management approach to individuals' cases. All rehabilitation measures will be done in full consultation with the employee and their representatives.

Occupational Health will often be part of the rehabilitation process, as will monitoring, and regular reviews.

Employees are also obliged to look after their own health, safety and wellbeing. The School can provide stress toolkits if you are feeling particularly stressed, as well as useful guidance from our HR Advisors and the HSE.

In all sickness absence cases the School will act with guidance from the School's HR Advisors.

This policy does not form part of the contract of employment.

5. ARRANGEMENTS FOR ABSENCES OTHER THAN SICKNESS

Compassionate Leave (Emergency)

In cases of emergencies that prevent attendance at work, employees should make contact with the school using the sickness reporting arrangements.

The Headteacher is authorised to grant up to a maximum period of ten working days off with pay for bereavement, serious accident/illness of close family members e.g. husband, wife, partner, son or daughter; father, mother, brother or sister. Requests beyond this will be referred to the Governing Body. In relation to other relatives or friends leave will be granted for up to three days and will be unpaid.

Private/Personal leave

In other circumstances where an employee requests leave during term time for urgent personal reasons, 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 nor easily postponed examples are outlined below although not an exhaustive list:

- moving house
- attending graduation
- presentation and award ceremonies
- attendance at weddings
- urgent domestic repairs
- professional examinations
- training
- attending interviews
- private study

The Headteacher is authorised to grant time off with/ without pay up to a maximum of 2 days on a single occasion. All leave under this heading is normally unpaid. This will not normally be granted immediately before or after school holiday periods.

For short periods of time (less than 1 hour) following agreement with the Headteacher, employees may be able to make acceptable arrangement with colleagues to cover classes, which does not involve additional cost. In such cases leave may be granted with pay.

Extended Leave

If employees require further additional longer term leave to undertake extended study, career break, voluntary or work activities such requests must be made in writing to the Personnel Committee of the Governing Body (with a copy to the Headteacher) for consideration at their meeting the term before the leave is required.

Emergency Time off for dependants

All employees have the right to a reasonable time off during working hours for dependants, this time off is intended to deal with **unforeseen matters** and **emergencies**. There is no legal right to be paid; however the governors have agreed that up to three separate **occasions/days** during one school year will be paid and any further days will be unpaid.

A dependant could be a spouse, partner, child parent, or someone who depends on an employee for care, for example an elderly neighbour.

The leave can be taken for example to:

- Deal with a breakdown in childcare
- To put longer term care in place for children or elderly relatives
- If a dependant fall ill or is taken into hospital
- To arrange or attend a funeral.

Employees must follow the reporting absence procedure. We reserve the right to review this situation under the disciplinary and/or capability procedures if absence for this reason is more than the school can reasonably cope with.

Time off with pay is not normally granted for reasons arising from ongoing care commitments or responsibilities of others

Parental Leave

Is in relation to where the absence is known or can be anticipated in advance. Where this absence relates to a child, parental leave would usually be taken (i.e. time off for a child's operation), the employee should make a request at the earliest opportunity, normally in writing, to the Headteacher, having first discussed with his/her immediate manager/supervisor the implications for cover, etc. There is no statutory right to payment for this and payment will be at the discretion of the Headteacher. The purpose of parental leave is to care for your child. This means looking after their welfare and could include making arrangements for the good of your child. Caring for a child does not necessarily mean being with the child 24 hours a day. Parental leave might be taken simply to enable you to spend more time with your young child. Examples of the way parental leave might be used include:

- straight after your maternity, paternity or adoption leave
- spending more time with your child in their early years
- time with your child during a stay in hospital
- looking at new schools
- settling your child into new childcare arrangements
- allowing your family to spend more time together, for example, taking your child to stay with grandparents

You can take parental leave immediately after your maternity, paternity or adoption leave providing you give the correct notice.

There are limits and rules on parental leave, further information should be sought from the Headteacher.

In the following circumstances when employees who are entitled to time off work, which is governed by statutory and/or contractual entitlement, whether paid or unpaid, the Governing Body will meet the relevant requirements and follow Schools' HR guidance:

Maternity, adoption, maternity support (paternity) leave and leave for family emergencies;

Trade union activities and duties, and specified public duties

Doctor/Dentist appointments

You are normally expected to ensure that appointments for personal visits to the doctor, dentist, hospital etc. are outside of your working hours. However, in the event that this is not reasonably practicable, time off from work will be permitted to attend such appointments, ensuring your time off causes as little disruption as possible, i.e. at the beginning or the end of the day. The school requests the right to see evidence of appointments, such as a letter or appointment card. Where the appointment is not urgent, and where the time would negatively impact the work plans for your department/class, this should be re-arranged to a more suitable time and date wherever possible.

Where the school considers an employee has taken an unreasonable amount of time off for this purpose, it reserves the right to withdraw payment for this at their discretion and following consultation with the employee. Consideration will of course be given to the Equalities Act (2010) and statutory right to time off, in all instances.

Annual leave/holidays during sickness absence (where this applies)

If an employee's sickness absence occurs at the same time or before any pre-booked holidays, which they are then unable to go on, the Head Teacher, or Governing Body will approve the reinstatement of the annual leave. If the sickness absence occurs at the same time or before normal annual leave, but no pre-booked holiday, re-instatement of that leave is at the discretion of the Head Teacher or Governing Body. The school may reserve the right to request evidence in making such decisions in consultation with the employee.

Religious Observances

There may be times when an employee requests time off to attend or observe a religious holiday, festival or event. Granted time off is at the Headteacher's discretion, and the needs of the pupils, cover and cost implications will need to be considered.

Severe Weather

If the School is closed due to adverse weather conditions, all contracted staff will have authorised leave on full pay. It is expected that all teachers, will work at home if practicable, on their PPA.

If the School is open for pupils, it is expected that all staff will attempt to get to work if at all possible, even if they will arrive late. If it is not safe for a member of staff to travel to work, they must follow the notification of absence procedure. Discretionary leave on full pay will be considered up to three days in any School year. Requests for other discretionary leave will be taken into account.

Time Off for Trade Union Duties

Time off will encompass reasonable time for a representative to attend meetings that fall within the definition of trade union duty, and a reasonable amount of preparation time and post-meeting time to deal with matters arising from the meeting in relation to the representative's members. Reasonable travelling time to and from meetings needs to be included.

Maternity, Paternity and Adoption

The School has a separate policy for Maternity, Adoption and Paternity entitlements. Please ask for a copy from the Business Manager.

Military service

The School recognises that part-time military service contributes to the defence of this country, therefore where annual training is required discretionary leave of absence may be granted. A request for leave should be made in the usual way, initially with the employee's line manager / Head of Department.

Public duties

If called for Jury Service the employee's line manager / Head of Department should be informed immediately. The employee should present the letter / claim form to the Bursar to ensure that the relevant cover and any salary changes can be agreed. Whilst absent the employee should ensure the school is kept informed of the likely date of the employee's return to work.