



Staff Leave of Absence Policy

BEDWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Bedwell Crescent,
Stevenage, Herts, SG1 1NJ**

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1. Introduction

Teachers and other term-time employees are normally expected to take holidays and other leave outside of term time. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances where an individual may need to be absent during the school term. The purpose of this policy is to provide school staff with an understanding of the options relating to paid and unpaid leave of absence that may be available to them during term time, and to ensure that all staff are treated fairly and equally.

Leave will not be automatically granted and the Headteacher will make decisions based on the circumstances of each particular case and the operational needs of the school.

This policy applies to teaching and support staff. It does not form part of anybody's contract of employment and may be varied.

This policy does not cover staff illness, maternity or paternity leave – for more information on these circumstances, see our Staff Health and Attendance Policy and statutory guidance provided on the HfL portal.

2. Dependent Leave

We recognise that there will be occasions where staff are faced with emergency situations involving dependants where they may need to take time off work.

This section of the policy explains the right to take time off work to manage unexpected or sudden problems, and of taking a reasonable amount of time for issues relating to a dependant and in order to make any necessary longer-term arrangements.

For the purpose of this policy, a dependent is defined as:

- a spouse or civil partner
- a child
- a parent
- any other person who would reasonably rely on you for assistance if they fell ill or was injured or assaulted, or who would rely on you to make arrangements for the provision of care in the event of illness or injury

2.1 Circumstances in which right to time off for dependants applies

Staff (irrespective of length of service, and whether they are part time or full time) are entitled to take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to take necessary action:

- to provide assistance when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted
- to make arrangements for the provision of care for an ill or injured dependant
- in consequence of the death of a dependant
- because of the unexpected disruption or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant
- to deal with an incident that involves their child and occurs unexpectedly while the child is at school/ another educational establishment.

2.2 Procedure

If you need to take time off for dependants you should contact your Headteacher at the earliest opportunity. If you become aware of an emergency situation while at work, you should immediately speak to an appropriate person about leaving work early.

2.3 Length of absence and pay

The right to time off for dependants will, in most cases, be one or two days. You must actively seek alternative longer-term arrangements for the care of a dependant as soon as possible after the emergency occurs. If you are unable to make alternative arrangements, you must contact your Headteacher and explain why further absence is required.

There is no statutory entitlement to receive pay while taking time off for dependants. However, **we offer emergency paid leave of up to 5 days per year** to allow for the care of sick children and for carers leave. This, in most cases, will cover the first day of absence, so that the staff member is able to arrange for alternative care / support.

3. Compassionate Leave

The purpose of compassionate leave is to help employees to come to terms with the death of a loved one, or a serious illness or injury involving a loved one, or serious personal relationship problems.

3.1 Bereavement

In circumstances involving bereavement, or a critically ill dependent / immediate family member, (spouse, civil partner, partner, parent, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild) each case will be viewed sympathetically, and the amount of leave granted will depend on the individual's circumstance. We will consider matters such as the employee's relationship with

the deceased, domestic responsibilities, and travel requirements. In most circumstances, a maximum of 3 days paid leave will be offered; further compassionate leave will usually be unpaid.

If bereavement is related to the death of a child under 18 including parents who suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy, staff will be entitled to two weeks paid Parental Bereavement Leave.

In the case of death of another close relative, for example an aunt, uncle, cousin, or parent-in-law, or a close friend, staff will be granted unpaid leave to attend a funeral.

3.2 Return to work and extended periods of absence

If the employee is unable to return after the initial agreed period of leave, it may be appropriate to request that they consult their GP and obtain a fit note as it is likely that this situation will be causing distress/stress. Otherwise, consideration could be given to a period of flexible working, a career break, or a short period of unpaid absence.

3.3 Sources of additional support

- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) - confidential helpline for employees which may be provided through the employer's sick pay scheme - www.educationsupport.org.uk/EAP
- Bereavement support - www.cruse.org.uk
- HfL wellbeing resources - www.hfleducation.org/school-improvement/wellbeing/

4. Carers Leave

We recognise that many of our staff have caring responsibilities and that they may need our support to combine work with care. We are committed to doing what we can to help to ensure that the health and wellbeing of employees with caring responsibilities are looked after.

4.1 Eligibility

All staff have a statutory right to take carer's leave to provide or arrange care for a dependant if they have a long-term care need. In the context of statutory carer's leave, a dependant means:

- your spouse, civil partner, child or parent;

- any person who lives in the same household as you (other than as a lodger, tenant, boarder, or employee)
- any other person who would reasonably rely on you to provide or arrange care.

A dependant has a long-term care need if they:

- have an illness or injury (whether physical or mental) that requires, or is likely to require, care for more than three months;
- have a condition that amounts to a disability under the Equality Act 2010
- require care for a reason connected to their old age.

This statutory right to carer's leave applies to a wide range of caring situations, but excludes general childcare, except where your child meets the definition of a dependant with a long-term care need.

4.2 Periods of leave

You are entitled to **one week of unpaid leave in any 12-month period** (meaning that a full-time employee is entitled to five days' carer's leave in any 12-month rolling period; if you work three days per week, you will be entitled to three days of carer's leave in any 12-month rolling period, and so on). Employees can take the leave in one continuous block, as individual days, or as half days.

If you are caring for more than one dependant, you do not have a separate entitlement to carer's leave for each dependant.

You must give notice in writing to your line manager of your intention to take carer's leave and reasonable notice should be provided. While every effort will be made to meet your request, we may postpone a period of carer's leave if we consider that your absence will disrupt the operation of the setting.

The statutory right to carer's leave is intended to be for planned and foreseen caring commitments. If you need to take time off to manage an unexpected or sudden problems relating to a dependant and make any necessary longer-term caring arrangements, please see section 2.

We recognise that staff may need a longer period of time off work that goes beyond the statutory entitlement to carer's leave under this policy. In such cases, we may agree for you to take the time off work as discretionary authorised, unpaid absence.

4.3 Sources of additional support

- Carers UK, which provides help and advice for carers on employment rights, benefits and tax credits, assessments, and other practical matters for carers - www.carersuk.org/
- the NHS website, which provides a wealth of information and advice for carers - www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/
- Grace Care Consulting, which provides advice and support on care, special needs and neurodiversity; all needs and neurodiversity - www.graceconsulting.co.uk
- Age UK and Independent Age, which offer information and support to anyone providing informal unpaid care to an older person through a range of local services - www.ageuk.org.uk and www.independentage.org
- Contact a Family, which provides support, advice and information to families with disabled children - www.contact.org.uk
- Carers Trust, which works with other organisations to provide access for carers to breaks, information, advice, education, training and employment opportunities - www.carers.org

5. Medical Appointments

There will be various times during an employee's employment that they may request time off for medical reasons.

5.1 Types of appointment

Reasonable time-off for employees to attend medical appointments, which are unable to be arranged out of working hours will be given. Before arranging non-urgent doctor's medical appointments, employees should seek the approval of the employer and make every attempt to make these appointments at the beginning or end of the day or during lunch breaks to minimise the time they have to be absent from work.

Routine doctors or dentists' appointments (e.g. check-ups) should not be taken during the employee's working hours.

Elective procedures should be arranged during holiday periods and will usually be unpaid.

Medical screenings should be arranged outside of working time where possible. If not possible, paid time off will be granted for medical screening (including cancer screening) where required by the employee's medical advisors

5.2 Occupational Health appointments

When referred by the school, there is an expectation that employees will attend any Occupational Health appointments once arranged. These will normally be in the employee's working time and is a paid absence

6. Weddings

Paid leave will be granted for up to 1 day for attendance at the wedding of a close relative (brother, sister, parent or child, grandparent or grandchild). Under exceptional circumstances, this may be extended to 2 days (typically where extended travel is involved).

Discretionary unpaid leave may be granted to attend the weddings of other relatives or close friends. It is expected that members of staff will arrange for their own weddings to take place outside school time.

7. Other personal reasons

Exceptionally, there may be other personal reasons for requesting leave of absence. Examples might be attendance at a relative's graduation ceremony or "once in a lifetime" visit to relatives overseas. Such leave, where granted, will normally be unpaid and subject to adequate notice so that replacement staff can be employed if necessary.

7.1 Graduation ceremonies

Parents will be granted **one day of paid leave** to attend one graduation ceremony for each child. Staff will be granted one day of paid leave to attend their own graduation ceremony

7.2 Moving house

One day of paid leave will be granted for each house move subject to a maximum of 1 move in a period of one year. Additional days may be granted on an unpaid basis