



## **Copnor Primary School – Staff Absence Policy**

### **Rationale**

The Governing Body is committed to the health, safety and welfare of our employees. We take a pro-active approach to absence management and are committed to creating a working environment that encourages, values and supports attendance. This policy is in place to establish fair and equitable treatment for all staff absence.

To this end we ensure that the following measures are used:-

- Pre-employment health checks
- Reviewing working practices/environments with a view to supporting attendance
- Ensuring equitable application of this policy and regulating time off
- Encouraging staff to make full use of counselling provision
- Conducting return to work interviews by the Headteacher or deputy Headteacher to identify causes of absence and to define measures to support absence
- Conducting exit interviews by the Headteacher

As Governors, we acknowledge that most absences will be for legitimate and authorised reasons and therefore the Governing Body will take a flexible and understanding approach in dealing with the needs of the individual. We are committed to the exploration of alternative solutions to absence issues and only when all alternatives have been explored will the Governors exercise its authority to determine whether an employee should cease to work at the school. This will be done in consultation with Human Resources with reference to professional associations.

The Governing Body has delegated the making of decisions regarding absences to the Headteacher, who will seek advice from Human Resources and refer to the Chair of Governors if necessary.

### **Statutory and Contractual Requirements**

Ill health and absence are governed by statutory provisions including:-

- Education (Teachers Qualifications and Health Standards) (England) Regulations 1999 (Statutory instrument 216/99)
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Health and Safety At Work Act 1974
- Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002
- Employment Act 2002 (Disputes Resolutions) Regulations 2004

There are also guidelines available for Occupational Health Advisers or 'Fitness to Teach' issued jointly by the DfES and the Department of Health.

We are committed to ensuring that legislative and contractual arrangements are met.

### **Absence due to sickness**

This is regulated by the employees' contractual entitlements under the relevant conditions of service. Such sickness absence will fall under one of the following categories:

- Sporadic self-certified absence. Occasional days of absence up to and including 7 calendar days in length.
- Short-term certified absence. Absence between 8 calendar days and one month.

- Long-term certified absence. Absence of greater than one month.
- In the case of certified absences, a medical certificate from a registered GP will be required. In certain circumstances, the Human Resources Team may require medical suspension of the relevant employee, followed by medical clearance by the City Medical Adviser before a return to work is authorised.
- Sporadic and short-term absences, which are repetitive in their nature or long-term health absences will be referred to the Human Resources team to be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate procedure. This is contained in the Manual of Personnel Practice.

### **Authorised absence**

This can occur when an employee has had prior approval for their absence. Examples of such absence include:

#### A. Authorised absence:-

- A1. Statutory leave (including maternity leave)
- A2. Absence for public duties. Up to 18 days in any academic year to function as a Justice of the Peace, a governor of an educational establishment maintained by the LA, a member of a statutory tribunal, a member of a body appointed by central government, a member of the General Teaching Council. Leave over 18 days would require consideration by both Human Resources and the Governing Body. (Before agreeing to be nominated for any public duty the member of staff should discuss the request and its implications with the Headteacher.)
- A3. Court service. Leave shall be granted to enable an employee to serve as a juror or witness in court as per the Manual of Personnel Practice. Where an employee is attending court for some other purpose pay shall be subject to consultation with Human Resources.
- A4. Absence for professional association activities
- A5. Contractual entitlements (Annual leave, ordinary maternity leave, paternity leave, maternity support leave, adoption leave, parental leave and dependency leave)
- A6. The first day of absence for the sickness of a child will be paid under dependency leave (3 days paid maximum per year). Subsequent days will be unpaid. Please refer to the Manual of Personnel Practice.
- A7. If an employee is unable to get to work due to adverse weather conditions the employee must immediately telephone the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. Up to 1 day will be paid.

#### B. The following additional requests for absence during term time will be considered taking into account the needs of the individual against the operational needs of the school:-

- B1. Examining duties. Up to 5 days in any academic year to attend an activity arranged by an examination board.
- B2. Examinee activities. Up to 5 days in any academic year to attend an examination.
- B3. To attend an interview or pre-visit for an interview
- B4. To attend a school that the member of staff is transferring to, by mutual agreement between the Headteachers.
- B5. To attend their wedding or that of a close relative. Up to 1 day.
- B6. To attend the funeral of a relative. Up to 5 days for an immediate family member. Up to 2 days for others.
- B6. To attend their graduation or that of their child or partner. Up to 1 day.
- B7. To enable them to move house, if it is not practicable for them to do this outside of term time. Up to 1 day.

We recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances not covered above, and individual cases will be considered by the Headteacher, who may consult with either Human Resources and/or the Chair of Governors. Application for approval should be made at the earliest possible date.

## **Unauthorised Absence**

This occurs when an employee does not attend work and has not received prior approval from the Headteacher. Examples of such absence include:

- Late attendance
- Prolonged breaks
- Taking leave without approval
- Sickness absence without proper notification

Any such absence may be considered as a disciplinary matter and be dealt with by the procedure found in the Manual of Personnel Practice.

## **Recording of Absences**

- Any absence of over half a day duration should be recorded on the absence system of the City Council.

## **Expectations of employees when absent**

Any sickness absence should be reported by telephone call by 07:30 on the first day of absence. The one exception to this is for Breakfast club who can text the Deputy Headteacher before this time to alert an absence then phone again by 07:30. Admin staff should contact the Headteacher and other staff should contact the Deputy Headteacher. The HT and DHT have both made their personal numbers available for this, but if for any reason they are unobtainable then please leave a voicemail on school answering machine on 02392-661191. The voicemail should be left by the employee unless they are incapacitated. Whilst you may choose to also leave a message with other staff; it is still essential that the HT or DHT are telephoned.

Staff should give an indication of the nature of the illness and if possible an indication of approximately how long they are likely to be absent.

On the fourth day of absence the employee should again notify either the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher of their condition and expected date of return.

Should the absence continue after 7 calendar days they must visit their GP and obtain a medical certificate, which should be sent immediately to the Headteacher. Should the absence be on-going then medical certificates should be submitted on a regular basis as soon as they are certified. The school expects to maintain regular sensitive contact with employees who are absent and this contact is intended to be supportive.

On return to work the employee will have a “return to work” meeting where a sickness absence form is completed. These will be held as follows:

- Midday Supervisory Assistants with the Deputy Headteacher
- All other staff with the Headteacher

Employees cannot be required to carry out any work whilst absent due to sickness.

In the event that an employee reaches four absences in a 12 month rolling period, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will discuss the circumstances with the employee to establish the reasons.

Where there is no apparent on-going medical reason for the absences, targets for improvement will be set for the employee with an agreed timescale. Such agreements will be documented and a review date arranged. The manager may also seek further advice from Occupational Health.

In the event that the employee continues to have further absence or fails to comply with sickness absence reporting in accordance with this policy then the Portsmouth City Council Absence Management Policy and Procedures for managing frequent absence and/or long-term ill health will be invoked. This may result in sickness pay being withheld and disciplinary action being taken. If there are any extenuating circumstances, the employee must advise the Headteacher. In respect of the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors should be advised.

### **Support For Employees Returning To Work from a long period of Absence**

The Governors are committed to assisting all employees who are absent from work for reasons of ill health and particularly those who return from a long period of absence. On return to work, support will be provided from the Line Manager/Headteacher or in the case of the Headteacher, the Director of Children, Families and Learning or a representative of the Director.

Where medical advice suggests this is necessary, the Governing Body will support an employee in making a phased return to work (initially on reduced hours/workload) where this will enable them to return to normal working within a reasonable period. The school will seek advice from Human Resources and if relevant, the City Medical Adviser will be consulted before any decision is taken in such matters.

The Headteacher will conduct a return to work interview which will be conducted in a sensitive manner and will be focused on facilitating the employees' return to work and supporting future attendance. The Governors are committed to the consistent application of the agreed system of interviews for all staff at all levels.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

To enable the Governors to monitor the effectiveness of this policy, anonymised data will be submitted to the Governors on an annual basis during the first meeting of the Resources committee each academic year. Where there is a cause for concern, the Governors will ask the Headteacher to take appropriate action and contact Human Resources.

Human Resources will support Governors in investigating a school where a high level of absence is revealed.

### **Appeals**

There may be occasions when an employee wishes to appeal to the Governing Body. This should be written to the Appeals Committee and it is therefore essential that members of the Appeals Committee are not involved in any decision making requested by the Headteacher.

Policy Agreed: Nov 2019

Review Date: Jan 2021