

# Fairisle Junior School



*Staff Attendance and Absence*

*Policy and Guidelines*

*Fairisle Junior School is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this Staff Attendance and Absence policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010).*

*Fairisle Junior School seeks to implement this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.*

*This document is available to all interested parties on request from the School office*

*This policy is adopted by the Fairisle Junior School Governing Body and reviewed annually by Peter Howard, Robert Atkinson and Maria Hughes or as events or legislation change requires.*

*The next scheduled date for review is February 2024.*

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## **Introduction and Rationale**

As a school we follow the policies and procedures set by Southampton City Council and agreed with the relevant professional associations and trade unions. These policies include the Attendance Management Policy and the Model Procedures for Managing Absence (Short and Long Term).

This policy includes:

- Correct procedure for reporting absences
- Medical appointments during working hours
- Short term absence
- Long term absence
- Self Certification and Return to Work Interviews
- Requests for time off during Term Time
- Punctuality

All employees at our school have a contractual duty to attend work, unless the absence is authorised or they are unable to attend through sickness, injury or other unforeseen circumstances.

## **Attendance Management Policy**

At Fairisle Junior School, we seek to maintain the highest possible levels of staff attendance. Whilst doing so we aim to treat all colleagues experiencing ill health fairly, consistently and sensitively. We ensure that school leaders and managers are aware of their responsibilities when absences occur and we provide a safe working environment and appropriate support as necessary.

All employees must:

- Follow the procedure stipulated in the policy for reporting absence and providing any necessary certification.
- Co-operate fully with attendance management procedures such as attending meetings, providing information and any referral to the Occupational Health service.
- Ensure that absence is attributed to illness only when a medical reason exists. The council has a range of policies to support potential absence for any other reason (such as caring, parental and family responsibilities) to which Fairisle Junior School fully subscribes.
- Return to work at the first available opportunity.

Fairisle Junior School will:

- Proactively endorse and implement actions that support health at work.
- Ensure that all members of staff are familiar with the council's and school's attendance management policy and procedures.
- Deal with all sickness absence cases in a supportive and consistent way
- Monitor absence and maintain accurate records so that necessary management information can be provided.
- Follow the procedures provided, making sure that frequent contact is maintained with absent employees and that effective return to work interviews are undertaken.
- Make appropriate and timely referrals to Occupational Health.
- Refer to and instigate other appropriate policies as required (e.g. capability or disciplinary)

Employment may be fairly and legitimately terminated on the grounds of lack of capability due to ill health, provided that the processes detailed in the **Attendance Management Procedure** have been correctly and fairly followed, taking into account the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act where applicable.

### **Attendance Management Procedure**

Any employee who is unable to attend work due to illness must do the following:

- Personally telephone the Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher before 8.00 a.m. (or an hour before your working time starts) and advise of the likely duration of the absence.

OR

- If you are unable to contact either the Head or Deputy, telephone the school and leave a message (using option 2).

AND

- Telephone the school by 3.15 p.m. on each day of absence (unless under certification) to advise leaders of your potential availability for work the following day.

Note: The city council's policy is that contacting the school and leaders must be by physical phone call and not by the use of any SMS, MMS or other messaging service including e-mail. Fairisle Junior fully endorses this policy.

### **Medical Appointments during Term Time**

Where possible, all medical appointments should be made outside normal school working hours. If, however, this is not possible prior approval must be obtained from the Headteacher.

### **Short Term Absence**

Short term absence in relation to this procedure is any period of illness that lasts less than one month. However, there may be circumstances where the long term procedure is used with a member of staff following advice from a doctor.

Principles:

- The Governing Body and the Headteacher of Fairisle Junior School are entitled to expect that all employees attend work for all their contracted hours.
- Fairisle Junior School is an equal opportunities employer. All employees at our school are entitled to expect fair and consistent treatment in respect of their attendance.
- Employees who become disabled during their employment or who suffer from serious or chronic health that affect their attendance will be treated sympathetically and given every encouragement and assistance in continuing their employment if they so wish.
- Information concerning an employee's health, whether given verbally or in writing, is a matter between the individual and the Headteacher. The Headteacher will take all reasonable precautions to ensure confidentiality.

Where an employee is absent from work for 7 calendar days or less (this includes weekends), a self-certificate form must be completed as soon as the employee returns to work. From the eighth calendar day, a fit-note needs to be obtained (normally from the employee's general practitioner).

Following each period of absence, there will be a return to work discussion with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Business Manager. This discussion should cover the following:

- Welcome back to work
- The reason for the absence

- Confirm that the employee is fit to return to work and has provided the appropriate certificate from his/her doctor if necessary
- Whether any aspect of the job is having an impact on the employee's health
- Any adjustments or assistance that can be provided to the employee
- An update on any work issues during the employee's absence
- Patterns of absence if appropriate (see below)
- Any other concerns that either party may have concerning the absence or absence patterns.

Return to work discussions are always recorded in writing using the form at Appendix 1.

### **Repetitive and Persistent Short-Term Sickness**

Repetitive and frequent absence is regarded as a serious matter at Fairisle Junior School and is triggered by 5 separate absences or 10 days absence in any 12 month rolling period. In such circumstances, a formal meeting will be arranged with the employee. A representative from the employee's professional association or union representative may also attend. At this meeting an agreed period of absence monitoring will begin and a review meeting set up. A referral to Occupational Health could be made. We undertake to make early contact with the schools external HR advisor to discuss the most appropriate approach.

Where in such circumstances the Occupational Health unit finds that there are medical reasons to explain the employee's poor attendance Fairisle Junior School will investigate if any reasonable adjustments might be made (e.g. reduced hours or physical adjustments to work place) in order to help the employee sustain an acceptable level of attendance.

In some circumstances the Headteacher may consider whether unacceptable attendance needs to be dealt with under the disciplinary and/or dismissal linked to the capability and appeals procedure.

Note: We take particular care when dealing with absences that are, or may be due to:

- Pregnancy related conditions
- Conditions defined as disabilities under the DDA
- Accidents at work or illnesses contracted at work
- Terminal illnesses
- Alcohol and drug abuse

## Long Term Absence

### Principles:

- The Governing Body and the Headteacher of Fairisle Junior School are entitled to expect that all employees attend work for all their contracted hours.
- Fairisle Junior School is an equal opportunities employer. All employees at our school are entitled to expect fair and consistent treatment in respect of their attendance.
- Employees who become disabled during their employment or who suffer from serious or chronic health that affect their attendance will be treated sympathetically and given every encouragement and assistance in continuing their employment if they so wish.
- Information concerning an employee's health, whether given verbally or in writing, is a matter between the individual and the Headteacher. The Headteacher will take all reasonable precautions to ensure confidentiality.

Long term absence in relation to this procedure is any period of illness that lasts more than one month. However, there may be circumstances where the long term procedure is used prior to a month following advice from a doctor.

The general principles for resolving long term absence (or regular sickness absence covering substantial periods of one month or more) are the same for teaching and support employees. We undertake to make early contact with the school's external HR advisor to discuss the most appropriate approach. (Any specific differences for teachers are identified below).

The following steps will take place over a period of weeks/months with each case looked at on its own merit. An occupational health referral may take place at any time.

### *Step 1 (Contacting the Employee)*

During the period of absence, we will maintain regular contact with the employee in order to keep informed about progress and the employee's level of recovery. This contact will always be sympathetic, supportive and non-threatening.

### *Step 2 (Contact HR/Meeting with the Employee)*

In all cases of absence more than 1 month the Headteacher will contact the school's external HR advisor and arrange a formal meeting with the employee. At this point it is likely that a referral to Occupational Health will be made and this is to be discussed during the meeting.

(There may be some circumstances where we may wish to contact Occupational Health before the employee has been off for one month – e.g. in cases of work related stress)

### *Step 3 (Occupational Health Report)*

The report will provide information and a further meeting is arranged at this point to discuss the nature of the advice with the employee. (This employee can again be accompanied by a representative or person of their choice).

There are three possible outcomes:

1. If there is acceptance that the employee can return to work this should be arranged as soon as possible. Initially there may be occasions when the employee might return on different conditions (e.g. part time work or limited duties for a short time) which we should consider and allow if possible. (The school may need to make '*reasonable adjustments*' to the employee's work in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) – if this is the case HR will provide advice)
2. If the employee is deemed unfit to continue in his/her current job but fit to undertake suitable alternative work, we will always try to secure the employee's agreement to this conclusion taking due account of any constraints the Occupational Health Unit have identified. If the employee does not accept the view of the Occupational Health Unit, we will provide an opportunity for the employee to obtain further independent medical advice for submission (this should normally occur within 30 days of the date of the meeting).
3. Dismissal on the grounds of capability due to ill health. This is considered by the Headteacher in cases where the employee accepts the medical advice and either does not wish to be considered for or is not recommended for suitable alternative employment, under the Model Dismissal and Appeal Procedure.

In cases where the employee is considered suitable for redeployment they are placed on the redeployment register for a reasonable period (normally 6 months). If it has not proved feasible to accommodate the employee with suitable alternative work (either because it is not available, or because it has been turned down for valid reasons agreed by both parties) the case for termination of employment on the grounds of ill health is considered by the Headteacher under the Model Dismissal and Appeal Procedure.

## **Teachers' Attendance and Absence**

There are certain differences with regard to teachers' attendance and absence that must be reflected in the action taken.

- Ill Health Retirement Benefits

Teachers who are unable to continue working because of illness or injury can apply for ill health benefits under the Teachers' Pension Scheme if they are members of the scheme. We would always take advice from our external HR advisor on the process of the application.

- Medical Suspension

We have the power to suspend teachers where necessary if we feel that their condition poses a risk to the safety and well-being of children or colleagues. Suspension would only be carried out on the advice of an appropriately qualified medical advisor about the risks encountered with the individual's state of health. Each case is judged on its individual merits.

Note: We take particular care when dealing with absences that are, or may be due to:

- Pregnancy related conditions
- Conditions defined as disabilities under the DDA
- Accidents at work or illnesses contracted at work
- Terminal illnesses
- Alcohol and drug abuse

### **Self Certification and Return to Work Interviews**

In cases where an employee is off work for seven calendar days or less they must complete a self certification form for the Headteacher or Business Manager. (Note: this includes weekends)

In cases where an employee is off work from the eighth day they are required to produce a fit note from their medical practitioner.

Following each period of absence that lasts at least 3 days, there will be a return to work discussion with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Business Manager.

### **Requests for Time off during Term Time**

Generally requests for time off during working hours fall into the following categories:

- Requests for time off to attend to professional duties
- Requests from staff wishing to fulfil responsibilities under public offices they hold (e.g. school governor, jury service)
- Requests relating to personal circumstances



### *Nomination for Public Duty*

Before agreeing to be nominated for a public duty or office, an employee should first discuss the implications of taking on a responsibility with the Headteacher.

### *Interviews*

We allow authorised leave to enable a member of staff to attend an interview for another post within the Local Government service.

### *Time off for Dependants*

Under the Employment Relations Act 1999, an employee is entitled to be permitted to take a reasonable amount of **unpaid** time off during normal working hours in order to take action which is necessary. As a good employer we are able to approve one day's paid leave each school year in the case of a genuine emergency situation. Employees should notify the school as soon as possible.

Such emergency situations may include:

- To provide assistance when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted.
- To arrange care for a dependant who is ill or injured
- Where the arrangements for the care of a dependant are unexpectedly disrupted or terminated.
- As a result of the death of a dependant.
- To deal with an incident involving the employee's child which occurs unexpectedly when he/she is at school.

### *Moving House*

The Headteacher may authorise paid leave normally for a maximum of one day, but with possible extension to two days in the case of a long-distance removal, to enable a member of staff to move house if it is not reasonably practicable for the removal to take place outside the employee's normal working hours.

### *Miscellaneous reasons*

The Headteacher may authorise unpaid leave (for a maximum of one day per academic year per employee) to enable a member of staff to be absent from duty for any other reasonable purpose.

The above paragraph will apply to circumstances such as an employee requesting leave to attend their child's graduation, to see their solicitor on a personal matter or in exceptional circumstances attend a religious festival (normally festivals occur outside working time).

## **Arriving at work on time**

All employees are expected to arrive at work in time to fulfil their duties to the best of their ability.

There are a very small number of occasions where an employee might be late (for example in the case of a flat tyre on the way to work)

If there are persistent issues with individuals, they will be dealt with under the terms of the school's disciplinary policy. Copies are available from the Headteacher.

Date Policy Reviewed: Spring term 2022

Next Review: Spring term 2024



## Self Certification for Short Term Absence

(On the 8<sup>th</sup> Calendar day a doctors 'Fit Note' will be required)

<b>EMPLOYEE NAME:</b>		
First working day's absence started on:  am/pm	Last day of absence:  am/pm	Total Number of working days lost due to absence  days

Tick below the days you would normally work or are scheduled to work:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

<b>Reasons for absence</b> (state briefly in terms of symptoms or effects, words such as illness or unwell are insufficient)
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Was the absence related to any of the following? (Please tick)

- ☐ Pregnancy related:  
☐ Disability related:  
☐ Sustained at work:

<b>Any other comments:</b>
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I agree that to the best of my knowledge the reasons for absence as indicated above are correct.

<b>Employee Signature:</b>	Date:
<b>School Representative:</b>	Date:

Office use only		Total PAID days absent over last 12 months
Office use only		Total UNPAID days absent over last 12 months
Office use only		Total COMPASSIONATE days leave over academic year

**PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL  
RECORD OF RETURN TO WORK  
DISCUSSION**

<b>NAME</b>	
<b>POST</b>	
<b>DATE OF ABSENCE</b>	From: To:

**POINTS TO COVER:****TICK**

<b>1. Welcome back</b>	
Comments:	
<b>2. Explore reason for absence</b>	
Comments:	
<b>3. Confirmation the employee is fit to return to work</b>	
Comments:	
<b>4. Discussion about 'Fit Note', if provided</b>	
Comments:	
<b>5. Aspects of the job that could potentially impact the employee's health?</b>	
Comments:	
<b>6. Any adjustments or additional assistance needed?</b>	
Comments:	
<b>7. Update employee on any work changes during their absence.</b>	
Comments:	
<b>8. Discussion regarding absence patterns if appropriate (consider use of calendar)</b>	
Comments:	
<b>9. Discussion regarding any other concerns the school or employee have</b>	
Comments:	
<b>10. Actions or recommendations if needed</b>	
Comments:	

<b>Employee Signature:</b>	Date:
<b>School Representative:</b>	Date:

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