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# FOREST HILL SCHOOL

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## STAFF ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES

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*March 2013*

*Review: as required, or if a situation occurs which necessitates amendment*

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## **Introduction**

The Staff Absence Management Policy and Procedures are to inform and provide clear guidelines on staff attendance so that Forest Hill School can reach optimum attendance levels in order to maintain efficient use of its resources. This policy takes account of National Agreements found in the 'Burgundy Book', Teachers Pay and Conditions document and the 'Green Book' for Support Staff. It should be read in conjunction with the local authority guidelines for monitoring and managing absence and the model procedure for handling impaired capability on grounds of ill health. These documents are available from the Human Resources Manager.

A satisfactory level of attendance at work is crucial to the smooth running of the school. High absence rates not only impact on colleagues left to cover the absence but have major implications for the school budget and the teaching and learning of our students. Unsatisfactory absence rates ultimately lead to lower standards of work and service. The Headteacher must therefore, as part of normal day-to-day supervision, ensure that employees are aware of the standards of attendance required, where improvement is required and how these will be monitored and reviewed over time. The expectations for all employees in the school are that there will be very high levels of attendance. There is acceptance of course that people can become sick; however, employees need to know that there is an expectation that absence through sickness should be kept at a minimum and that sickness records are rigorously monitored. Employees also need to be aware that failure to reach an acceptable level of attendance may result in formal action being taken under the LA Procedure for impaired Capability on Grounds of ill-Health.

## **Definitions of Absence**

**Absence** - is defined as not attending for work when required to do so

**Authorised Absence** - is absence which has been authorised by the Headteacher prior to or after its occurrence and can be paid or unpaid

**Unauthorised Absence** - is absence which has not received authorisation by the Headteacher prior to or after its occurrence and is **always unpaid**

We are aware that an employee absent from work may be due to a variety of reasons including health problems, family or personal matters. It is vital that the school has in place the Staff Absence Management Policy and Procedures to ensure that all employees receive the appropriate support at such times and that absence is managed effectively to ensure equal and consistent treatment of all staff.

A consistent and proactive approach to managing attendance is essential to minimise disruption while at the same time treating employees fairly and compassionately.

Staff absence from work can have an adverse effect on the achievement of pupils. All the evidence suggests that disruption to the pattern of a pupils' learning has a detrimental effect on progress and attainment and the quality of education and opportunity they receive.

Line management has a key role in influencing employee behaviour and in creating a purposeful and supportive working atmosphere which can play a large part in maintaining and improving attendance. The length of time lost by employees through absence must however be monitored to ensure that each employee is able to do their job effectively and without putting themselves or others at risk. Managers should ensure that all their employees are familiar with the absence reporting procedure and the absence rules.

## **Reporting Absence**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Day of Absence**

**All Employees** who are unavoidably absent through illness or for personal reasons **must** notify the school before 7.45am on the morning of their absence.

Messages are to be left on the dedicated absence answerphone number:

**020 8699 9981 - NO OTHER NUMBER TO BE USED**

**State clearly:**

- Full name
- Nature / reason for absence
- Duration of absence or anticipated date of return

**You must** also contact your HOS / HOD to set your cover, which needs to be clear, adequate for the lesson, and available to non-specialists AND by staff from external agencies who do NOT have access to Fronter / FHS Connect. It is essential that you set suitable cover work for every lesson in which you are responsible for a class or group of students, thus ensuring pupils have appropriate and relevant work to keep them engaged in class.

Main Reception staff must also report their absence to their line manager in addition to the staff absence line.

If you are absent for more than one day and HAVE NOT informed the school you will not be returning the following day, YOU MUST contact the school again and before 7.45am to inform them of your absence and make the necessary cover arrangements.

If you are absent for more than one day BUT have made clear the date of your return during your initial call, you do not need to call again unless this situation changes.

When you return to work, you must complete the 'Return to Work' form in the COVER folder on FHS Connect or obtain a paper version which is located in the Staffroom (Appendix B). You must then forward it to the cover manager responsible for staff absence.

## **Sickness Absence Entitlement**

### **Sickness Absence of 1 to 3 days**

- This is classed as "Un-certificated Sickness"

### **Sickness Absence of 4 to 7 Days – (Including Saturdays & Sundays)**

- This is classed as "Self-Certificated Sickness"

If an absence is to last any longer than 3 days you must on or before the 4<sup>th</sup> day contact the Human Resources Manager to notify them of the reason for the continued absence. This can be by telephone or by email, (see back of Absence Policy for contact information).

On return to work you will be required to complete and sign the Lewisham Self-Certification form (see Appendix B). This is essential in order to process entitlement to occupational sick pay. **Forms are available from the HR Dept.**

### **Sickness Absence from the 8th day or MORE (including Saturday & Sundays)**

- This is classed as "Medically certified sickness"

By the 8<sup>th</sup> day of absence employees must see their Doctor/Medical Practitioner and obtain a signed Statement of Fitness for Work indicating how long they anticipate they will be absent from work. This must be forwarded immediately to the Human Resources Manager who will need this for the Attendance Returns to the Local Authority. Subsequently you must submit further Statement of Fitness for Work certificates if the absence is extended beyond the period covered by previous certificates.

### **Entitlement to Sick Pay**

#### **Teachers**

The periods of entitlement to paid sick leave are set out in the Conditions of Service for Schoolteachers in England and Wales and in the former ILEA staff code. Entitlement to sick leave is based on aggregated teaching service (excluding breaks in service).

You are required to follow the absence reporting procedure laid down by the school.

#### **Support Staff (APT&C)**

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| 1 <sup>st</sup> year of service                   | 1 months' full pay (after completing 4 months' service) and 2 months' half pay |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of service                   | 2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay                                      |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> year of service                   | 4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay                                      |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> year of service | 5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay                                      |
| After 5 years of service                          | 6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay                                      |

### **Salary Payments whilst sick**

**SSP (Statutory Sick Pay)** paid by the Government towards the employee's salary from the 4<sup>th</sup> day of sickness and up to 28 weeks at the current rate. This payment is not in addition to the employee's daily/weekly salary.

**OSP (Occupational Sick Pay)** is provided as part of all employees' terms and conditions of service. It is only available to employees who are genuinely sick. Payments are made to the employee from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of sickness and in conjunctions with the SSP from the 4<sup>th</sup> day. This payment is not in addition to the employee's salary, but will be paid to the employee instead of their salary.

### **School Contact whilst absent**

The school is responsible for establishing and maintaining contact with absent employees and from an early stage will exercise their welfare role by telephoning and, where appropriate, visiting the employee. The purpose of discussions will be to keep in touch with the employee's state of health and possible return to work.

### **Return to work Interview**

Employees who have been absent from work may be required to attend a confidential informal meeting on their return to work with their Head of Department or Headteacher. The meeting will be private, informal and helpful to the employee and employer. This will then enable the school to welcome the employee back, check employee's current health, ascertain whether further time-off will be required for treatment/appointments, and to review any events that may have occurred during the absence period. A record of the meeting will be kept and key points recorded.

### **Absence Trigger Points**

#### **Absence Review meetings**

Absence review meetings will be conducted with your line manager / Headteacher if in any three-month period an employee has displayed a pattern of frequent short-term absence defined as:

- at least 3 separate periods of un-certificated, self-certificated or statement of fitness for work absence
- patterns of absence, for example, regular Friday or Monday absence, or absences regularly occurring on a particular day of the week
- any other absence giving rise to concern

### **Referral to the Occupational Health**

#### **Regular pattern of absence**

Where an employee is showing a pattern of absence it is at the discretion of the Headteacher to refer them to Occupational Health. This will be done through consultation with the employee.

#### **Long Term absence from work**

Where the employee's recovery period is uncertain or the absence is likely to continue significantly longer than 4 weeks, the case will be referred by the Headteacher to Occupational Health who will advise the Headteacher and the Local Authority of the health of the employee. This process will be done in consultation with the employee.

### **Requesting Absence (Known In Advance)**

**All Employees must:**

- Log this BY EMAIL to the cover manager person as soon as you are aware of the absence, no matter how far in advance this may be. Use the 'Request for Absence known in advance' form (Appendix A) in FHS Connect in the cover folder or in the staffroom, which must be filled in and attached to your email along with appointment letters and forwarded to the cover manager. The cover manager will then liaise with Human Resources to confirm whether the absence is authorised, paid/unpaid or unauthorised. The cover administrator will confirm if your absence has been authorised. Should your absence be unauthorised the cover manager will contact you.
- Give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice. NOTE: the earlier you place the request, the more likely it is that we will be able to cover you. Please remember that even if you give 2 weeks' notice, there is no guarantee that we will be able to approve your request.
- Set clear, adequate and reasonable cover that can be supervised by non – specialists AND by staff from external agencies who do NOT have access to Fronter / FHS Connect. All cover must be left with the Head of Subject, who will make it available to cover staff.

To ensure equal and consistent treatment of employees it is likely that only absence specified in this booklet will normally be paid. If you have a request for "special" paid leave you will need to arrange an appointment to see the Headteacher.

All employees have the right to appeal to the Headteacher against any 'unpaid' leave decision

Unpaid leave will be at a rate of 1/365<sup>th</sup> of your salary if paid on an annual basis and 1/195<sup>th</sup> or the equivalent daily rate if paid on a daily basis.

### **Emergency Unplanned Absence**

This covers unforeseen or unexpected absence for which you are unable to give us the required 2 weeks' notice.

You must follow the same guidelines as reporting an absence, giving a clear reason for the absence and if possible a likely date for your return.

Notify your HOD or HOS immediately with details of your cover.

We will do our best to accommodate the absence request under these extreme circumstances.

In such unforeseen absences the nature of the absence will be considered to determine the absence as being paid or unpaid.

**NOTE: Failure to follow these procedures may result in absence being deemed 'unauthorised'**

## **Leave of Absence Provision**

### **Medical Appointments**

When considering requests to attend medical appointment the following basic principles will apply:

- Where employees are able to influence the time of their medical appointments then these **MUST** be arranged in the employee's own time (e.g. Doctor/Hospital/Dental appointments).
- Where this is not possible and it is evident that the employee cannot attend outside of working hours, then reasonable time off with pay should be granted and recorded. Wherever possible employees are expected to attend work before or return to work after the appointment - health, time and travel permitting.
- Should an employee be requested to attend a medical appointment you will be required to produce the appointment letter which should be attached to your Request for Absence form when submitting for authorisation - failure to do this may result in unauthorised absence.

### **Dependants Leave**

The Employment Relations Act 1999 provides a right for employees, regardless of length of service to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off work to deal with certain unexpected or sudden emergencies involving dependants and to make any necessary longer-term arrangements. Dependant is defined as a spouse or cohabitee, child, parent or anyone who reasonably relies on the employee for assistance if the person falls ill, is injured or assaulted, or to make arrangements for the provision of care in the event of illness or injury. It is at the Headteacher's discretion whether to pay dependants' leave. There is an expectation that the employee will do everything in their power as quickly as is possible to make satisfactory arrangements for the dependant so that they can attend work. Employees should acknowledge any shared responsibility for dependants, for example with their partner (where this is applicable).

There is no legal obligation for you to be paid for Dependant absence but we recognise that such emergencies can occur and therefore 5 working days paid leave will be granted in any rolling 12 month period, (pro rata for part-time employees). In exceptional circumstances this may be extended (paid or unpaid) at the discretion of the Headteacher.

### **Compassionate/Bereavement Leave**

Employees are usually entitled to one day with pay to attend the funeral of any relative or person with whom there has been a close relationship. Factors which may be taken into account in deciding the actual amount of leave to be granted include: a) the closeness of the relationship, b) the distance which would have to be travelled to attend the funeral

(e.g. abroad) c) whether the member of staff is responsible for making funeral arrangements as next of kin or executor.

- **Death** of member of immediate family (that is parent, partner, child, brother or sister): Up to 3 days with pay
- **Funeral** of an employee's immediate family (that is parent, partner, child, brother or sister): Up to 2 days with pay
- **Funeral** of an employee's partner's parents, grandparent, grandchild or other close relative with whom the employee maintains or shares the home or is the employee's next of kin: a) Up to 1 day with pay.  
Up to 2 days leave with pay should be granted where the funeral takes place at a distance of more than 4 hours travelling time from London.

### **Holidays during Term Time/Late Return from Holidays**

Employees are not allowed holiday leave during term time. Employees who are delayed returning from leave/holiday through circumstances beyond their control may be asked to produce written evidence of the reason for their late return. This is classified as unpaid leave but subject to written evidence and agreement with the Headteacher, may result in the leave being agreed as paid.

### **Interviews and Appointments**

When attending Interviews/Appointments related to an employees' career, the Request for Absence Known in Advance procedures must be followed.

Interviews: Employees will be granted leave with pay for visits/interviews which are part of the formal selection process.

Appointments: Once appointed, Employees will be allowed 1 day for visits to their new school or place of employment. These visits should be timed to cause the least amount of disruption to their work and the date agreed with the person responsible for cover, before arrangements are made. Colleagues requesting time off must secure the agreement of their new school to reimburse FHS for the cost of the day's pay. Such an agreement should be in writing (letter, email) and attached to the request for leave. Otherwise the leave is granted as unpaid.

### **Jury Service**

Employees receiving a summons to serve on a jury must report this immediately to the Headteacher, who will grant paid leave of absence. You must also follow the Reporting absence known in advance procedures when requesting the time off.

Employees should be aware they may apply for exemption from Jury Service in crucial times of the school year and that this should be discussed with the Headteacher before the request is made.

You must also inform the Human Resources Manager who will need to complete the Jury service forms before you attend your Jury Service.

Whilst you are on Jury Service you will continue to receive your full remuneration from Forest Hill School. You will also receive a payment direct from the Jury Service and this payment must be returned to Forest Hill School (it is not paid in addition to your normal salary). Please speak to the Human Resources Manager for clarification.

### **Maternity Leave**

Maternity Leave is allowed in line with the National Statutory Regulations and the Local Authority Maternity and Pay arrangements. Employees may also request extended maternity leave, unpaid, following the birth of the child. Pregnant employees must, by law, be allowed time off for ante-natal care when this is not available outside the school day. Written evidence of appointments must accompany the 'Request for Absence Known in Advance' form.

Pregnant staff should refer to the Local Authorities Maternity Leave and Pay arrangements for full details of their leave and pay entitlements.

### **Paternity Leave**

Employees who meet the qualification requirements are entitled to receive SPP (Birth) for two weeks at the rate of £100 per week, but the school will honour 2 weeks full pay for the duration of the paternity leave and where all qualifying rules are met.

SPP (birth) can be taken during the eight-week period following the birth of the child. It can be taken in whole weeks only. For this purpose a week runs over a period of any 7 days, for example if the employee starts their leave on a Tuesday, then the SPP (birth) runs from Tuesday to Monday.

**Adoption Leave** is allowed in line with the National Statutory Regulation.

**Maternity, Paternity & Adoption Leave - please contact the Human Resources Manager for advice, guidance and procedures.**

### **Moving House**

A maximum of one working day's leave with pay is permitted.

### **Religious Holidays**

Leave of absence will be granted in line with Local Authority regulations for official religious holidays and festivals, which fall within school time. Religious holidays which fall outside of the Local Authority regulations will be honoured and treated as authorised unpaid absence.

### **Teacher Exchanges**

Requests to take part in teacher exchanges will be considered on an individual basis by the Headteacher and Governing Body.

### **Trade Union Duties**

Paid leave is allowed in order to carry out official union duties and will be granted in line with local and national agreements. Please ensure that the person responsible for absence is informed in advance of any official union duties which may impact on your normal working day. The school also requests that they receive an annual letter from the relevant Trade Unions confirming the name of the individual who has been elected to serve as the School representative or in any other capacity for the coming year.

### **Member of Public Bodies and School Governors**

Paid leave to attend official duties will be granted in line with statutory rights and agreements.

### **Weddings**

Employees are entitled to one day with pay to attend the wedding of a relative (of their own). In certain circumstances (distance to travel), and at the Headteacher's discretion, a further day's unpaid leave may be granted. In certain circumstances (e.g. close personal relationship) one day's unpaid leave maybe granted for attendance at any other wedding.

### **Other Planned Absence Inset/Visits**

#### **Absence for Inset**

If you wish to apply for INTERNAL or EXTERNAL INSET, you must:

1. Apply by email to the person responsible for INSET, who will confirm with you whether or not you will be able to go.
2. If your request is approved, you may assume that cover has also been requested.
3. Give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice. NOTE: the earlier you place the request, the more likely it is that we will be able to cover you. Please remember that even if you give 2 weeks' notice, there is no guarantee that we will be able to approve your INSET request.
4. Set clear, adequate and reasonable cover work that can be supervised by non – specialists AND by staff from external agencies who do NOT have access to Fronter / FHS Connect. All cover must be left with the Head of Subject, who will make it available to cover staff.

You do NOT need to contact the Cover Manager at any point in this procedure. Application for cover will be made by RWF on your behalf.

### **Cover Generated by Visits**

If you wish to take students on a visit or journey, you must:

1. Apply by email the person responsible for school visits, who will confirm with you whether or not you will be able to go.
2. If your visit is approved, you may assume that cover has also been arranged.
3. Give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice. NOTE: the earlier you place the request, the more likely it is that we will be able to cover you. Please remember that even if you give 2 weeks' notice, there is no guarantee that we will be able to permit your visit.
4. Set clear, adequate and reasonable cover work that can be supervised by non – specialists AND by staff from external agencies who do NOT have access to Fronter / FHS Connect. All cover must be left with the Head of Subject, who will make it available to cover staff.

You do NOT need to contact the Cover Manager at any point in this procedure. Application for cover will be made by SLE on your behalf.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Absence Line** - **0208 699 9981**

**Main Switchboard Number** - **0208 699 9343**

#### **Steve Brady, Room 007**

Headteacher

Email: [s.brady@foresthillschool.co.uk](mailto:s.brady@foresthillschool.co.uk)

#### **Debbie Taylor - 020 8613 8416**

Human Resources Manager

Email: [d.taylor@foresthillschool.co.uk](mailto:d.taylor@foresthillschool.co.uk)

#### **Frances Cooper - 020 8613 8475**

Responsible for Staff Absence/Cover Manager

Email: [f.cooper@foresthillschool.co.uk](mailto:f.cooper@foresthillschool.co.uk)

#### **Paula Hamilton - 020 8613 8491**

Staff Cover Administration

Email: [p.hamilton@foresthillschool.co.uk](mailto:p.hamilton@foresthillschool.co.uk)

#### **Rachel Woolf - 020 8613 8461**

Responsible for INSET

Email: [r.woolf@foresthillschool.co.uk](mailto:r.woolf@foresthillschool.co.uk)

#### **Stuart Livingstone - 020 8613 8411**

Responsible for School Visits

Email: [s.livingstone@foresthillschool.co.uk](mailto:s.livingstone@foresthillschool.co.uk)

### **APPENDIX A**

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

**REQUEST FOR ABSENCE KNOWN IN ADVANCE (PAID/UNPAID)**

**- PLEASE ATTACH APPOINTMENT LETTERS -**

THIS FORM SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO **FRANCES COOPER** FOR APPROVAL  
BEFORE TAKING TIME OFF

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

REASON: (IF ABSENCE DUE TO FAMILY COMMITMENT PLEASE STATE RELATIONSHIP OF PERSON)

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DATE/TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ (PAID/UNPAID)

\* IF 'UNPAID' LEAVE IS GRANTED, THE FORM WILL BE RETURNED FOR YOU TO SIGN BELOW.

IN THE EVENT OF MY REQUEST FOR UNPAID LEAVE BEING GRANTED, I HEREBY AUTHORISE THE SCHOOL TO DEDUCT THIS FROM MY SALARY

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

**FOREST HILL SCHOOL**

**REPORTING OF UNKNOWN ABSENCE**

**- TO BE COMPLETED ON THE FIRST DAY OF RETURN TO WORK -**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE(S) OF ABSENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

**REASON FOR ABSENCE**

(PLEASE ATTACH COPIES OF FITNESS FOR WORK STATEMENTS/SELF CERTIFICATES AS APPROPRIATE)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ (PAID/UNPAID)

ONLY ABSENCES SPECIFIED IN STAFF ABSENCE POLICY & LEA CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR STAFF WILL NORMALLY BE PAID. IF YOU HAVE A SPECIAL REQUEST FOR PAID LEAVE, PLEASE MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE STEVE BRADY (HEAD TEACHER).

PLEASE SEE STAFF ABSENCE POLICY FOR ENTITLEMENTS (AVAILABLE FROM THE HR DEPT)

**COMPLETED FORM TO BE RETURNED TO FRANCES COOPER**