

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Senior Management Team on an annual basis.

| Date the policy was last reviewed and agreed | Senior Manager |                                                                                   | Manager |           |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|
|                                              | Name           | Signature                                                                         | Name    | Signature |
| January 2026                                 | Natasha Smyth  |  |         |           |
|                                              |                |                                                                                   |         |           |

This policy is due for review up to 12 months from the above date

## Staff Absence & Time Keeping Policy

### Legal Basis: Related Sub Section in The Statutory Framework for The Early Years Foundation Stage

*1.19 All children deserve high quality early education and care. This requires a quality workforce. A well-trained, skilled team of practitioners can help every child achieve the best possible educational outcomes. Children need to build an attachment with their key person for their confidence and well-being. The key person also promotes children's learning by developing a deep understanding of their individual needs and children can particularly benefit from their modelling and support. The requirements in relation to workforce training and responsibilities, including that of the key person, are outlined in Section 3 but they are equally important for children's learning and development as they are for their safety and welfare.*

*3.21 Staff members must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance which may affect their ability to care for children. **If a practitioner is taking medication which may affect their ability to care for children, they should seek medical advice. Practitioners must only work directly with children if the medical advice received confirms that the medication is unlikely to impair that person's ability to look after children properly.** All medication on the premises must be stored securely, and out of reach of children, at all times.*

*3.35 Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. **Providers must ensure that children are adequately supervised, including whilst eating, and decide how to use staff to ensure children's needs are met.** Providers must inform parents and/or carers about how staff are organised, and, when relevant and practical, aim to involve them in these decisions.*

*3.39 The ratio requirements below apply to the total number of staff available to work directly with children<sup>32</sup>. Exceptionally, and where the quality of care and safety and security of children is maintained, changes to the ratios may be made.*

*3.90 The EYFS requirements sit alongside other legal obligations and do not supersede or replace any other legislation which providers must still meet. For example, where provision is taking place in maintained schools there is other legislation in place with which headteachers, teachers and other practitioners must comply with. Other duties on providers include:*

- *Employment laws.*
- *Anti-discriminatory legislation.*
- *Health and safety legislation.*
- *Data collection regulations<sup>59</sup>.*
- *Duty of care.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Within the Early Years Framework (EYFS), "staff absence" refers to when an early-years practitioner is unable to attend work due to illness, personal reasons, or other factors. The framework outlines guidelines for managing these absences to ensure the continuity of care and safety for children in the setting. This often includes procedures for notifying parents, covering shifts, and maintaining appropriate staff-to-child ratios.

Key points about staff absence in the EYFS:

**Safeguarding concern:** Proper management of staff absences is crucial for safeguarding children as it ensures there are always enough qualified staff present to supervise and care for them.

**Staffing ratios:** When a staff member is absent, providers need to ensure they can maintain the required staff-to-child ratios to comply with EYFS regulations.

**Communication with parents:** Parents should be informed when a regular staff member is absent, especially if it could impact their child's care routine.

This document details our setting's policy towards staff time-keeping, and the rules governing absence of employees from work which will include sickness, authorised and unauthorised absences.

## 2 TIME KEEPING

Employees are required to attend punctually for work. Employees are required to **sign in as soon as they arrive, and sign out as they leave, each day** using the 'Tapestry' app and on the paper register. Employees arriving late for work will have their wages reduced accordingly.

Employees are not permitted to leave work before their finishing time without permission from the Manager or Senior Manager. In the event of an employee requiring time away from the nursery during their normal shift hours then they must report back to work and continue their shifts without unnecessary delay, and must sign out and sign in on their return.

Persistent lateness (more than 3 occurrences over a half term period) will be considered to be a breach of contract and be subject to the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

## 3 ABSENCE

If a member of staff is unable to report for duty for any reason, they are required to notify the Manager by telephone at the earliest opportunity so that cover can be arranged, **at the very latest before 7.30am before the shift is due to start**. Staff must call themselves so that we know they are safe. Partners/parents etc. are not allowed to phone on your behalf unless in an extreme emergency. Text messages, emails, voice notes etc are not acceptable, nor is asking a staff member to relay a message.

It is the responsibility of all employees to keep the setting advised of the nature of the illness or circumstances which prevent them from reporting for work, and of the likely duration of their absence. Staff should also provide details of any work or information regarding any child which needs to be covered urgently.

Staff should let the Manager know by 3.00pm on a day they are absent if they are likely to be absent or not the following day.

If an employee requests to be absent from work for reasons other than sickness or emergency, then prior permission must be obtained from the Senior Manager. This request for cover for absence can be for the following reasons:

- Jury duty or court appearances as a witness.
- Medical appointments (only where these cannot be made outside of working hours).
- Compassionate leave for domestic/family reasons, bereavements etc. (see Part 11)

All periods of absence, regardless of the reason, will be recorded on a Staff Absence Record, and recorded on the individuals Bradford factor score sheet by the Senior Manager. Any period of unauthorised absence will be considered as a breach of contract and subject to disciplinary and/or gross misconduct proceedings.

## 4 SICKNESS

Length of sickness absence - your responsibility as an employee

**For sickness from 3 up to 7 days:** Complete a self-certification on the first day of your return to work. The certificate must be sent to the Senior Manager as notification of sick leave, and a copy will be kept in the employee's personnel file. A Self-Certification form is available from any Doctor's Surgery or can be completed online at gov.uk. (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ask-your-employer-for-statutory-sick-pay>)

**If sickness extends beyond 7 days:** Provide a doctor's statement of fitness to work certificate promptly to the manager. Further medical certificates must be submitted to give continuous cover for the period of absence. These must be sent to the Senior Manager as notification of sick leave, and a copy will be kept in employees' personnel file.

On return-to-work employees will complete a return-to-work review. This is so that the nature of the absence is fully understood, including whether it is a work-related illness, and any changes required to reduce the risk of recurrence are understood. The other purpose is to ensure staff are fit to return to work and any adjustments, such as returning on reduced hours or reduced physical exertion are taken into account to ensure a sustained recovery.

## 5 MONITORING OF SICKNESS & ABSENCE

Employees who accrue numerous sick days, regardless of whether certificated or not, will be subject to the company discipline process using the Bradford Factor as a trigger for sickness reviews. The Bradford factor scores are based on the frequency and length of an employee's absence during the previous 52 weeks period. If an employee is absent for part of the day, it will be counted as a half day (0.5) for the purposes of calculating the Bradford Factor Score.

The formula used is:  $B = S^2 \times D$

Where:

B = Bradford factor score

S = total number of instances of absence for that individual in the given period

D = total number of days the individual was absent during the given period

Managers will use the following thresholds to trigger a sickness review meeting:

50 points – Stage 1: verbal warning.

150 points – Stage 2: written warning

300 points – Stage 3: final warning

500 points – Stage 4: dismissal

### The Warning Procedure

**Stage 1:** When the target of 50 points has accumulated, an investigation into the cause of the absenteeism will take place, an informal verbal warning will take place with notes to improve the employee's absence.

**Stage 2: First Formal Hearing & Written Warning** In the event a further absences occur, so when the target of 150 points has been reached in the rolling twelve-month period, a formal written warning may be issued.

This warning remains in force for a period of six months. The employee will be informed at all stages that their overall attendance record is unacceptable, and in the event that no improvement is made, this could eventually lead to termination of employment.

**Stage 3: Second Formal Hearing & Final Written Warning** In the event that a further absence occurs in the rolling twelve months period following stage 2, when the target of 300 points has been reached, then a formal final written warning may be issued

**Stage 4: Third Formal Hearing & Notice of Dismissal** In the event that a further absence occurs in the rolling twelve months period following stage 3, when the target of 500 points has been reached then this could result in the company terminating employment by reason of unacceptable attendance record.

This does not mean a verbal warning will automatically be given at 50 points or dismissal will automatically happen at 500 points. It just means that these actions will be considered. Factors that will be taken into account are the nature of the illness, the likelihood of the employee's attendance improving, the impact the absence is having on colleagues and our ability to provide for our children.

## 6 LONG TERM SICKNESS

Where absences have lasted over 10 working days (i.e. 10 days that the preschool is open) or more, the Manager will contact the member of staff concerned to obtain an initial assessment of the problem and to offer assistance.

Where appropriate, after further assessment of the problem, a face-to-face meeting or telephone conference between Managers and the member of staff should be arranged to:

- Seek to confirm the reasons and nature of the absence and its likely duration
- Ensure that the member of staff is aware of the setting's concern regarding their health and necessary absence from work
- Consider offering alternative duties or a shorter working week if this would enable a quicker return to work subject to medical advice and business needs
- Give consideration to any personal problems being encountered and discuss possible ways of helping the individual resolve these

If all other avenues have been investigated, the absence continues or, following return to work, the attendance record does not improve, a subsequent meeting should be arranged. At this point, unless there are reasonable grounds to believe there will be an improvement in the foreseeable future (4 weeks), the manager should inform the member of staff that long-term sickness absence due to ill health may put their employment at risk and the possibility of termination by reason of capability or suitability to work with children might have to be considered, taking into account any medical information available.

The position will be reviewed periodically and ultimately it may become necessary from a business perspective to consider termination of employment. In these circumstances, the nursery will:

- Review the employee's absence record to assess whether or not it is sufficient to justify dismissal
- Consult the employee

- Advise the employee in writing as soon as it is established that termination of employment has become a possibility
- Meet with the employee to discuss the options and consider the employee's views on continuing employment
- Review if there are any other jobs that the employee could do prior to taking any decision on whether or not to dismiss
- Allow a right of appeal against any decision to dismiss the employee on grounds of long term ill health
- Arrange a further meeting with the employee to determine any appeal
- Following this meeting, inform the employee of its final decision
- Act reasonably towards the employee at all times.
- Any decision to terminate employment will be taken by the Senior Manager, in consultation with the Manager and Deputy Manager, making sure the capability procedure has been exhausted.

## **7 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH**

The setting reserves the right to request employees to attend an appointment with an Occupational Health Advisor (e.g. consultant, GP) during their employment, if it is reasonably deemed necessary due to sickness absence, changes in health or the role, or where it is necessary to seek an expert medical opinion as to whether or not the employee can fulfil their job role or whether any reasonable adjustments should be made to the employee's role.

## **8 ACCESS TO MEDICAL RECORDS**

The Access to Medical Records Act 1988 gives individuals the right of access to medical records relating to themselves which have been prepared by a medical practitioner for employment purposes. Where the setting requests further medical information about the health of staff from an individual's General Practitioner or Specialist, or its own occupational health provider, the provisions of the Act will be followed.

The Act provides that:

- Employers must gain the consent of employees before requesting reports from medical practitioners
- Employers must inform employees of their rights in respect of medical reports
- The employee has the right of access to the report before the employer sees it, provided appropriate notification is given
- The employer is responsible for notifying the medical practitioner that the employee wishes to have access
- The employee may ask for a report to be amended or may attach a statement to the report
- Having seen the report, the employee may wish to withhold consent to it being supplied.

## **Representation**

Throughout any interviews regarding sickness absence, staff are entitled to the support of and/or representation by a work colleague or recognised trade union representative.

## **9 SICK PAY**

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be paid in accordance with Department for Work and Pensions requirements.

**10 ANNUAL LEAVE**

Annual Leave is taken during the school holidays. Days off/holidays/annual leave during term time are not allowed, except as set out in this policy.

**11 SPECIAL LEAVE**

Special Leave will be considered when family circumstances could require time off work. These absences will be recorded and Bradford Factor Scores updated accordingly.

**Children's School or Special Events**

Unpaid time out of the day to attend a child's school or other special event\* may be granted at the Senior Manager's discretion and subject to business needs.

(\*Sports days, Christmas plays, special performances, awards ceremonies etc.)

**Religious Observances**

Time off for Religious Observances will be granted where employees have declared their religious preferences at the start of their employment and evidence of the observance is provided.

**Serious illness/injury of an employee's immediate family**

This will be looked at on an individual basis and to agree a reasonable period of unpaid leave time.

**Death of a member of an employee's immediate family**

This leave applies on the death of an employee's spouse, partner, parent, sibling, grandparent, dependant or other relative for whom the employee has special responsibility or has had special ties. Generally, the amount of time off required will be at the Senior Manager's discretion and will depend on individual circumstances, but up to one working week unpaid leave would be considered.

**STAFF DECLARATION**

I agree that I have read and understood the information set out in this policy, and will abide by it.

I understand that if I have any questions about this policy, I will raise them with my manager prior to signing my agreement below.

| Staff Name | Staff Signature | Date |
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