



Special Leave Policy for Schools

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1. Scope

This policy applies to all staff employed in schools.

Except in cases of serious urgency, no member of staff may be absent from work for any reason other than their own illness, unless it is with previous permission.

Headteachers have discretion to grant special leave which may be paid or unpaid. This is not an entitlement and there is no automatic right to special leave.

Special leave provisions operate with a high level of trust. Abuse of this trust will be dealt with under the school's Disciplinary procedure.

Entitlements to statutory leave such as maternity, adoption, paternity and parental leave are covered under separate procedures, as are entitlements to time off for jury service and other public duties.

All absence due to illness of a member of staff's child must be taken under dependants' leave (section 4.3)

2. Policy/Purpose

The policy recognises that a work life balance benefits both the organisation and employees, and supports the principle that employees work best when they are able to achieve an appropriate balance between work and other aspects of their lives.

It also recognises that employees will experience difficult circumstances and unforeseen events, for which they may need to take time off work. The school will seek to facilitate time off wherever possible. This policy defines the circumstances where paid time off will be given in addition to the options of annual leave and unpaid leave.

This policy outlines the circumstances for which an employee may request time off from work under the special leave policy in any one academic year and the period of time off which can be allowed with pay. For part-time staff, this period will be pro-rata to the number of hours worked. Any request for time off beyond the specified period will be at the discretion of the headteacher a) whether to grant the leave and b) whether it will be with or without pay.

Where an employee has an entitlement to take annual leave, there will be an expectation that the employee use their annual leave entitlement in some circumstances instead of requesting special leave.

3. Definition of Close Relative/Dependant

For the purposes of this policy, a close relative is defined as spouse/partner, children (including stepchildren, adopted and current foster children), parents, siblings, grandparents or grandchildren, parent-in-law, elderly relatives or a person to whom the employee is next-of-kin or is nominated as such, or someone where there has been a guardian relationship.

The employee must demonstrate that they are a principal carer and is clearly the most appropriate person to provide support.

4. Types of Special Leave

The following are circumstances for which special leave may be requested and granted with pay:-

4.1 Bereavement Leave

The purpose of bereavement leave is to facilitate an employee making funeral arrangements and/or attending the funeral, in the event of the death of a close relative. The **maximum** level of paid bereavement leave is up to 5 days at management discretion.

If additional time away from work is needed, over and above the 5 day allocation, the school may wish to seek to allow time off using other means such as unpaid leave, or annual leave where the employee has an entitlement to take annual leave.

4.2 Emergency/Domestic Leave

The purpose of emergency/domestic leave is to facilitate an employee taking time off work in situations where an emergency or unforeseen situation has arisen within the employee's domestic circumstances. Employees are expected to plan for and use their annual leave, where appropriate, for known events such as school/childminder holidays or routine domestic appliance servicing. Where these arrangements break down unexpectedly, emergency/domestic leave enables the employee to make immediate alternative arrangements. As an example this could be in the event of a childminder being suddenly being taken ill, a day care centre or school closing at short notice, an incident occurring at a child's school, or in the event of the employee suffering flood, fire or burglary.

The **maximum** level of paid emergency/domestic leave is up to 3 days per academic year at management discretion.

If additional time away from work is needed, over and above the 3 day maximum, the school may wish to seek to allow time off using other means such as unpaid leave, or annual leave where the employee has an entitlement to take annual leave.

4.3 Dependants' Leave

The purpose of dependants' leave is to facilitate an employee taking time off where they have caring responsibilities and need time to deal with an emergency involving a dependant who has been suddenly taken ill.

There can be a number of reasons for an employee requesting dependants' leave which could include accompanying a young or vulnerable dependant to a significant emergency appointment or in-patient stay, or to look after a sick dependant where other arrangements cannot be made.

The **maximum** level of paid dependants' leave is up to 5 days per academic year at management discretion, regardless of the number of dependants.

If additional time away from work is needed over and above the 5 day maximum, the school may wish to seek to allow time off using other means such as unpaid leave, or annual leave where the employee has an entitlement to take annual leave.

4.4 Religious Festivals

The school can allow an employee to take up to 3 days with pay each academic year for observance of religious festivals. Time off with pay should only be allowed where the religious festival is celebrated by the whole of the affected community on a national/international level.

Where an employee has an entitlement to take annual leave, they would be expected to use their annual leave for this purpose and would not be granted time off under this policy.

4.5 Wedding of Close Relative

The **maximum** level of paid leave is 1 day per academic year at management discretion. Where an employee has an entitlement to take annual leave, they would be expected to use their annual leave for this purpose and would not be granted time off under this policy.

4.6 Moving House

The **maximum** level of paid leave is 1 day per academic year to allow an employee to move household effects to their new home. This must be on the actual day of the move only and employees may be asked to provide documentary evidence stating why the move could not take place during a school holiday or at a weekend. Where an employee has an entitlement to take annual leave, they would be expected to use their annual leave for this purpose and would not be granted time off under this policy.

4.7 Attending Job Interviews

Paid leave up to 3 days per academic year may be given depending on interview arrangements and the distance involved in attending. Where an employee has an entitlement to take annual leave, they would be expected to use their annual leave for this purpose and would not be granted time off under this policy.

5. Unauthorised Absence

Where an employee is absent from work without permission without an acceptable explanation, pay will be deducted and action will be taken under the school's Disciplinary procedure.

6. Requesting Special Leave

Employees must make all requests for special leave in writing to the Headteacher or to their line manager, using the special leave request form at Appendix 1. Headteachers must similarly submit their own personal requests for special leave in the same way to the Chair of Governors.

Wherever possible, applications for special leave should be made well in advance so that the school is able to make arrangements for cover. In circumstances where this is not possible (for instance, in unforeseen or emergency situations) the employee should telephone their headteacher / line manager as soon as possible to let them know why they are absent and how long they may be absent for. At this stage the headteacher / line manager should make it clear that an application for special leave can be made but that it may not be granted. If it is not granted, unpaid leave or annual leave may be authorised instead. Applications not made prior to the leave being taken must be submitted immediately on return to work. Special leave must be recorded on the employee's personnel file and Payroll must be notified.

Appendix 1

Special Leave Request Form		<i>Employee to Complete</i>
Name:		
Job Title:		
Pay Number:		
I wish to apply for: (Select one)		
PAID SPECIAL LEAVE		UNPAID SPECIAL LEAVE
From (date):	To (date):	
Please give reasons for request (please see guidelines attached)		
Employee Signature:		Date:
<i>Line Manager to Complete</i>		
(Delete as appropriate)		
Request authorised for:		
Paid Special Leave for: days		
Unpaid Special Leave for: days		
Request not authorised		
Manager's Signature:		Date:

A copy of this form should be retained on the employee's personal file and your Payroll provider must be notified if leave is approved.

Appendix 2

Dealing with requests for special leave - Management guidance

This guidance is provided with the aim that it will assist headteachers and managers in making their decision when dealing with requests from their employees for special leave.

a) Bereavement Leave

Requests to attend funerals should be considered sympathetically. It is recognised that individual circumstances are many and varied and there may need to be discussions with the employee in order to determine the full circumstances when responding to requests for time away from work under this policy.

Managers should seek to establish details such as the time and location of the funeral, the closeness of the relationship, available alternatives if bereavement leave is not appropriate.

b) Emergency/Domestic Leave

Emergency/domestic leave is clearly intended to assist employees in dealing with unexpected problems which cannot be planned for in the normal way.

Circumstances for which emergency/domestic leave is authorised are varied and whilst it is a difficult time for the employee, managers have a right to satisfy themselves that the application is appropriate.

Unexpected emergencies can be dealt with in a relatively short period of time but decisions as to how much time is reasonable may need to be made very quickly and depend on the circumstances of the emergency. For example, a house fire or a burglary may require immediate time off work to resolve essential matters/problems. If, in the circumstances, the employee is unable to discuss the nature and extent of the problem when telephoning the manager to let them know that they will not be attending that day, further discussion must take place as soon as possible or immediately on return to work.

c) Dependants' Leave

When considering requests for dependants; leave and the time given, managers should recognise the needs of service delivery, whilst at the same time recognising the employee's need to undertake their caring responsibilities.

In make these decisions, managers should consider:

- Is the person requiring care a 'dependant' as defined by the policy?
- Managers may have some awareness of the personal circumstances of their employees and may be able to make informed judgements without making further enquiries.
- Where it is not apparent what the nature of the dependant relationship is, it will be necessary to explore the situation sensitively with the employee to ascertain whether the request falls within the provisions for dependants' leave.

Appendix 3

Completing the special leave request form – Guidance for employees

In order that your request for special leave may be looked at sympathetically, it is important to provide details of the reason for the request. The following guidelines clarify the type of information that is required:

Bereavement leave

Please indicate:

- Your relationship to the deceased, i.e., husband, wife, partner, parent, child, brother, sister etc. (please refer to Section 3 Definition of close relative)
- The place where the funeral is to take place and if you need time off travel there; and
- Any other relevant details, such as responsibility for make funeral arrangements

Dependants' leave for illness of a child

Please indicate:

- The age of the child;
- The nature of the illness; and
- Any other relevant details

Dependants' leave for illness of other close relatives

Please indicate:

- Your relationship to the person who is ill;
- The nature of the illness;
- Any other relevant details, e.g., demonstrating that you are the principal carer and are clearly the most appropriate person to provide support

Emergency/domestic leave

Please indicate:

- State type of emergency e.g., burglary etc.
- If emergency is relating to the breakdown of care arrangements at the last minute, please give details of type of care arrangements and your relationship to the dependant
- Any other relevant details

Request for special leave to attend job interview

Please indicate:

- The format of the interview and the duration as given by the school/company

- The location and the extent of travelling involved
- Any other relevant details