



Our moral obligation is to help our children become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens, and we believe that this document which sets out our approach to Staff Discretionary Leave will help us achieve this goal.

Staff Discretionary Leave Policy – Teachers and Support Staff

All absence from work should be recorded (including annual leave) and any unpaid leave or other absence which might affect pay (e.g. sick leave, jury service) must be notified to The Oak Academy Trust's Payroll Provider.

Where it is the Head Teacher making a request for discretionary leave this will be at the discretion of the Chair of Trustees.

Appointments During Work Time

Absences for appointments during normal working hours not covered in this guidance are entirely at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Normally, staff should not make appointments during work time – particularly where this may cause disruption and/or require cover to be arranged. It is recognised that, because of the working hours of others, such appointments are, occasionally, unavoidable. However, it should be borne in mind that many of these services are now accessible on Saturdays and that, normally, all staff should be able to arrange appointments which do not interrupt the school day.

If it is felt appropriate to grant absence for an appointment during normal working hours:

- In the case of a teacher there should be no disruption to normal teaching, unless satisfactory cover is arranged at no cost to the school;
- Support staff would normally be expected to make up the time.

Leave for Medical Reasons

There may be a variety of situations where employees will need time off for medical purposes and the general intention is to accommodate reasonable requests for such time off. All requests must be made to the Headteacher or School Business Manager by completing an Absence Request Form, giving reasonable notice.

Routine Appointments

Where practical, employees should make routine appointments for the doctor/dental/hospital, etc outside of working hours, where this is not practical, reasonable paid time off will be approved.

Cancer Screening

Paid time off will be permitted for the purpose of cancer screening.

Cosmetic Surgery

Paid time off will be permitted for non-elective cosmetic surgery (i.e. where it relates to a diagnosed medical condition).





Disability

As a reasonable adjustment, paid special leave may be used to enable disabled staff to attend medical appointments related to their disability, adjust to new disability related equipment/aids or where workplace adjustments need to be put in place before a return to work. In the latter example, special paid leave will only be approved where the employee has been assessed as being fit to return to work.

Fertility Treatment

Employees requesting time off for fertility treatment will in general be supported. The specific needs will need to be understood, and the various provisions for leave set out in this policy will be used to enable this to happen where reasonable. This may mean time off for medical appointments, making full use of compassionate and special leave. The leave agreed may be paid or unpaid depending on the specific circumstances. In any event, the situation will be treated with sensitivity, and with the understanding the process can take some time.

Issues to be taken into consideration could include:

- The timing of some treatment is critical and cannot always be planned well in advance;
- Clinics offering this treatment may require long journeys;
- After treatment, they may need to be time off for recuperation; reactions to any unsuccessful treatments.

Time Off for Trade Union Activities

Accredited Representatives

Employment legislation provides for local trade union officials/representatives (i.e. recognised by the employer and the union) to have reasonable time off with pay and facilities to enable them to undertake their trade union duties. Time may be taken for both consulting and representing and for any necessary training related to these duties. The extent of the time off and facilities is for Trustees to determine but it must be 'reasonable' in all the circumstances having regard to the Code of Practice issued by ACAS (Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service).

Union Members Other Than Officials

Trade union members (as distinct from officials/accredited representatives) are entitled to reasonable time off without pay to attend union meetings related to their own employment.

Similarly, trade union officials and/or members are entitled to reasonable time off without pay to engage in activities which are not directly related to the conduct of employee relations with their employer. National conferences may fall into this category although the extent of time off for such purposes may be the subject of local negotiation.

Compassionate Leave

Leave on compassionate grounds is entirely at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

The following guidelines have been adopted for leave with pay in any leave year:





- death of member of immediate family - up to 5 days
- death of other near relative - up to 3 days
- death of a close friend - one day
- child's illness - up to 5 days*
- serious illness of a near relative - up to 3 days*

* This is intended to provide first day cover until the employee can make alternative arrangements; absence for the duration of the illness should be in very exceptional circumstances only.

Any period of compassionate leave in excess of two weeks will normally be considered without pay rather than with pay taking into account the circumstances and needs of the school.

A bereaved parent of a child under the age of 18 or of a child stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy is entitled to a statutory minimum of two weeks compassionate leave, within 56 weeks of the child's death. This leave can be taken in one block or two blocks of one week. Where an employee meets the qualifying period* they are also entitled to statutory parental bereavement pay.

* Have at least 26 weeks' continuous service and weekly average earnings over the lower earnings limit.

The Headteacher may choose to adopt the statutory minimum or pay full pay for all Parental Bereavement Leave

Interviews

Paid leave of absence to attend interviews for appointments in education is on the basis of a maximum of five interviews in any year. Unpaid leave may be granted at the Head Teachers discretion; this may be appropriate for interviews for posts outside teaching/local government.

Public Duties

Employees are entitled to 'reasonable' time off but not necessarily with pay for the performance of such duties as:

- a Justice of the Peace
- a member of a – Local Authority – Statutory Tribunal – Health Authority – Water Company
- a member or governor of a maintained educational establishment maintained by a Local Authority

The Head Teacher will review applications for such time off on a case by case basis.

Jury Service

An employee required to undertake jury service is, effectively, entitled to paid leave of absence by virtue of the allowances which may be claimed from the Court, namely:

- travelling expenses, including parking fees
- subsistence allowance
- financial loss allowance





An employee should receive a Certificate of Loss of Earnings with the summons to attend court. This must be sent to the school for completion and returned to the employee to take to Court. At the end of the Jury Service, the employee needs to obtain a statement of the actual Loss of Earnings Allowance paid, for submission to the school so that the amount can be deducted from his/her salary.

Attendance as Witness in Court/Employment Tribunal

Attendance as a witness may be on the basis of paid or unpaid leave of absence, as explained below.

Paid Leave of Absence

Where a member of staff is required to attend as a witness arising from his/her employment, paid leave is automatic.

He/she must:

- ascertain the daily amount of loss of earnings for the attendance concerned;
- enter a claim for this from the party who called him/her to give evidence;
- inform the School when the claim has been paid – so that the amount can be deducted from salary.

Unpaid Leave

If attendance is in the employee's private capacity, he/she is expected to take annual leave. If this is not possible, unpaid leave of absence should be granted, but it should be made clear that the employee should claim loss of earnings and that any shortfall may not, necessarily, be made up. The procedure in the latter circumstances requires the employee to:

- obtain prior agreement to leave of absence;
- insist on a subpoena or witness summons as a pre-condition of attendance (as the issuing party has to offer to meet the witness's expenses);
- ascertain the daily loss of earnings (which will include Saturday/Sunday if the absence is for a complete week or includes a weekend);
- enter a claim from the party who called the employee as a witness;
- inform the school of the full period of absence so that the loss of earnings is deducted from salary (even if this exceeds the amount recovered).

Service in Non-Regular Forces

It is the Trust's policy to grant two weeks' paid leave of absence for attendance at summer camp etc., to an employee who is a member of the Non-Regular Forces. An employee who wishes to become a member of the Non-Regular Forces should prior to joining, seek approval from the Head Teacher. Such approval should not be withheld unreasonably.

Special Leave Paid

Special paid leave will be considered at the discretion of the Head Teacher in the following special circumstances:





- moving house : one day
- bus or rail strike which prevents travel to work, with no other means being reasonably available : one day
- other personal considerations (e.g. attendance at a son's/daughter's graduation ceremony): up to three days per academic year
- an employee who is being made redundant should be given reasonable paid time off to look for a new job or to arrange training

Unpaid

The Headteacher may grant unpaid leave in exceptional circumstances for urgent personal considerations. Each case should be considered on its merits and is classed as 'leave of absence' rather than 'extended leave' for the purpose of the supply regulations. It should also be noted that periods of unpaid leave affect pension benefits as it does not count as reckonable service.

For Support Staff who are members of the LGPS, there may be implications for their pension contributions whilst taking unpaid leave. Any additional regular contributions or contributions being made for the purchase of additional membership under the LGPS will remain payable throughout unpaid leave. The contributions will be calculated on the rate of pay receivable, as if the individual was not on unpaid leave. The additional benefits therefore continue to accrue in full. The individual needs to make arrangements with the School for the contributions to be collected, so early contact with that office is advised to ensure continuing cover.

N.B If the contributions are not made then the contract to purchase additional benefits would cease and would not recommence on return from unpaid leave.

Study Leave Teachers

For studies leading to external Higher Education qualifications which contribute to a teacher's professional development, it is recommended that up to 20 working days paid leave be granted over the duration of the course, with not more than 5 days in any one year, plus the days of the examinations.

Support Staff

The National Conditions of Service state that paid leave of absence should be granted for the purpose of sitting examinations applicable to local government service. It is recommended that paid leave be permitted:

- for study revision for the first attempt at an examination on the basis of one day for each day of examination, with a maximum of one week (extended in exceptional cases only);
- for study by correspondence course, up to two days leave for each day of examination, with a maximum of two weeks.

Adverse Weather

Paid time off work because of adverse weather is at the discretion of the headteacher. It should be borne in mind that every employee has a contractual duty to report for work and is expected to make every effort to attend, even if arrival is delayed. This applies equally to public transport strikes and other emergencies as well as adverse weather.





If it is necessary to close a school, employees are still expected to report for work – unless they are instructed or advised not to (in which case they must be paid as normal).

If an employee does not attend for work on the grounds of adverse weather conditions, he/she must submit full details to the headteacher. If the headteacher is satisfied that all reasonable efforts were made to get to work, the employee should be paid as normal for the first day; it is expected that alternative arrangements would normally be made to attend subsequently. If the headteacher is not satisfied with the reasons for nonattendance, the absence may be without pay.

As an alternative to paid or unpaid leave of absence, the headteacher may exercise one of the following options, according to the circumstances:

- agree that the employee can work at home (where this is realistic/feasible);
- arrange for the employee to make up all or some of the absence by working additional hours as agreed;
- authorise annual leave;
- agree that the employee may report to work elsewhere.

Employees who are genuinely late for work and/or sent home early because of adverse weather should be paid as normal – although the headteacher may require the time to be made up.

If an employee asks to leave early, a deduction should normally be made from pay, unless the request is reasonable having regard to the conditions. Otherwise, it may be appropriate for the time to be made up. When there are adverse weather conditions, staff should be advised to listen to local radio broadcasts, particularly for information about possible closure of the school, and should, if necessary, try to contact the headteacher for advice. When the school remains open for pupils there needs to be staff available to teach and supervise; they must, therefore, make every reasonable effort to attend.

Leave for Religious Festivals and Cultural Observance

The Trust will respond reasonably and sensitively to any request from an employee regarding their cultural or religious needs.

A member of staff who wishes to observe a religious or cultural tradition should consider whether it is practical to do so by using either leave or flexible arrangements.

Care should be taken in responding to requests for leave for the purposes of religious observance as the school may need to provide justification for not agreeing to such requests.

