



Absence Management Procedure

June 2024

At Elsworth Pre-School we encourage all our staff to maximise their attendance at work while recognising that staff will, from time to time, be unable to come to work due to sickness. By implementing this policy, we aim to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of our business needs and the genuine needs of staff to take occasional periods of time off work because of sickness.

This policy and procedure establish a framework to support individuals and the organisation in times of sickness absence. It ensures that appropriate and consistent advice is provided and that assistance and support is offered to staff and, where necessary, action is taken.

Principles

We aim to provide a healthy working environment and demonstrate commitment to health, safety and the welfare of staff in order to maximise attendance. Management is responsible for regularly monitoring and taking appropriate action in connection with sickness and other unplanned absence.

Exclusion periods for contagious illnesses

Working with children means that employees are in contact with illnesses which can be highly contagious. We take the health of children and staff very seriously; therefore, if they have any contagious illness they must adhere to the same exclusion periods as children. This will ensure that they are able to recover appropriately and that the illness is not passed on to other employees, children or parents/carers. The manager will advise them of any exclusion times required (see the Sickness and Illness and Infection Control policies).

Sickness absence reporting procedure

Reporting sickness absence should follow the below guidelines. Failure to follow these could delay any sick pay due to the staff member and could possibly result in disciplinary action.

On their first day of absence, the staff member must:

-
- Notify the pre-school manager by 7am by phone. Text message and emails are not an acceptable form of communication for this purpose.
- Give a brief detail of the illness and the expected length of absence.
- If they are unable to return to work the following day, they must contact the pre-school manager by 1pm.



- For absences of more than seven consecutive days, a 'fit note' must be provided which has been completed by a qualified medical practitioner for the period of absence.
- After returning to work from any sickness absence leave, a 'Return to Work' interview may be undertaken by the employee and manager. This will not happen in all circumstances, and these are held at their our discretion. However, such meetings will normally be held in the following circumstances:
 - Where the absence has exceeded 14 days.
 - Where the nature of the illness means that duties on return to work may need to be altered and clarification and/or consultation is required.
 - Where a member of staff has had two or more absences in 12 weeks.

During the 'Return to Work' interview the following will be discussed:

- The reason for absence
- Whether adjustments to the role (on a temporary or more permanent basis) are required and what they are. These might include adjusted work patterns, start and finish times and changes of duties.
- Future requirements and expectations, e.g. improved attendance.
- The 'Return to Work' interview should be recorded and signed by both the manager and employee and a copy attached to the employee's file.

Where an employee's attendance record gives cause for concern because of the duration or frequency of absence, this should be brought to the attention of the employee through a discussion with the manager.

Throughout any stage of discussions on sickness absence, employees may be accompanied by a work colleague. The abuse of sick leave and pay regulations may be classified as misconduct and will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure.

Frequent and/or persistent short-term sickness absence

Short-term absence may be short periods of one or two days occurring frequently. Absence of this nature can be identified by one of the following indicators and should be classed as a trigger:

- Four self-certified spells of absence in one calendar year.
- A total of 10 working days or more of self-certified absence in one calendar year.
- Patterns of absence over a period, e.g. an individual regularly taking Mondays or Fridays off.
- Where an employee's attendance record is significantly worse than those of comparable employees, or absence problems have gone on for a considerable length of time.



Long-term sickness absence

For the purposes of the policy, long-term sickness absence is defined by the pre-school as absences lasting over one month.

Where absences have lasted over 10 working days or more, the manager should contact the member of staff concerned to obtain an initial assessment of the problem and to offer any further help or assistance.

At this point and when felt appropriate after further assessment of the problem, the manager will arrange a face-to-face meeting or telephone conference between themselves and the member of staff. The meeting should:

- Seek to confirm the reasons and nature of the absence and its likely duration.
- Ensure that the member of staff is aware of the pre-school'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.
- Consider any personal problems being encountered and discuss possible ways of helping the individual resolve these.
- Advise the member of staff that in their best interests they may be asked to see a registered medical practitioner or occupational health provider appointed by the pre-school to enable a medical report to be prepared.
- Alternatively, and if appropriate, gain agreement from the member of staff to contact their doctor or specialist in order to establish the likely length of absence and the long-term effect on capability in relation to job performance and attendance at work.

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, the manager, after consulting the committee, 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 pre-school will:

- Review the staff member's absence record to assess whether it is sufficient to justify dismissal.
- Consult the staff member.
- Obtain up-to-date medical advice through Occupational Health.
- Advise the staff member in writing as soon as it is established that termination of employment has become a possibility.



- Meet with the staff member to discuss the options and consider their views on continuing employment.
- Review if there are any other jobs that the staff member could do prior to taking any decision on whether to dismiss.
- Allow a right of appeal against any decision to dismiss the staff member on grounds of long-term ill health.
- Arrange a further meeting with the staff member to determine any appeal.
- Following this meeting, inform the staff member of the final decision.
- Act reasonably towards the employee at all times.

Any decision to terminate employment will be taken by the committee, making sure the capability procedure has been exhausted.

Occupational health

The pre-school reserves the right to request staff members to attend an appointment with an Occupational Health Advisor (e.g. consultant, GP) during their employment, if it is 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 staff member's role.

The pre-school will seek to engage the services of an independent Occupational Health Advisor in situations where expert medical opinion is required and work with them to identify the best course of action in circumstances of sickness absence.

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.

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.

Where the pre-school requests further medical information about the health of a staff member from an individual's GP or specialist, or its own occupational health provider, the provisions of the Act will be followed.



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.

Sick Pay

After the first 3 months of service and in any twelve-month period, staff are entitled to a maximum of 4 weeks' (28 days) sick pay which will be based on their normal salary subject to them complying with the provisions of this clause relating to sickness absence. This is pro-rated in their year of joining. Sick pay is inclusive of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

Serious illness/injury of a staff member's immediate family

This will be looked at on an individual basis and the manager will agree with the staff member a reasonable period of paid leave time initially, with additional unpaid leave if a significant amount of time off is required. They will also need to consider flexible working i.e. adjusting the length of the working day, changes in hours/days worked etc.

Death of a staff member's immediate family

This leave applies on the death of a staff member's spouse, life partner, parent, brother, sister, grandparent, dependent or other relative for whom the staff member has responsibility for or has had special ties. Generally, the amount of time off required will be at the manager's discretion and will depend on individual circumstances but up to **one week's** paid leave would be considered.

Adopted on:	4 th June 2024
Adopted by:	Sophie Mills, Pre-School Interim Manager Hannah Holland, Chair of Trustees
Next Review Date:	4 th June 2025