Pathway Trust

Absence Management Policy

Policy effective from	1 September 2026
Policy owner	Director of People
Policy applies to	Berrow Church Primary School Burnham-on-Sea Infant School Castle Batch Primary School Charfield Primary School Cherry Garden Primary School Downend School East Huntspill Primary School Lyde Green Primary School Mangotsfield School Marlwood School Pawlett Primary School Priory Community School Severn Beach Primary School St Andrew's Church Junior School St Anne's Church Primary School The Castle School The King Alfred School Tortworth Primary School West Huntspill Primary School Worle Community School Pathway Partnership Teams
Policy changes since last version	New policy

1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of absence is to ensure that employees are able to manage particular circumstances that may occur in their lives where it is not possible to arrange these during school closed periods and time off may be required.

1.2. Absence is defined as any planned or unplanned time off from work; unplanned absence could be either due to ill-health of an employee or could be due to a number of different causes (for example, child care needs, injuries, recurring conditions, or a serious illness requiring lengthy treatment) which are not related to their own sickness. Absence can vary from short intermittent periods or to a continuous period of long-term absence.

1.3. This policy sets out our procedures for reporting absence and for the management of absence in a fair and consistent way. This policy covers both planned and unplanned absence for sickness, time off for dependants and emergency leave. It is expected that requests will only be made for planned absence in term time once all other possible alternatives have been considered.

1.4. We wish to ensure that the reasons for absence are understood in each case and investigated where necessary. In addition, where needed and reasonably practicable, measures will be taken to assist those in returning to work in a considered and meaningful way.

1.5. This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time following consultation. We may also vary application of this procedure, including any time scales for action, as appropriate.

1.6. The trust is committed to ensuring any policy and procedure does not disadvantage any individual with protected characteristics in line with Equality Act 2010. All policies and procedures are checked to ensure they do not discriminate either directly or indirectly or present any barriers.

1.7. Employees who transfer to Pathway Trust on their pre-existing terms and conditions of employment by way of a TUPE transfer may have enhanced contractual entitlements. Where this is the case, those enhanced contractual entitlements will continue to apply, unless superseded by subsequent arrangements.

1.8. Any employee who is suspected to have abused the provision for time off may be subject to disciplinary proceedings in line with the trust's Disciplinary Procedure.

2. Scope and purpose

2.1. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that staff understand the expectations of the trust in terms of attendance at work. In applying this policy, we aim to ensure that attendance is managed appropriately and consistently and that employees receive relevant support.

2.2. The procedure applies to all employees regardless of length of service. It does not apply to contractors, consultants, agency workers or any self-employed individuals working for us.. For these types of workers we will ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to work with the appropriate external agency or services they are provided

from. In the situation where attendance has reached an unacceptable level or we have exhausted options of how to accommodate time off, we reserve the right to end any contractual agreement with them.

2.3. This policy does not cover requests for flexible working, maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave. Information on these can be found in the relevant trust policy.

2.4. Throughout the policy the term 'we' refers to the trust as the employer. The definition of 'we' in terms of contact may refer for example to the Headteacher/Director, Line Manager or the trust HR Team.

3. Definitions

3.1. **Unplanned absence** - any time off work which has not been formally or informally requested by an employee; if an employee is sick then if applicable their sickness entitlement will be paid; but for any other reason this time off will usually be unpaid.

3.2. **Planned absence** - any time off work which has been formally requested and granted, such as a planned operation or planned appointments for dependents; this is unpaid unless specified or annual leave for all year round support staff dependent on the situation.

3.3. **Short term sickness absence** - any absence that lasts between half and 20 days (four working weeks).

3.4. **Long term sickness absence** - any absence that lasts for a continuous period of longer than four working weeks.

3.5. **Time off for dependents** - any unplanned absence taken to make arrangements for those who the employee cares for.

3.6. ACAS define an employee's dependants as:

- Their spouse, partner or civil partner.
- Their child.
- Their parent.
- A person who lives in their household (not tenants, lodgers or employees).
- A person who would rely on them for help in the event of an accident, illness or injury, such as an elderly neighbour.
- A person who relies on them to make care arrangements.

3.7. **Caring responsibility** - A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a family member or friend who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support.

3.8. A **dependent** can also be someone an employee cares for. A carer is someone who provides care as the person they are helping is unable to and there is no one else who can provide the help.

3.9. **Emergency leave** is any unplanned absence which is in relation to something other than sickness or time off for dependants, such as dealing with emergency domestic business e.g. flooding, structural damage, burglary etc.

4. Disabilities

4.1. We are aware that absence may result from a disability, be that the employee or their dependent. At each stage of this procedure, particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the requirements of a job or other aspects of working arrangements that will provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.

4.2. If you consider that you are affected by a disability or any medical condition which affects your ability to undertake your work, you should inform your Headteacher/Director.

5. Time off for Dependents

5.1. Time off for dependants is classed as unplanned absence as it is a legal right to take time off for unexpected events or incidents involving one of your dependents. If you know well in advance that a problem might arise or you wish to take time off to care for a dependant yourself, for example, planned doctor or dentist appointments then you should make a request for time off as per the local school procedures using the trust's Absence Request Form.

5.2. Up to 5 days will be paid in a rolling 12 month period; anything over that will usually be unpaid but Headteachers/Directors can use discretion if appropriate.

5.3. You will only be entitled to time off under this policy if, as soon as is reasonably practicable, you tell us in line with local school procedures for reporting unplanned absence (section 13):

- The reason for your absence; and
- How long you expect to be away from work.

5.4. Employees are only entitled to take reasonable time off under this policy where there is an immediate crisis and it is necessary to take action in relation to a dependent. This will depend on the nature of the problem, the closeness of the relationship between you, and whether someone else is available to assist. Reasonable time off will not normally be more than 1 or possibly 2 days and in most cases will be less than a day. However, we will always consider each set of circumstances based on their facts and will then discuss the situation with you and agree on the next steps.

5.5. We appreciate that it is difficult to determine when instances will occur and therefore whilst time off for dependants leave will normally be unpaid, the trust may grant paid leave but this will be at the discretion of the Headteacher/Director.

6. Emergency Leave

6.1. Emergency Leave is classed as unplanned absence for employees to deal with urgent matters e.g. flooding, structural damage, burglary etc.

6.2. You will only be entitled to time off under this policy if, as soon as is reasonably practicable, you tell us in line with local school procedures for reporting unplanned absence (section 13):

- The reason for your absence; and
- How long you expect to be away from work.

6.3. Employees are only entitled to take reasonable time off under this policy where there is an immediate crisis. Reasonable time off will not normally be more than 1 or possibly 2 days and in most cases will be less than a day. However, we will always consider each set of circumstances based on their facts and will then discuss the situation with you and agree on the next steps.

6.4. We appreciate that it is difficult to determine when instances will occur and therefore whilst Emergency Leave will normally be unpaid, but this will be at the discretion of the Headteacher/Director.

6.5. Where it is possible to do so in advance or when you return to work after taking time off under this policy, we might ask for you to provide evidence for your reasons for taking time off.

7. Carer's Leave

7.1. Employees have a statutory right to take one week of unpaid leave in any rolling 12-month period to provide or arrange care for a dependent with a long-term need. This applies from the commencement of employment with the school/trust.

7.2. A long-term need is defined as:

- Illness or injury (physical or mental) that requires, or is likely to require, care for more than three months
- A disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010
- Requiring care for a reason connected with old age

7.3. A dependant for the purposes of this policy is:

- An employee's spouse, civil partner, parent or child;
- A person who lives in the same household as the employee, but who is not their tenant, lodger, boarder or employee; or
- Anyone else who reasonably relies on the employee to provide assistance, make arrangements or take action of the kind referred to in paragraph 5.1.

7.4. The minimum amount of Carer's Leave an employee can request in a 12-month rolling period is half a working day. The maximum period of leave that can be requested is one week. The days requested do not have to be consecutive, and may be taken in blocks or as individual days or as half days.

7.5. Employees must give either twice as many days' notice as the length of leave being requested, or 3 days' notice (whichever is the longer). For notice purposes, a half day's leave requires a full day's notice.

7.6. To request Carer's Leave, please complete the Request for Carer's Leave form at Appendix 3 and follow the local school procedures for requesting leave, giving the notice set out in paragraph 7.5.

7.7. The school/trust will postpone your carer's leave if the running of the school/trust will be unduly disrupted by your absence. However you will be permitted to take the requested amount of leave within one month of your original request. If leave is postponed, this will be confirmed in writing within seven days of your request in a written counter notice. This will explain the reason for the postponement and the revised dates that Carer's Leave can be taken.

7.8. Carer's leave that has already begun cannot be cancelled, however where leave has not yet begun, it may be cancelled or taken at a different time if there is a mutual agreement between the employee and Headteacher/Director.

7.9. Employees have the right to return to the same role on the same terms and conditions after a period of carers leave.

8. Planned Absence procedure

8.1. Planned absence constitutes time off that an employee has prior knowledge of. Employees should ensure leave requests are made at least two weeks in advance (in line with local procedures at your place of work) or in exceptional circumstances as soon as practically possible, so that the school/trust can consider the request carefully and to ensure that cover can be implemented where required. All employees should in the first instance take all necessary steps to arrange appointments and time off outside of their contracted hours and term time.

8.2. In all circumstances, employees must complete the trust Absence Request form (Appendix 2) and follow the local school procedures for requesting leave. You should contact the school operations manager if you are unaware of the procedure at your school. The outcome of your request will be advised to you when a decision has been made.

8.3. In all cases the decision to agree to a request will be at the absolute discretion of the Headteacher/Director. Where a request is refused, the reason will be advised to you and detailed on your request form

8.4. Support staff employees contracted all year round should follow the usual leave request procedure for requesting annual leave.

8.5. The trust understands there may sometimes be exceptional circumstances (outside of those outlined in Section 8 - 11) and these could not be arranged outside of normal working hours or term time if applicable. These types of circumstances do not fall into contractual or statutory entitlement for leave. Examples are (but are not exhaustive):

- **Moving house** - Employees should normally make arrangements for moving house outside normal working days. Where this is not possible, up to a day's paid leave may be granted.

- **Wedding or civil partnership ceremony** - Employees should make their own wedding/civil partnership arrangements outside normal working days. Up to a day's paid leave may be granted to enable employees to attend a close relative's wedding or civil partnership ceremony where this is held during normal working hours.

- **Other special events** - The trust recognises that in exceptional circumstances there will be special events in an employee's family life that cannot be arranged outside normal working days e.g. graduation ceremonies, school productions, sports day. Requests will be considered for time off for these purposes and up to a day's unpaid leave may be granted.

- **Special absence for other personal or family reasons,** e.g. to visit relatives who live abroad or to nurse a sick person may also be considered in exceptional circumstances where the employee has a minimum of one year's service at the date of commencement of the leave. A holiday will not be considered as an exceptional circumstance. Unpaid leave may be granted in these circumstances.

- **Interviews** - The trust accepts that employees will have little or no control over when an interview will take place and therefore may grant up paid leave for an interview. However, where there are repeated absences for this purpose then unpaid leave may be granted. Employees must follow the local school procedures to inform us of the time, date and duration of the interview as soon as they have this information so that the request can be considered promptly to avoid disappointment. The trust can ask employees to provide evidence of the interview.

8.6. Plans or arrangements for the time off should not be made by the employee until they have received a decision in relation to their request and their request is granted, if appropriate.

9. Health and Welfare

9.1. Employees are expected to make routine medical appointments on their non-working days/outside working hours. Where it can be demonstrated that it is not possible to obtain appointments outside of working hours, paid leave may be granted for reasons of the personal health and welfare of an employee. For example, visits to a doctor, dentist, optician, clinic and hospital. We will expect employees to provide evidence of their requirement to attend any medical appointments.

9.2. All employees are encouraged to attend medical appointments for preventative screening, such as smear tests, mammograms, prostate examinations. These appointments are covered by this policy.

9.3. Employees who donate blood or other medical tissue are encouraged to do this outside of working hours. Where this is not possible requests for time off to attend these appointments will be considered under this policy and leave approved will be unpaid.

9.4. Employees who are planning to undergo a course of fertility treatment or are planning to become a surrogate should discuss this their treatment plan and requirements for time off with us. The school/trust will consider these cases based on the individual circumstances.

10. Time off for public duties

10.1. The trust supports employees to perform certain public duties that they may be committed to undertake and will give them time off to do so where it does not conflict with the operational needs of the school/trust. The trust is not obliged to grant employees paid leave for these purposes. The circumstances in which we are prepared to do so are set out below.

Jury service

10.2. Employees should complete the trust Request for Absence form and follow the local school procedures as soon as they are summoned for jury service and provide a copy of the summons if requested.

10.3. Depending on the demands of the school/trust we may request that the employee applies to be excused from or have the jury service deferred.

10.4. Employees will be expected to return to work if released from jury service for part days, for full days or early if they are not required for the full two weeks.

10.5. Employees will continue to receive their normal rate of pay during their time on jury service. They are, however, required to claim the maximum loss of earnings allowance from the Jury Central Summoning Bureau and submit their form to hr@pathwaytrust.uk to be processed which will be offset against pay received during the period.

Voluntary public service

10.6. Employees are entitled to a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work to carry out certain public duties. All employees may be granted up to 5 days' unpaid leave to perform voluntary public service duties. Any additional leave will be granted on an unpaid basis subject to the exercise of our discretion to grant further paid leave.

10.7. Public service duties include service as a:

- Tribunal member.
- Magistrate.
- Local councillor.
- Member of an NHS Trust.
- Prison visitor.
- Lay visitor to police stations.
- School community councillor.

- Trustee.

10.8. As soon as you are aware that you will require time off for performance of a public service you should complete the trust Absence Request form and follow the local school procedures for requesting leave and include full details of the time off that is being requested and the reasons for your request.

10.9. The trust will agree to requests for time off to undertake public duties wherever reasonably possible having regard to the criteria set out in this policy.

10.10. Each request for time off will be considered on its merits, in the circumstances in which it is made including:

- Whether the activity is reasonable in relation to your employment.
- How much time off is reasonably required for the duty in question.
- How much time off you have already taken for the public duty in question.
- How your absence will affect the school/trust.

Reserve forces duties

10.11. We are aware that employees who are members of the Reserve Forces (the Territorial Army, Royal Navy Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve or Royal Auxiliary Air Force) may be called-up at any time to be used on full-time operations and will be expected to attend regular training.

10.12. Whilst we will do everything possible to meet your request for leave it may not always be possible for operational reasons. If we receive notice that you have been called-up there may be occasions when we need to apply to an adjudication officer for the notice to be deferred or revoked if your absence would cause serious harm to the school/trust (which could not be prevented by the grant of financial assistance).

10.13. Once your military service has ended you may submit a written application for reinstatement to your employment. This should be made by the third Monday following the end of your military service and you should notify us of the date on which you will be available to restart work.

10.14. If it is not reasonable and practicable to reinstate you into your former employment we will offer you the most favourable occupation on the most favourable terms and conditions which are reasonable and practicable.

10.15. When calculating the length of your continuous employment with us, the period of absence on military service will not be counted. The period of employment before your mobilisation and the period after your reinstatement will be treated as continuous.

11. Professional Examination Duties

11.1. The trust will authorise leave for teachers to undertake professional duties in connection with GCSE, GCE A Level and other public examinations in line with the

provisions of the Burgundy Book (Section 6). This also gives details of how the school may be reimbursed when a teacher has to be released.

12. Redundancy – support for job seeking

12.1. Employees who have been identified by the trust as at risk of being made redundant will be allowed reasonable time off during working hours to support them with securing alternative employment or to arrange training for future employment. The amount of time-off is at the discretion of the Headteacher/Director. Each case will be considered on its merits. Where applicable, reasonable time off may be paid; however, the maximum amount payable for this purpose is limited to 40% of one week's pay, in line with statutory guidance.

13. Religious Festivals

13.1. Employees whose religious beliefs require the observance of festivals which fall on days upon which they would normally work, may be granted unpaid leave.

13.2. Employees must complete the trust Absence Request Form and follow the local procedures at their location of work at the start of each academic year detailing any dates that they may need to request time off for. Where this is not possible employees should provide this information as soon as they are able to and no later than 10 working days before the date of the requested leave.

14. Unplanned absence reporting procedure

14.1. All employees are required to follow the local reporting procedure as set out by their location of work. You should contact your school operations manager or line manager if you are unaware of the local reporting procedure for your location of work.

14.2. Text message or email is not an acceptable method for initial absence notification. Following initial contact, you and your designated point of contact may mutually agree on alternative communication channels and an appropriate update frequency for the duration of your absence.

14.3. If you cannot attend work you should follow the local reporting procedure for your location of work. The following details should be provided:

- The nature of absence.
- Nature of the illness or injury if applicable.
- The expected length of your absence from work.
- Contact details.
- Any outstanding or urgent work that requires attention, including information in relation to student work that needs covering.

14.4. If you are at work and you have the need to leave at short notice due to your own illness/injury or dependents' needs then you should report this to your line manager or school operations manager. Managers should contact the school operations

manager to make arrangements for anyone who is unwell to be accompanied home and/or to receive medical treatment where necessary.

14.5. Managers should ensure that any absence that is notified to them directly is reported to the cover co-ordinator or school administrator, so that absence can be recorded and arrangements made to cover work as appropriate.

15. Fit Notes & Self-Certification

15.1. For sickness absence of up to seven calendar days you must complete a self-certification form which will be provided to you and should be completed at your Return to Work discussion.

15.2. For absence of eight calendar days or more you must obtain a certificate from an eligible healthcare professional (a 'Statement of Fitness for Work') stating that you are not fit for work and the reason(s) why. This should be forwarded to the cover co-ordinator or school administrator as soon as possible. If your absence continues, further medical certificates must be provided to cover the whole period of absence.

15.3. If your healthcare professional provides a certificate stating that you 'may be fit for work' you should inform us immediately. We will discuss with you any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your healthcare professional's advice. This may take place at a return to work discussion (see section 19). If appropriate measures cannot be taken, you will remain on sick leave and we will set a date to review the situation.

15.4. Where we are concerned about the reason for absence, or frequent short-term absence, we may require a medical certificate for each absence regardless of duration. In such circumstances, we will cover any costs incurred in obtaining such medical certificates, for absences of a week or less, on production of a doctor's invoice.

15.5. Where an employee is absent immediately prior to a school closure period, they will continue to be deemed as being absent for the purposes of recording sickness and statutory and/or contractual sick pay during the school closure period, unless they provide a fit note indicating they are fit to return to work. The cost of a fit note will be covered by the trust if applicable.

15.6. If you are undergoing an elective or cosmetic surgery or procedure for which you will be absent from work, then any entitlement to trust sick pay (as set out in section 16) will be subject to receipt of satisfactory medical evidence. This medical evidence will need to be in the form of a report from your doctor or a specialist confirming that you are undergoing the procedure on medical advice. You may be required to take annual leave (if applicable) or unpaid leave for any absence related to a purely elective procedure.

15.7. Where absence appears to be as a result of an infectious disease the trust reserves the right to obtain medical evidence to ascertain whether the infection was directly attributable to the workplace.

16. Unauthorised absence

16.1. Cases of unauthorised absence may be dealt with under the trust's Disciplinary Procedure.

16.2. Absences that have not been notified according to the local absence reporting procedure for your location of work will be treated as unauthorised absence.

16.3. If you do not report for work and have not contacted us (in line with the local absence reporting procedure for your location of work) to explain the reason for your absence, we will try to contact you, by telephone and in writing if necessary. This should not be treated as a substitute for reporting sickness absence.

17. Sick pay

17.1. You should refer to your contract for details of the sick pay to which you are entitled.

17.2. Failure to properly report your absence, undertake medical examination by our Occupational Health provider as outlined in Section 19, or to provide medical or self-certification could lead to your pay being suspended.

17.3. Submission of a Fit Note does not guarantee being paid sickness entitlement, as if we have a reasonable belief that you are not sick we will withhold payment. Similarly, if you go sick during an investigation into your conduct or performance or whilst a formal meeting is pending for you to attend, we will withhold sick pay.

17.4. Fit Notes do not preclude you from being asked to attend management meetings or to confirm additional details if required.

18. Keeping in contact during unplanned absence

18.1. If you are absent you should expect to be contacted from time to time in order to discuss your wellbeing, expected length of continued absence from work and any of your work that requires attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and will be kept to a reasonable minimum. It is the joint responsibility of both the line manager and the employee to maintain contact.

18.2. If you have any concerns while absent, whether about the reason for your absence or your ability to return to work, you should feel free to contact your line manager and/or Headteacher/Director at any time.

18.3. We offer access to confidential counselling, which is available on request. The details to access this service can be obtained from the school operations manager.

19. Occupational Health

19.1. We may, at any time in operating this policy, ask you to attend a medical examination by our Occupational Health provider (at our expense).

19.2. You will be asked to agree that any report produced in connection with any such examination may be disclosed to us and that we may discuss the contents of the report with our advisers and the relevant doctor.

19.3. Failure to agree to a reasonable request may result in decisions being made in the absence of any medical information. In some circumstances disciplinary action may be taken where you do not cooperate with the sickness absence process.

19.4. In the event of a difference of opinion between an employee's GP or other healthcare professional and the trust's Occupational Health advisors, regarding an employee's fitness for work, functional capacity or the existence of an underlying medical condition contributing towards persistent absences, the Occupational Health advisor's advice will take precedence. In some cases, an independent medical advisor may be asked to give a second opinion.

19.5. Employees must make every reasonable effort to attend the medical examination and failure to attend without good reason may lead to the employees incurring the cost of medical examination.

19.6. This process is in line with our Workforce Privacy Notice which sets out how we will gather, process and hold special category personal data of individuals during employment.

20. Return-to-work discussions

20.1. Return-to-Work discussions (Appendix 1) should take place after every unplanned absence so as to ensure that all proactive steps can be taken to ensure the right support is put in place to both support you and manage the operational impact.

20.2. A return-to-work discussion enables us to confirm the details of your absence. It also gives you the opportunity to raise any concerns or questions you may have, and to bring any relevant matters to our attention.

20.3. Where your doctor has provided a certificate stating that you 'may be fit for work' we will usually hold a return-to-work discussion to discuss any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your healthcare professional’s advice.

20.4. Ideally these discussions should take place face to face within two days of your return to work but where appropriate and reasonable, these can be arranged over the phone or via online video chat.

20.5. Employees may wish to take a copy of the completed discussion form, which can be photocopied at the earliest opportunity if a hard copy has been completed or printed off if completed online.

21. Returning to work from long-term sickness absence

21.1. We are committed to helping employees return to work from long-term sickness absence. As part of our sickness absence meetings procedure (see section 22), we will, where appropriate and possible, support returns to work by:

- Obtaining medical advice;
- Making reasonable adjustments to the workplace, working practices and working hours, including a time-limited phased return to work and return to work plan (see paragraph 20.2);

- Considering a temporary or permanent contractual change being made to working hours to accommodate with pay adjusted accordingly;
- Considering redeployment, if appropriate.

21.2. A phased return enables employees to make a gradual return to work and will be a recommendation of an Occupational Health advisor or the employee's GP. A phased return would considered on the following basis:

- Phased return to work should normally be up to 4 weeks. A phased return of a period longer than a six week period would only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- Employees will receive their full pay on the phased return.
- Phased returns should normally start at no less than half the employee's contractual hours.

21.3. If you are unable to return to work in the longer term, we will consider whether you are entitled to any benefits under your contract i.e. ill health retirement. If unfortunately you are unable to return to work but do not meet the criteria for ill-health retirement, then you will be invited to a Capability Meeting where it could be decided that your contract of employment will be ended on an agreed date and if applicable paid your notice in lieu of working it. You will also receive any outstanding and untaken holidays if they are owed to you when you leave.

22. Sick leave and Annual Leave (All year round support staff)

22.1. If you become sick or injured while on annual leave such that you would be unfit for work you may ask us to treat the period of incapacity as sick leave and reclaim the annual leave.

22.2. To be able to claim company sick pay you must notify us of your incapacity immediately, and the usual requirements for medical evidence in this policy will also apply, even if you are abroad.

22.3. If you are on sick leave your request to cancel any pre-arranged annual leave that would otherwise coincide with your sick leave. You should notify us as soon as possible that you wish to do this.

22.4. If your period of sick leave extends into the next holiday year, or if there is not enough time left in the current holiday year to make it practicable to take your remaining holiday entitlement, you can carry any unused holiday entitlement over to the following leave year up to a maximum of 5 days to be used within three months of your return to work.

23. Types of Absence Meetings

23.1. The following procedures will be applicable when managing absence:

- **Welfare Meetings (section 23)** - arranged with an employee to review or agree Occupational Health assessments or have matters which were discussed at a return to work discussion that require investigation; and/or where an employee

has been absent for more than 4 weeks for any type of unplanned or planned absence. There is no set number of meetings which need to be held but for long term absence it is likely a meeting once every 4 to 6 weeks would be necessary, but the number of meetings should be proportionate to the nature of the absence. This type of meeting is appropriate when we wish to meet with employees, even if they are in work, about any matter which relates to something which may have or will impact on their attendance at work.

- **Ill-Health/Attendance Capability Meeting (section 24)** - this meeting would normally only be arranged when an employee is potentially unable to return to work in any capacity, due to either ill-health or for a non-sickness related matter.
- **Formal Stage Absence Review (section 25-27)** - We may apply this procedure whenever we consider it necessary, including, for example, if you have hit a trigger in respect of unplanned absence.

24. Welfare review meetings

24.1. Employees may be invited to a welfare meeting if they are absent or if they are at work. If you are absent, you will be invited to a welfare meeting, ideally within the first two weeks of your absence, where appropriate. This way we can ensure that a proactive approach is being taken to support you whilst you are absent and enabling an effective return to work plan.

24.2. The purposes of a welfare review meeting may include:

- Discussing the reasons for absence;
- Where you are on long-term sickness absence, determining how long the absence is likely to last;
- Where you have been absent on a number of occasions, determining the likelihood of further absences; but have not hit a trigger or a trigger has been met but there is a protected characteristic which would mean escalation to the Formal Stage would be inappropriate;
- Considering whether medical advice is required or, if already obtained, what that advice is.
- Consider what, if any, measures might improve your health and/or attendance;
- Determining a way forward, action that will be taken and a time-scale for review, and/or a further meeting(s) under the absence procedures.

24.3. The Headteacher/Director or appropriate senior employee will chair the meeting, and where necessary a member of the trust's HR team may also be in attendance. You may bring a companion with you to the meeting (section 28).

25. Ill-Health/Attendance Capability Meeting

25.1. In the unfortunate event that an employee who has been absent and who cannot return to work in any capacity, then a decision will need to be made as to whether to end their contract of employment. This type of meeting would also be arranged for an

employee who is in work but is completely unable to carry out their role due to their own health, a dependent's or any other seriously impactful reason.

25.2. The trust would consider that a reasonable amount of time for someone to be absent from work would usually be around 6 months, generally this should be adequate time to recover and return. If however it is felt that it is unlikely they will be able to return to work by that time a final decision can be made as to whether to redeploy them elsewhere or to end their contract of employment on the grounds of ill-health capability. Medical advice must be sought from Occupational Health before the decision regarding ill-health capability can be made. It may be appropriate to refer the employee to the Ill-Health Retirement process and advice from the trust's HR team should be sought in order to start this process.

25.3. Although the employee doesn't not need to be absent for the full 6 months before a final decision is made, if the absence is due to the employee's health then It may be appropriate to extend the 6 month period depending on the nature of the illness or situation, such as if an employee has cancer or another serious concern.

25.4. This type of meeting can only be arranged when all avenues have been exhausted in regards to the implementation of reasonable adjustments, and the employee will likely have had a number of welfare meetings before this type of meeting is arranged.

25.5. There is no predetermined number of welfare meetings which should take place prior to this final decision meeting, but the process must be reasonable and meaningful.

25.6. We will give you five days' written notice of the date, time and place of an ill health/attendance capability meeting. We will put any concerns about your absence and the basis for those concerns in writing or otherwise advise why the meeting is being called. A reasonable opportunity for you to consider this information before a meeting will be provided.

25.7. The meeting will be conducted by the Headteacher/Director or other senior employee appointed by the Headteacher/Director. A member of the trust's HR Team may be in attendance. You may bring a companion with you to the meeting.

25.8. The purposes of the meeting may include:

- Any appropriate update to the employees circumstances, such as further medical advice.
- Redeployment opportunities - but these must be suitable for the adjustments required for the employee.
- Ending the contract of employment.

25.9. Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, the reasons for it, and of the right of appeal will be given to you in writing within 5 working days of the formal stage absence meeting. The appeal period begins on receipt of your outcome letter.

26. Formal Stage Absence Review Meeting (Stage 1)

26.1. Where a trigger point has been hit it will be at the discretion of the Headteacher/Director or other senior employee as to whether an invite to a Formal

Stage Absence Review meeting should be arranged; advice from the trust's HR should be sought, but usually an invite will be required when an employee has:

- Had 3 occasions of absence due to illness (irrespective of length of absence) or more than 10 days within a rolling six month period.
- Had 10 occasions of absence, within a rolling twelve month period due to non-sickness unplanned absence, which will constitute a trigger level but advice from HR must be sought before progressing to a Formal Stage Absence Review meeting.
- These triggers are pro rata for part time employees and consideration will be given to adjusting triggers for employees with a disability, with advice taken from Occupational Health for predicted absence levels. Pregnancy related absences will be discounted when calculating triggers.

26.2. All return to work interviews will need to have been completed, this is so it is clear on what grounds the employee is being invited in and to ensure that no-one with any confirmed or possible disability element is invited into this type of meeting. Employees who fall into these categories would be invited to attend a welfare meeting.

26.3. The purpose of the meeting is to determine whether there is sufficient mitigation as to why your absence has reached such a level, and if punitive action is required, a warning to be issued.

26.4. We will give you five days' written notice of the date, time and place of a formal stage absence review meeting. We will put any concerns about your absence and the basis for those concerns in writing or otherwise advise why the meeting is being called. A reasonable opportunity for you to consider this information before a meeting will be provided.

26.5. The meeting will be conducted by the Headteacher/Director or other senior employee appointed by the Headteacher/Director. A member of the trust's HR Team may be in attendance. You may bring a companion with you to the meeting.

26.6. You must take all reasonable steps to attend a meeting. Failure to do so without good reason may be treated as misconduct. If you or your companion are unable to attend at the time specified you should immediately inform the named contact on the letter who will seek to agree an alternative time.

26.7. The meeting may be adjourned if we are awaiting receipt of information, need to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at a previous meeting. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the meeting is reconvened.

26.8. Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, the reasons for it, and of the right of appeal will be given to you in writing within 5 working days of the formal stage absence meeting. The appeal period begins on receipt of your outcome letter.

26.9. Formal warnings issued for as part of the Formal Stage 1 procedure will remain live for a period of 6 months from the date of issue, during which time further absences

beyond the review period would be dealt with either at the next stage of the procedure or by an extension of the current live warning.

26.10. If, at any time, we consider that you have taken or are taking sickness absence when you are not unwell, or believe that you are taking authorised absence under false pretences then they may refer matters to be dealt with under the trust's Disciplinary Procedure.

27. Formal Stage 2 Meeting

27.1. Where a warning has been issued at stage 1 if there is a further period of absence during the warning period, then consideration should be given if they should be invited to a Formal Stage 2 meeting.

27.2. The same procedure should be followed as referenced in 24.3.

27.3. Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, the reasons for it, and of the right of appeal will be given to you in writing within 5 days of the formal stage absence meeting. The appeal period begins on receipt of your outcome letter.

27.4. A formal warning may be issued under stage 2 that your employment may be at risk if your attendance does not improve and that the matter may progress to the stage 3 of the procedure. Formal warnings issued for as part of the Formal Stage 2 procedure will remain live for a period of 12 months from the date of issue, during which time further absences beyond the review period would be dealt with either at the next stage of the procedure or by an extension of the current live warning.

28. Formal Stage 3 Meeting

28.1. Where there has been a further period of absence during the stage 2 warning period, then consideration should be given if they should be invited to a Formal Stage 3 meeting.

28.2. The same procedure should be followed as referenced in 24.3.

28.3. The purpose of the meeting will be:

- To consider the possible termination of your employment. Termination will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice.
- Consideration for the reasons for your absence and what steps you have taken to manage unplanned time off.

28.4. Confirmation of any decision made at a meeting, the reasons for it, and of the right of appeal will be given to you in writing within 5 working days of the formal stage absence meeting. The appeal period begins on receipt of your outcome letter.

29. Right to be accompanied at meetings

29.1. You may bring a companion to any meeting or appeal meeting under these procedures with the exception of 1:1 discussions including the return to work discussion.

29.2. Your companion may be either a trade union representative or a work colleague. You should provide their details to the named contact in the invite letter, in good time before the meeting takes place. It is good practice to share their contact details with the named contact so that arrangements can be made directly for rearranging or organising meetings.

29.3. Employees are allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay to act as a companion. However, they are not obliged to act as a companion and may decline a request if they so wish. They will need to confirm with the appropriate person that they are able to take time away from work for the meeting before they agree to attend. This request can be refused but all attempts should be made to allow the time away from work.

29.4. We may at our discretion permit other companions (for example family members) where this will help overcome particular difficulties caused by a disability.

29.5. Some companions may not be allowed: for example, anyone who may have a conflict of interest, or whose presence may prejudice a meeting.

29.6. A companion may make representations, ask questions, and sum up your position, but will not be allowed to answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during a meeting.

29.7. Mental Health Nurses, counsellors, support workers or similar are permitted to attend as your companion to enable your input at the meeting; please let the named contact in your invite letter that you wish to bring this type of companion with you. It is good practice to share their contact details with the named contact so that arrangements can be made directly for rearranging or organising meetings.

29.8. Please note that we will not postpone a meeting for someone who is not a trade union representative or official. We will also not be able to postpone a meeting to accommodate your trade union indefinitely but will ensure that we will work with them to ensure a reasonable timeframe.

30. Appeals

30.1. You may appeal against the outcome of the Formal Stages of this procedure as well as any dismissal due to Ill-Health/Attendance Capability. You may bring a companion to an appeal meeting.

30.2. An appeal should be made in writing, stating the full grounds of appeal, to the Headteacher/Director copied to hr@pathwaytrust.uk within seven days of the date on which the decision was sent to you.

30.3. You will be given five days' written notice of an appeal meeting. In cases of dismissal the appeal will be held as soon as possible. Any new matters raised in an appeal may delay an appeal meeting if further investigation is required.

30.4. You will be provided with written details of any new information which comes to light before an appeal meeting. You will also be given a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the meeting.

30.5. An appeal meeting will be conducted by the appropriate level of management or Trustee.

30.6. Following an appeal, the original decision may be confirmed, revoked or replaced with a different decision. The final decision will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days of the meeting, there will be no further right of appeal.

30.7. The date that any dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of an appeal. However, if the appeal is successful, the decision to dismiss will be revoked with no loss of continuity or pay.

31. Retention and data protection

31.1. When managing an employee's leave and pay under this policy, the school/trust processes personal data collected in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. Data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing the leave and pay. We will comply with the requirements of the **Data Protection Legislation** (being (i) the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679) (unless and until the GDPR is no longer directly applicable in the UK) and any national implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time, in the UK and then (ii) any successor legislation to the GDPR or the Data Protection Act 1998, including the Data Protection Act 2018). Records will be kept in accordance with our Privacy Notice, our Retention and Destruction Policy and in line with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation.

32. Review of this policy

This policy is reviewed and amended annually by the trust in consultation with the recognised trade unions. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

Appendix 1 - Return to Work discussion form

The purpose of this process is to capture the meaningful discussion regarding your return to work, so to ensure that you are fit to be back in work, and what adjustments may be required both short and long term to enable you in the workplace. The form will also capture any proactive steps that can be agreed to minimise the need for further unplanned absence. It applies to all unplanned absences, both sickness, time off for dependents and emergency leave.

As a reminder the trigger points detailed within the Pathway Absence Management policy are: 3 periods of unplanned sickness absence; or 10 days' total sickness absence within a six months period; 10 episodes of emergency leave and/or time off for dependants (irrespective of length of absence) within a twelve month period.

Employee Name:		**Role:**	
First Date of Absence:		**Last Date of Absence:**	

Reason for absence					
Sickness Absence		Dependents Leave		Emergency Leave	
Other please provide further information:					

Was the absence reported in line with the school absence reporting procedures	YES	NO
If NO, why was this? Do you understand the reporting procedures and have an awareness of the absence policy?		

Please discuss and complete the following, providing as much information as possible

Sickness Absence

Did you seek medical advice? If not, why not. Have you completed a self-certification form or did you provide a fit note from the doctor?	
Was the absence a one off episode or an ongoing issue. If ongoing, what treatment have you received?	

Dependents/Emergency Leave

What was the reason for the absence?	
If due to a dependent: Does the dependent have a disability or ongoing/underlying health issue? Are you a carer for the dependent(solely responsible for their care which is related to a serious health issue or disability)?	
If due to an emergency, are there any steps that could be taken to ensure this does not happen again?	

Discuss the next steps - which could be one of the following: Confirm given copy of absence policy Referral to Occupational Health Counselling Local adjustments	

Invite to formal stage	

I confirm that I am aware of the Absence Management Policy

Employee Name		Employee Signed	
Interview completed by		Date completed	

Completed forms will be kept on the employee file

Appendix 2

Pathway Staff Absence Request Form (September 2026)

Employee Details	
Full Name	
School/Department	
Pay reference number	

1. The following time off work is requested								
Period	**From**	Day	Month	Year	To	Day	Month	Year
	If part of a day, beginning at ( ) am/pm to ( ) am/pm							
	Working day return date					Day	Month	Year

2. Reason for absence (please mark an X in the relevant leave box)					
Appointments(e.g. doctor)		Fostering leave		Religious observance	
Ante-natal care		Hospital appointments		Right of accompaniment	
Bereavement leave		Interviews		Severe weather conditions	
Court appearance		Jury service		Special leave	
Dependants' care leave		Medical screening		Study leave and exams	
Election duties		National Sporting event (competitor)		Territorial/auxiliary force	
Fertility treatment		Political activities		Trade Union Duties	
Funeral leave		Public duties		Unpaid Leave	

Other Circumstances (please specify)	
If appropriate, please attach relevant forms, letters and/or certificates. Where possible you should provide below a detailed explanation of the above leave request:-	

3. To be completed when absence was not approved in advance:-								
I was absent:	From	Day	Month	Year	To	Day	Month	Year
Please provide the reason for absence								
Reason why prior approval was not sought								

4. Authorisation					
Employee signature		Date			
Authorisation for time off	With Pay		Without Pay		
Authorisers signature		Date			
If the leave request has not been approved, please confirm the reason.					

Number of days leave of absence already granted in the 12-month period	

Appendix 3

Pathway Staff Carer's Leave Request Form (September 2026)

Please complete this form to request carer's leave, giving at least:

- three days' notice; or
- twice as many days' notice as the length of leave you are requesting whichever is greater.

For example, if you are requesting four consecutive days' leave, you are required to give eight days' notice.

Please refer to Section 7 of the Pathway Staff Absence Management Policy for further information

Employee Details	
Full Name	
School/Department	
Pay reference number	

I request carers' leave (unpaid) on the following date(s)

Period	**Day**	**Month**	**Year**	**To**	**Day**	**Month**	**Year**	**Half day or full day?**	**Total number of days**

Date(s) of any previous Carer's Leave(unpaid) taken within the last 12 months	

I confirm that:		

Authorisation			
Employee signature		**Date**	
Authorisers signature		**Date**	
If the leave request has not been approved and is therefore postponed, please confirm the reason and alternative dates agreed in line with paragraph 7.7			