

Greenford School



Greenford School Staff Attendance Management Policy

Reviewed and Agreed: October 2026

Next Review Date: October 2027

Rationale

At Greenford CE Primary School, we recognise that our staff are our most important resource. We want Greenford to be a place where colleagues feel valued, supported and treated with compassion when illness, family responsibilities or difficult circumstances affect their ability to attend work.

At the same time, regular and reliable staff attendance matters. Children thrive on secure relationships, consistency and familiar routines. Staff absence can affect pupils' learning and wellbeing, increase workload for colleagues and create additional financial pressures for the school.

Our approach therefore seeks to balance compassion for individual circumstances with our responsibility to pupils, colleagues and the effective running of the school. Decisions will be reasonable, consistent and fair, while recognising that individual circumstances are not always the same and may require different responses.

As a Church of England school, this reflects our commitment to: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." - Galatians 6:2

This policy is deliberately practical. It sets out what staff should do when they cannot attend work, how the school will support them, when attendance may need to be reviewed, and how requests for other forms of leave will normally be considered.

1. Purpose and responsibilities

This policy applies to all employees of Greenford CE Primary School. It should be read alongside the Dorset Council Staff Attendance Management Procedure and relevant Dorset HR guidance.

The school will promote staff wellbeing and regular attendance, record absence accurately, consider requests fairly, maintain appropriate contact during absence, undertake return-to-work conversations and consider reasonable adjustments and Occupational Health advice where appropriate.

Employees are expected to attend work when fit to do so, follow the school's reporting arrangements, maintain reasonable contact during absence, provide required certification and request planned leave as early as possible.

Formal procedure. The Dorset Council Staff Attendance Management Procedure forms the school's formal procedure for managing attendance concerns. Nothing in this policy replaces or overrides that procedure. Where a matter progresses to formal attendance management, including formal warnings, hearings, appeals or consideration of medical capability, the school will seek HR advice and follow the Dorset procedure.

2. If you are unable to attend work

If you are unable to attend work because of illness, telephone the Headteacher as early as reasonably possible and normally at least one hour before the start of your working day. If the Headteacher is unavailable, telephone the Assistant Headteacher. If neither can be reached, email the Headteacher and telephone the school office.

A text message, email or message through another member of staff should not normally replace direct contact unless you are genuinely unable to make the call.

Please explain the nature of the absence, how long you expect to be absent where known, and any immediate information reasonably needed to manage the absence. There is no expectation that an employee who is unwell will undertake work while absent.

Where reasonably possible, telephone the school office by 3pm if you expect to remain absent the following day. If no update has been received, the office will contact you.

If you become unwell during the working day, speak to the Headteacher or appropriate line manager before leaving the premises.

If the Headteacher is absent through sickness, they will notify the Assistant Headteacher, school office and Chair of Governors.

3. Certification and returning to work

Employees will be required to self-certify sickness absence lasting seven calendar days or fewer. Where sickness continues for more than seven consecutive calendar days, including weekends and non-working days, an appropriate fit note must be provided promptly and cover the relevant period.

Where a fit note states that an employee may be fit for work subject to adjustments, this should be discussed with the Headteacher before returning so that the school can consider whether the suggested adjustments can reasonably be accommodated.

A brief return-to-work meeting will normally take place after every period of sickness absence. This is supportive rather than punitive and provides an opportunity to welcome the employee back, confirm fitness to return, identify support or work-related factors, consider reasonable adjustments and review overall attendance where appropriate. A proportionate record will be kept.

4. When attendance becomes a concern

Greenford uses the Dorset attendance levels below as prompts for review. Reaching a trigger does not automatically result in formal action; the circumstances of the individual employee will be considered.

Attendance trigger	Review point
Frequent short-term absence	3 or more occasions of sickness absence in a rolling 6-month period
Accumulated short-term absence	5 or more working days of sickness absence in a rolling 6-month period
Long-term sickness	4 calendar weeks or more
Other pattern	Any recurring or recognisable pattern which gives reasonable cause for concern

Trigger points will be considered proportionately for part-time employees. The school will consider the reasons for absence, individual circumstances, any underlying health condition or disability, pregnancy-related absence, previous attendance, support already provided and the impact of absence on the school.

Where appropriate, the first response will be an informal supportive discussion. If attendance continues to cause concern, the school may progress to the formal Dorset Attendance Management Procedure and will normally seek HR advice.

5. Long-term absence, support and reasonable adjustments

Sickness absence lasting, or expected to last, four calendar weeks or more will normally be treated as long-term sickness absence. The school will maintain reasonable and supportive contact, taking account of the employee's circumstances and health.

Occupational Health advice may be sought where absence becomes long term, there are repeated short-term absences, an underlying condition may be affecting attendance, advice is needed about fitness for work or reasonable adjustments, or advice would assist a safe and sustainable return.

The school will consider reasonable adjustments in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Depending on the individual circumstances, this may include adjustments to duties or hours, workplace adaptations, a phased return, adjusting attendance trigger points, disregarding some disability-related absence, or recording such absence separately.

Pregnancy-related absence and other protected circumstances will be considered appropriately and will not be treated in a way that would be unlawful or unreasonable. Complex cases will be managed with HR and, where appropriate, Occupational Health advice.

6. Requesting other leave

Greenford recognises that family responsibilities and unexpected events are a normal part of life. Wherever reasonably possible, the school will seek practical and compassionate solutions that support both the employee and the effective operation of the school.

Where leave can be planned, employees should submit a Staff Planned Leave Request form to the Headteacher as early as reasonably possible and before making arrangements which depend upon approval. Emergency situations will be dealt with according to the circumstances.

Requests will be considered fairly and consistently, taking account of any statutory or contractual entitlement, individual circumstances, whether the event could reasonably take place outside working hours, the amount of leave requested, the impact on pupils and colleagues, and whether alternative arrangements are reasonably available.

Treating people fairly does not necessarily mean treating every situation identically. Unless there is a statutory or contractual entitlement to paid leave, paid leave is at the Headteacher's discretion in accordance with relevant Dorset guidance. Leave requested by the Headteacher will be considered by the Chair of Governors.

7. Quick guide to leave

Circumstance	Normal Greenford position
Employee - routine GP, dentist or optician appointment	Should be arranged outside working hours wherever reasonably possible. Where this is not possible, submit a 'Staff Planned Leave Request' form. There is no automatic entitlement to paid time off; paid leave is at the Headteacher's discretion.
Employee - hospital appointment	Reasonable paid time off will normally be available. Staff should minimise time away from work where reasonably possible.
Specific treatment, counselling or regular ongoing medical treatment	Reasonable paid time off will normally be available. The amount of paid time will be agreed with the Headteacher.
Routine appointment for a child/dependant	This is not normally emergency time off for dependants. Employees are expected, wherever reasonably possible, to arrange routine appointments outside working hours or during school holiday periods. Where this is not possible, leave may be requested in advance. The Headteacher will consider requests in light of the circumstances, the availability of appointments and the operational needs of the school. Unpaid leave, flexibility in working arrangements or time made up elsewhere may be agreed as appropriate.

Dependant suddenly becomes ill, is injured or has an emergency	A reasonable amount of time off will be granted to deal with the immediate situation and, where necessary, make longer-term arrangements. The statutory entitlement is normally unpaid, although other arrangements may be considered according to the circumstances.
Unexpected breakdown in childcare/dependant-care arrangements	Reasonable emergency time off will be granted. Flexibility, time made up elsewhere or unpaid leave may be considered according to the circumstances.
Unexpected incident involving the employee's child while school/nursery has responsibility	Reasonable emergency time off will be granted and support considered in light of the circumstances.
Carer's leave for a dependant with a long-term care need	Up to one working week of statutory unpaid carer's leave in each 12-month period, subject to statutory requirements. The school will not require evidence of the dependant's medical condition.
Bereavement	Compassionate/bereavement leave will be considered in accordance with Dorset's applicable provisions and individual circumstances.
Jury service / required public duty	Managed in accordance with relevant statutory and contractual provisions.
Religious observance	Requests will be considered reasonably and individually.
IVF/fertility treatment	Reasonable time off will be considered. There is no general automatic entitlement to paid leave prior to pregnancy; individual circumstances and relevant employment protections will be considered.
Elective/cosmetic treatment not medically required	Normally expected to be arranged outside working time. Absence will not ordinarily be treated as paid sickness absence unless medically certified as necessary.
Other exceptional personal circumstances	Considered individually by the Headteacher. Leave may be paid or unpaid depending on the circumstances and applicable provisions.
Holiday during term time	Employees employed on a term-time basis should not normally take holiday during term time. Exceptional requests will be considered individually.

8. Recording, confidentiality and unauthorised absence

Sickness absence and authorised leave will be recorded accurately. Information concerning an employee's health will be treated sensitively and confidentially and retained in accordance with the school's data protection and records-management arrangements.

Employees must not take leave without appropriate authorisation unless circumstances make prior authorisation impossible. Failure to attend work without appropriate notification or authorisation may result in loss of pay and/or action under the school's disciplinary procedure. The school will establish the circumstances before determining what action, if any, is appropriate.

Employees will receive statutory and occupational sick pay in accordance with their statutory and contractual entitlements.

9. Formal attendance management

Most staff absence will not require formal attendance management. Where informal support does not result in a sustainable level of attendance, or where a case involves significant employment issues, the school will seek HR advice and follow the Dorset Council Staff Attendance Management Procedure.

The Dorset procedure sets out the arrangements for formal meetings, warnings, representation, hearings, appeals and, where necessary, consideration of medical capability. Employees will have the appropriate right to be accompanied and right of appeal at formal stages.

10. Monitoring and related guidance

The Headteacher will monitor staff attendance and the application of this policy. The Governing Body will review the policy in accordance with the school's policy-review cycle and sooner where there is a significant change in legislation, Dorset guidance or employment arrangements.

This policy should be read alongside, where applicable: Dorset Council Staff Attendance Management Procedure and Toolkit; Dorset Council guidance on Time Off for Dependants and Other Leave; the school's Disciplinary and Grievance procedures; Equality Policy; family-leave arrangements; Flexible Working arrangements; and relevant conditions of service for teaching and support staff.

Signed.....

Signed.....

Date.....

Date.....

Chair of Governors

Headteacher