



Notting Hill Preparatory School

4.6 Policy for Managing Staff Attendance And Absence

(EYFS & KS1-3)

Reviewer responsible: **Deputy Head: Operations**
Reviewed by: **DG**

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POLICY FOR MANAGING STAFF ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE

Background to the Policy

Notting Hill Prep has a responsibility to monitor and encourage satisfactory staff attendance, to control absence levels, and to support employees who are experiencing difficulties. In turn, employees have a responsibility to keep any absence to a minimum.

The intention of this policy is to develop an understanding by all employees of the importance of good attendance to the operation, performance and image of the school. The implementation of fair, consistent and open procedures will be used to encourage a commitment to achieving and maintaining a high level of attendance. The procedures include:

- guidelines for appointments and induction
- monitoring staff absence
- notification procedures
- management action

A commitment to good attendance will be reinforced through:

- consistent monitoring and management procedures
- positive promotion of good health
- genuine concern and interest in the health and well-being of employees.

Procedure for a Leave of Absence Request is included in the **Employment Manual** which is given to all new appointees.

Philosophy of the Policy

At Notting Hill Prep, we are committed to achieving and maintaining a high level of attendance from all employees, through the application of good management procedures. All employees must understand the importance of good attendance and ensure that any sickness absence is kept to a minimum. Employees should also be aware that they must not undertake any activity that might delay recovery or is incompatible with the illness.

It is the responsibility of the Deputy Head: Operations and the Bursar to monitor the overall levels of sickness absence on a regular basis. The school supports employees during periods of sickness. Action may be taken in accordance with the procedures adopted by Notting Hill Prep to deal with unacceptable levels and frequency of absence.

When a member of staff is absent, the reason should be established. While most of the reasons will be for ill health, there could be other explanations. If illness is not the cause, the Deputy Head: Operations needs to establish if the absence is a symptom of a problem within the school or a domestic difficulty.

Appointment Process

When appointing new staff, the selection panel should be aware of the applicant's previous attendance history. An applicant may only be asked health-related questions before appointment is offered if the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work they will be required to do. Such information should be obtained in a fair and open way. An individual who has a disability but who, previously, has been able to teach satisfactorily must not be subject to discrimination.

References

The school will:

- Request details of, and reasons for, absence within the last two years.
- Request details of absences beyond the employee's control, e.g. road accident.
- Ask for details of any disciplinary warnings for punctuality or absence.

Interview

Ask specific questions related to reasons for absence in interview and refer to Notting Hill Prep's commitment to achieving good attendance records.

Induction Period

During the induction period, good attendance is reinforced as a positive aim of the school. Advice is given on the correct procedures to follow should a member of staff be absent.

Nominated Person JCB & PGB

The Nominated Person responsible for the management of attendance and staff absence is the Deputy Head: Operations

The Deputy Head: Operations will:

- Monitor and be aware of the absence records of each employee.
- Record weekly absences and pass details on to the Bursar
- Send an email to each individual member of staff at the end of the week reminding them to complete the online HR return to work form
- Be the contact point for notification procedures.
- Ensure staff are aware of, and comply with, the staff absence reporting arrangements.
- Assist employees in need of support.
- Advise and work with staff that are a cause for concern.

Nominated Person OB

The Nominated Person responsible for the management of attendance and staff absence is the Head of Lower School

The Head of Lower School will:

- Monitor and be aware of the absence records of each employee in the OB
- Record weekly absences and pass details on to the Bursar
- Send an email to each individual member of staff at the end of the week reminding them to complete the online HR return to work form.
- Be the contact point for notification procedures.
- Ensure staff are aware of, and comply with, the staff absence reporting arrangements.
- Assist employees in need of support.
- Advise and work with staff that are a cause for concern.

Staff members whose teaching encompasses both Middle and Upper School classes will be managed by the Deputy Head: Operations

Monitoring and Recording

- The Deputy Head: Operations and the Head of Lower School liaise with the School Administrator and Bursar to ensure accurate records and valid, statistical information on staff absence are kept via the staff register.
- Patterns of absence/reasons for absence are analysed to determine trends in sickness absence, e.g. if there are persistent high levels of absence at certain times.
- Self-certificated absences are recorded on the staff appraisal form and may be raised for discussion at appraisal
- The Deputy Head: Operations and Head of Lower School provide the Bursar with weekly reports on levels of sickness absence within the school.
- Any concerns are referred to the Headmistress, who may choose to liaise with the Chair of Governors in respect of the action to take.

Absence of Deputy Head: Operations and Head of Lower School

If either are away, the other will take over any responsibilities. If both are away, the Bursar is the Nominated Person.

Procedures

Notification Procedures

All members of staff, including non-teaching staff, should follow the internal arrangements relating to sickness and other absences from Notting Hill Prep.

1. Request for Leave of Absence

- If staff require leave of absence from school for a medical appointment, funeral, or other personal reasons, a request should be made (in detail) by completing a Leave of Absence request on HR forms. **The Employment Manual** covers regulations for leave of absence with pay entitlement.
- The school reserves the right to withdraw salary if the request for absence is not covered by the Employment Manual.

2. Absence for Family Reasons/Parental Leave

- If known in advance, a request for leave of absence should be made directly to the Headmistress.
- If absence is not known in advance, procedures for absence arising from ill health should be followed.

3. Absence Arising from Ill Health

First Working Day

- The employee should contact the Deputy Head: Operations or Head of Lower School directly by telephone/text message by 7.00am at the latest, to allow time for alternative staffing arrangements.
- Playground supervisors contact the school by 8.00am at the latest, as their working day begins at 9.30am
- The employee should indicate reason for, and likely duration of, absence. The employee should state if the absence is work related, e.g. accident or injury at work. If the absence is work related, the Deputy Head: Operations or Head of Lower School should record this information.
- A reply by text from the Deputy Head: Operations or Head of Lower School indicates that the message has been received and cover procedures are underway. If no reply is received by 7.30am, a message should be left on the school answerphone.
- If the length of absence is unknown, the employee should contact the school by 4pm on the day of absence to advise whether they will be back the next day.
- It is the responsibility of an absent employee to keep the school informed of the estimated length of absence, although staff at the school will make every effort to keep in contact.
- For all absences of one or more days (including weekends), an employee should complete a Self-Certification form upon return in HR Forms self-certification.

After Seven Days (including non-working days)

- A doctor's certificate/statement should be sent/given to the Bursar.

Long-Term Absence

- During a long-term absence, an employee has a responsibility to keep the school informed of progress through the Deputy Head: Operations or Head of Lower School.
- The school maintains contact and visits the employee by agreement if necessary. An employee should not be subjected to pressure or harassment while absent.

Return to Work Discussion

After a prolonged period of absence because of ill health or unauthorised absence, the employee must report to the Deputy Head: Operations or Head of Lower School immediately before, or on returning to, work for a Return to Work Discussion.

They will:

- conduct the discussion in private at a convenient time
- permit the employee to have a friend or colleague with them
- be aware of the sickness record of the employee and refer to this if appropriate
- discuss the reason for absence and request that the employee provides an explanation
- seek to establish underlying problems - establish if the employee is seeking help
- be sensitive to the reasons for absence and be in a position to offer support/ guidance/practical assistance
- ensure the employee is fit to return to full-time duties
- brief the employee on current work issues.
- ensure the decision remains confidential within the Senior Management/Governors circle

Managing Staff punctuality

Staff are expected to arrive at school and to lessons at or before, the specified times. Persistent lateness becomes a disciplinary matter as per the Employment Manual

Cause for Concern – Formal Discussions with the Headmistress

When repeated short-term or long-term absence is viewed as a cause for concern (as referred to in the NHP Staff Handbook) the Headmistress will schedule a meeting with the employee.

At the meeting the employee:

- has the right to be accompanied by a friend, colleague or representative of a Professional Association
- is reminded of the level/frequency of absence and the associated effects on the operation of the school and on other employees
- is given an opportunity to explain the absence(s) and identify reasons
- is offered constructive help where appropriate
- is made aware that their attendance record is unacceptable; that improvement is necessary and that continued unacceptable levels of absence may lead to formal warnings and possible dismissal
- is informed that a medical report might be required
- is given a review date, e.g. after half a term, and is advised that the position will be monitored and reviewed
- receives written confirmation of the discussion.

FORMAL PROCEDURES

Where no satisfactory improvement is evident, formal procedures are implemented

These fall into three categories. Procedures for:

- repeated short-term absence
- long-term absence through permanent incapacity
- long-term absence, where the condition is not of a permanent nature.

These cases are dealt with under the Repeated Short-Term Absence Procedures or under the separate Long-Term Absence Procedures. Each case will be considered on an individual basis.

Short-Term Absence Procedures

Stage One

At Stage One, the employee receives a written summons to an interview with the Headmistress. The letter should state the absence pattern and confirm the employee's right to consult, and be accompanied by, a representative of his/her choice. The employee is given at least five days' notice.

During the interview, the Headmistress will:

- discuss the absence pattern, the reasons given and the implications for the school
- clarify underlying causes and seek to deal with these, again with reference to the support available from counselling services, etc.
- if no acceptable explanation is forthcoming, issue the employee with a formal written warning that
 - the level of absence is unacceptable
 - improvement is essential over a specified period, e.g. half a term.
- agree a review period and next interview date
- inform the employee that the consequence of further deterioration in attendance/absence frequency levels means the review date will be brought forward and will lead to the next stage of the procedure
- confirm the outcome of the interview in writing, with a return slip for the employee to acknowledge receipt of the warning

If there is an improvement in attendance at the end of the monitoring period, no further action is taken. The employee is informed in writing that attendance is now considered satisfactory. The employee is warned that, should the improvement not be maintained for a period of 12 months, Notting Hill Prep reserves the right to instigate Stage Two.

Stage Two

If there has been no improvement after Stage One, a second interview with the Headmistress and possibly the School Governors and/or Chair of Governors follows. This should observe the same procedures as for Stage One, including:

- a written warning that the employee's levels of attendance are still unacceptable and that significant and sustained improvement is imperative.
- a warning that, if there is no significant and sustained improvement, there could be a recommendation for dismissal on the grounds of the employee's incapacity to maintain an acceptable level of attendance.

After the interview, the dismissal warning is confirmed in writing. The employee is reminded of the possible outcome if improvement is not maintained, and that, if there is further deterioration over previous attendance levels, the review date will be brought forward.

If attendance has improved to acceptable levels by the end of the review period, no further action is taken and the employee is informed in writing.

If further action is deemed necessary within twelve months, Stage Three is activated.

Stage Three

If there is no sustained improvement after Stage Two, then the final interview is called.

Before arranging the meeting, the Headmistress should:

- consult with the Chair of Governors
- confirm the employee's right to be represented by an Adviser at the meeting
- obtain a current, independent medical report if applicable
- set out the attendance record, including that over the review period
- specify the reason for the interview
- state that a recommendation to the Governors for dismissal could be the conclusion to the meeting.

During the interview, the Headmistress:

- examines any new information regarding ill health or change in the nature of sickness absence

- considers medical advice
- reviews representations by the employee's Adviser
- might recommend termination of employment to the Governors
- confirms the decision in writing to the employee, who should sign and return a slip to acknowledge receipt.

Long-Term Absence Procedures

When a member of staff incurs a long-term absence through sickness, Notting Hill Prep will:

- ensure all absence is monitored
- keep in regular contact with the employee
- obtain an indication of likely length of absence, although such enquiries are treated sensitively
- where any action is taken that could have implications for the employee's salary or tenure, advise the employee to seek advice from his or her Union/Professional association
- be aware that the employee may be accompanied by a friend or representative of a union/professional Association.

