



RHT Absence Policy & Procedures

The Richard Huish Trust

Trust Executive –



Lead reviewer	Chief People Officer
Approving board/committee	People & Performance Committee
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1. Introduction

Richard Huish Trust (the Trust) provides governance and oversight to those Academies which are part of the Trust namely: Pyrland School, West Buckland Primary, North Curry CofE Primary, Nerrols Primary and Nursery, North Town Primary Lyngford Park Primary and Richard Huish College.

This policy applies to each of the Academies listed above.

This policy aims to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all in relation to absence from work. The procedures in conjunction with the policy aim provide clarity for staff and line managers in relation their own responsibilities and the related timescales.

2. Enquiries

Any enquiries about this document or suggestions on how it can be improved should be addressed to the Chief People Officer for the Trust.

3. Purpose

Whilst the contractual arrangements relating to sickness absence, annual leave, maternity leave, paternity leave and shared parental leave are all explicit in the various nationally agreed handbooks for staff working in schools and colleges, the purpose of this policy is to provide clarity where the Trust has discretion in relation to its approach and decision making when staff are absent from work.

4. Scope

All staff employed by Richard Huish Trust.

5. Absence Reporting Procedure

It is important that staff notify the school/college as soon as possible if they are not going to be able to attend work, with the reason why and to provide as much notice as possible for cover and or contingency arrangements to be put in place. Appendix 1 includes the specific absence reporting procedures for your school/college.

If staff become too unwell to remain at work during the working day, or other circumstances require them to leave work immediately, they must notify their line manager of their intention to leave and follow the procedure as described in appendix 1 before they go. This is to prevent disruption to learning, operational issues and or health safety issues caused by not knowing the person is no longer on site.

If staff feel uncomfortable stating the reason for their absence they should follow the absence reporting procedure as described in appendix 1 to notify the school/college of their absence then contact the Trust HR team to confirm the reason for their absence.

If a member of staff is absent from work and they have not notified the school/college of their absence, a member of the school/college or HR team will attempt to contact the member of staff. If after a reasonable length of time there is still no contact, in the interests of staff safety and wellbeing we may contact the staff members next of kin or the emergency services.

6. Keeping in contact

Where the period of absence extends past the 1st day, staff will need to remain in contact with the school/college as directed by their line manager for up to 7 days. After 7 days the staff member will need to provide a medical certificate confirming the reason and duration for the absence. Whilst the medical certificate will confirm a likely absence end date, it may be that the line manager requires the member of staff to keep them informed of their progress towards recovery and a return to work.

Where staff do not keep in contact with the school/college and do not respond to reasonable requests to make contact and or keep in contact with the school/college, the member of staff will be invited to attend a meeting at the school/college to discuss the matter. If the member of staff fails to attend the meeting and or continues not to maintain regular contact without reasonable explanation, the Trust will resort to the Disciplinary Procedure to resolve the matter.

7. Prolonged sickness absence / Long term sickness

There are times when unfortunately Trust staff will be absent from work for a prolonged period of time due to serious injury, illness or recovery from a medical procedure. There may be times during prolonged periods of absence when the line manager and a member of the HR team arrange to meet with the staff member to keep them up to date with what is happening at work and to discuss their wellbeing, recovery, and progress towards returning to work. These meetings might be at the school/college, or at a different mutually agreeable location or online.

In cases of prolonged sickness absence, it may be that the Trust choose to seek the opinion of a medical professional in the form of a medical report (GP/Consultant/Occupational Health (OH) Specialist) See section 12.

During prolonged periods of absence staff should not undertake any work or activities which are inconsistent with the illness or injury, or that may delay their recovery or return to work, or act in contravention of medical advice. It is anticipated that staff will do their utmost to facilitate a timely return to fitness and work.

There are times when staff members do not return to sufficiently good health to enable them to return to work in their existing role within a reasonable time frame. When these instances occur the HR team will work with the member of staff involved, taking advice from OH, to explore re-deployment to a different, more appropriate role or to consider reasonable adjustments where the illness or injury may classify the staff member as being 'disabled'. If having explored all reasonable options, there is no reasonable, viable alternative, the HR team will continue to work with the member of staff to sensitively support them through the process of concluding their employment with the Trust.

8. Return to work

Upon returning to work staff should report to their line manager to let them know that they have returned. Irrespective of the length of the absence, staff will need to complete the self-certificate form in line with the procedure described in appendix 1. If the period of absence is greater than 7 days, or at the line managers discretion, staff may be asked to attend a Return to Work Discussion. The return to work discussion is an opportunity for the line manager to talk with the staff member to check; that the staff member is well enough to return to work, whether the staff member has any concerns about returning to work, whether any temporary adjustments need to be made for the member of staff to return to work and whether there

might be any underlying reasons for absence from work, particularly where there have been frequent short periods of absence.

9. Phased Return to Work

A phased return to work may be used as a way of supporting staff to return to work often, but not always, following a long-term period of absence by adjusting their working hours or duties and may form part of a reasonable adjustment if they have a disability.

A phased return to work will need to be agreed between the staff member and the line manager with guidance taken from a member of the HR team. It will need to take account of what is possible to accommodate based on how it might impact on the needs of the school/college, as well as taking account of any medical advice and the staff members individual circumstances and what would be appropriate in supporting the return to work.

In normal circumstances the maximum duration which might be offered for a fully paid, phased return to work is a total of four weeks. The exact length and nature of the phased return will be assessed on a case-by-case basis considering the length and nature of the absence. Where a longer return to work period is needed, this will normally be managed through sick pay or by a temporary adjustment to contracted hours. This assessment will be conducted by the line manager, in conjunction with advice from a member of the HR team.

During the phased return period, any planned non-working days or hours not worked will not be counted as sickness absence, however days or hours which have been planned as working but which are not worked will be counted as sickness absence.

If staff are unable to return to their normal contracted hours and or duties by the end of the agreed phased return period, then a review of the situation will be required which might determine:

- The staff member is not ready to return to work and therefore will be absent again from work due to sickness.
- They are able to be at work but are unable to fulfil their normal contracted hours and/or normal duties, a temporary variation to reduce hours might be agreed between the line manager (with guidance from HR) and the employee and any pay will therefore be on a pro-rata basis.

10. Sick Pay

Contractual Sick pay arrangements for all staff working in the Trust are described in the relevant nationally agreed 'handbooks'.

Red Book - College Teaching Staff

6th Form College Support Staff Handbook - College Support Staff and non-teaching Management

Burgundy Book - School Teaching Staff (including Leadership)

Green Book - School Support Staff and non-teaching Management

When contractual sick pay is exhausted, the staff member will revert to statutory sick pay unless the statutory sick pay entitlement has also been exhausted (26 weeks) in which case the member of staff will have been provided with an SSP1 form at 'week 22' to enable

them to notify DWP that their employer can no longer pay them statutory sick pay. Staff will be notified in writing prior to running out of contractual and or Statutory sick pay.

11. Sickness during holidays (All Year round Support Staff only)

Staff will continue to accrue statutory holiday entitlement whilst they are on sickness leave. Sickness or injury occurring during a period of planned holiday that has been previously approved by their line manager should be reported as soon as is reasonably practicable and supported by appropriate medical evidence. Where practicable, they should comply with the sickness reporting procedure.

When sickness occurs before a period of annual leave and is likely to last into and/or over that holiday period the holiday will take precedence unless the following rules have been followed:

- The sickness is covered by a medical certificate (MED 3)
- The staff member has informed their line manager, in writing, that they wish to reclassify their holiday (including fixed holidays) as sickness as soon as is reasonably practical.

Where it has been agreed to treat a period of approved holiday or part of such a period as sickness absence, staff will be required to return to work as soon as fit to do so, regardless of whether this date coincides with the date on which they would otherwise have returned to work after the period of approved holiday.

12. Occupational Health

The Trust has access to occupational health specialists. Occupational Health (OH) is concerned with health in relation to work and the working environment. The objectives of the service are to prevent work-related ill health, provide advice to improve health at work, promote the benefits of good health, adapt work to the capabilities of employees and help maintain a healthy workplace.

Occupational health may be consulted for advice for a wide variety of reasons which could be related to:

- Staff members health on long term sickness absence and actions to support their return to work
- Staff members health where their level of sickness absence is affecting their performance at work
- Supporting staff with health concerns affecting them whilst at work
- Supporting staff with a disability and making adjustments to their job/environment
- Considering the possibility of medical redeployment and ill health retirement

If during the course of employment, questions arise as to your fitness for work, the Trust may refer you to Occupational Health specialists. The HR Team will liaise directly with you and will support you through this process.

Referral to Occupational Health has to be with the explicit consent of the member of staff (AMRA - Access to Medical Reports Act). It is important to note that where decisions must be made, in terms of next steps related to prolonged periods of absence, the Trust would prefer to do this with the best information available. If the member of staff does not consent to the Trust requesting a medical report, decisions may be made without the benefit of a medical report.

13. Absence Monitoring

Whilst it is understood that most people will be absent from work at some point, significant levels of persistent short term absence will impact upon staff members ability to fulfil their contractual obligations and their duties effectively. Where absence levels are a cause for concern, this will be raised informally in the first instance by the line manager, during this conversation it is anticipated that strategies to reduce absence levels will be discussed and agreed. If absence levels continue to be excessive and in excess of those considered to be 'usual and acceptable', having taken advice from the HR team, the line manager may choose to resort to the Trusts formal processes to progress the matter.

If there is a reasonable belief that staff may have been dishonest or disingenuous when informing the school/college of their reasons for being absent, having taken advice from the HR team, the line manager may choose to resort to the Trusts formal processes to progress the matter.

14. Medical and Health information

During reporting and monitoring of absence, your information will be handled confidentially by various relevant employees of the Trust, such as HR and Payroll, your Line Manager or Headteacher, and anyone involved in the recording of absence such as Office or Admin M. Full information on how we handle your data can be found in the Trust Privacy Notice.

15. Dependants and Carers Leave

It is acknowledged there are times when staff may need to have reasonable time away from work due to their responsibilities towards other people who are dependent upon them, for dealing with certain unexpected and sudden emergencies and to make necessary longer-term arrangements.

Dependants leave

A dependant for the purpose of this policy is a partner, child or parent. It might also be someone who lives in the same household who is dependent on you for your assistance and care in an emergency.

Where a member of Trust staff is absent due to dependants leave, they will normally be paid for the first day of emergency, unplanned dependants leave. All subsequent days will need to be requested and taken as authorised unpaid leave or annual leave where the contract allows, or using TOIL where it is acknowledged by the line manager that TOIL is owed to the employee.

Where the dependants leave is prolonged (2 weeks and after) this will need to be requested in writing by the employee to the Principal/Headteacher and will be unpaid in normal circumstances.

Carers

Employees will be entitled to unpaid leave to give or arrange care for a 'dependant' who, for the purposes of this policy, has: a physical or mental illness or injury that means they're

expected to need care for more than 3 months; a disability (as defined in the Equality Act 2010) or; care needs because of their old age

The dependant doesn't have to be a family member, it can be anyone who relies on them for care. Employees do not need to give evidence to the Trust of their dependant's care needs.

Employees can take up to one week of leave every 12 months. A 'week' means the length of time they usually work over 7 days. For example, if someone usually works 3 days a week, they can take 3 days of carer's leave.

They can either take a whole week off or take individual days or half days throughout the year. They can only take one week every 12 months. If an employee needs to care for more than one person, they cannot take a week of carer's leave for each dependant but they can use the week of leave on more than one dependant.

Employees need to give notice to the Trust before they want their leave to start, and request the leave by submitting a request through a preplanned absence form. If the request is for half a day or a day, the notice period must be at least 3 days. If the request is for more than one day, the notice period must be at least twice as long as the requested leave. For example, if the request is for 2 days, the notice period must be at least 4 days. The notice period needs to be in full days, even if the request includes half day amounts.

Requests cannot be refused however the Trust can request you delay your leave request if your leave would cause serious disruption to the Trust. Should this be the case, the Trust will:

- agree another date within one month of the requested date for the leave
- put the reason for the delay and new date in writing to the employee within 7 days of the original request, and before the requested start date of the leave

16. Other 'Special Leave'

The Trust provides the following leave arrangements concerning compassionate leave. All requests for leave, where possible, need to be made in advance and using the correct Huish Trust forms:

Funeral 1 days leave at full pay to attend the funeral of a direct relative (where exceptional travel is required, this may be extended by one day either side of the funeral at the discretion of the Headteacher/Principal).

A direct relative is defined as the staff members current partner, child, parent, legal guardian, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, or mother-, father-, sister-, brother-, son- or daughter-in-law.

Funeral leave outside of the direct relatives specified, should be discussed with the line manager who will take further advice from HR when necessary. In normal circumstances this will be unpaid leave or annual leave where the contract allows or using TOIL where it is acknowledged by the line manager that TOIL is owed to the employee.

Short Term Compassionate Leave Up to 5 days leave at full pay to attend to the necessary travel and/or administration in the aftermath of the loss of an immediate relative.

An immediate family member is defined to include the employee's current partner, child, parent, legal guardian, sibling or dependent.

Long Term Compassionate Leave – Bereavement Up to 2 weeks leave at full pay, or up to 4 weeks leave at half pay following the loss of a partner, child or a dependent.

Parental bereavement leave (Jacks Law) – Employees have a right to 2 weeks off during the year following the death of a child under the age of 18 or is still born. This is paid at 90% of average weekly earnings. For miscarriages after 24 weeks pregnancy, you may still be eligible for maternity or paternity pay, and 2 weeks parental bereavement leave. For miscarriages prior to 24 weeks, you may wish to have compassionate leave or sickness absence.

Long Term Compassionate Leave – Life Threatening Illness of a partner child or dependent Life-threatening means that the life of the person concerned is at a serious risk over a short term, 3 weeks full pay, or 6 weeks half pay.

Long term compassionate leave outside of the direct relatives specified should be discussed with the line manager who will take advice from HR.

Maternity Leave

As an employee of the Trust, you may be eligible for maternity leave when expecting a baby. Please complete the relevant form ensuring you give enough notice for your leave.

Paternity Leave

As an employee of the Trust, you may be eligible for paternity leave when expecting a baby. Please complete the relevant form ensuring you give enough notice for your leave where possible

Shared Parental Leave

As an employee of the Trust, you may be eligible for shared parental leave when expecting a baby. Please complete the relevant form ensuring you give enough notice for your leave.

Adoption Leave

As an employee of the Trust, you may be eligible for adoption leave when going through adoption. Please complete the relevant form ensuring you give enough notice for your leave.

Parental Leave

As an employee of the Trust, you may be eligible for parental leave. Please complete the relevant form ensuring you give enough notice for your leave where possible.

Jury Service

Unless circumstances meet the specific criteria in a which a member of staff would not be released for jury duty, Trust staff will be released to enable them to fulfil their Jury Service. Staff should provide a copy of the jury summons to the school and HR and are required to claim for loss of earnings from the courts. An equivalent amount will be deducted from your salary in the following months' pay.

Reserve Forces

The Trust are supportive of staff who remain members of the reserve forces.

To request leave to attend training related to their reserve forces role, staff should make this request in writing to the Headteacher/Principal as early as possible. Release is at the discretion of the Headteacher/Principal. Leave to attend training will be unpaid however, support staff who are contracted to work all year round may wish to request this as authorised annual leave (holiday).

Where Trust staff receive notice of being 'mobilised' they will need to provide the Headteacher/Principal with the written confirmation from their commanding officer. Unless circumstances meet the specific criteria in a which a member of staff would not be released for mobilisation, staff will be released as required. Whilst mobilised, staff will receive no pay (due to being paid through MOD). Staff will retain continuity of service whilst mobilised.

Medical Appointments/screening

Where possible we ask staff to make appointments when they are not going to be at work. If this is not possible, leave for medical appointments/screening will be authorised and staff will continue to receive normal pay.

Where a parent or guardian requests leave to attend a medical appointment with a child, where possible we ask staff to make these appointments when they are not going to be at work. If this is not possible, leave for medical appointments/screening will be authorised and staff will continue to receive normal pay.

Training/Study Leave or Time to attend Graduation Ceremony

The Trust will consider requests for training/study leave for staff with over 26 weeks service. In normal circumstances study leave will be unpaid unless the qualification being taken is at the Trust's request or is a requirement of the role. (Not applicable to apprentices who already receive 20% Off Job Training).

Where staff have achieved a degree or higher level qualification, 1 days paid leave will be granted to enable them to attend the Graduation Ceremony.

Term Time Annual Leave requests

Support Staff / Non-Teaching Management (All Year Round) – at

Principal/Headteachers discretion (can be delegated to the line manager) using annual leave entitlement.

TTO Support Staff - At Principal/Headteacher discretion - granted as authorised leave without pay.

Teachers – It is not anticipated that Teachers will request annual leave during term time and as such requests are most likely to be declined.

House Move

Where possible it is requested that people plan to move house when they are not at work. When this is not possible 1 day of authorised, paid leave will be granted.

Other Circumstances

Whilst this policy is written to provide clarity on the most frequent reasons for staff not attending work. There may be other circumstances which occur, not covered by the various nationally agreed handbooks and not covered by this policy. In these instances the Trust encourage staff to discuss these matters with their line manager, the Headteacher/Principal or a member of the HR team as soon as they become aware of them. In most situations it is

anticipated that the decision will be at the discretion of the Headteacher/Principal. The request will be considered as quickly as is practically possible, allowing time for advice to be taken. The response will confirm whether or not the request has been granted and whether there will be any implications related to pay.

17. Infectious Diseases

Where staff believe they may have an infectious disease (or someone in their household has an infectious disease), they should take the advice of the NHS with regard to preventing the spread of the disease and whether or not they should be attending work.

18. Quality Management

It will be the responsibility of the RHT Chief People Officer, and the HR team in liaison with the Trust's People and Performance Committee, and Academy Headteachers/Principals to review and monitor the effectiveness of this policy and procedure annually and to recommend change where necessary.

The effectiveness of the procedure will be considered bi-annually by the Trust People and Performance Committee.

19. Associated Guidance Documents

RHT Disciplinary Procedure

RHT Staff Code of Conduct

Red Book - College Teaching Staff

6th Form College Support Staff Handbook - College Support Staff and non-teaching Management

Burgundy Book - School Teaching Staff (including Leadership)

Green Book - School Support Staff and non-teaching Management

School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document

Appendix 1

Absence Reporting procedure

As soon as the member of staff knows that they are unlikely to be able to attend work at North Curry C of E Primary School they should follow the reporting procedure described below:

1. Prior to 07:30 ring the Head teacher or designated Senior Teacher and confirm, name, time and date of call, reason for absence.
2. If no response phone the school and leave a message
3. Continue to try to get hold of the Head teacher or Senior Teacher until they receive a response

Where a member of staff becomes so unwell during the day that they feel too unwell to remain at work they should:

1. Inform the Head teacher or designated Senior Teacher as soon as possible
2. Assess whether they are safe to get themselves home or call emergency contact if not
3. Keep the Head teacher informed as to next steps for the following day

When a member of staff is returning to work, on the first day they should:

1. Check in with the Head teacher or designated Senior teacher following their back to work interview (if applicable)
2. Ensure that they keep the Head teacher or designated senior teacher informed if they feel unwell