Larkspur Primary School

Leave of Absence Policy

Revised April 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1. The School recognises that an employee has to balance work and their personal life, and it is committed to the equality of opportunity for all employees and to developing practices and HR policies that support work-life balance.

1.2. The School depends on all its employees to deliver education and learning and is therefore committed to establishing a positive attendance culture. There is a range of provisions that allow for flexible working, special leave to be taken for events outside work and occupational leave schemes covering sickness and maternity. Policies and procedure referred to in this document can be obtained from the school office.

2. Aim

2.1. The aim of this policy is to inform employees of the range of leave options, and other associated provisions, available either as an employment right or at the discretion of the School.

3. Definition of Leave of Absence

3.1. A leave of absence is time allowed away from the employee's contracted hours of work. Although employees are required to be in school during term time there may be circumstances which require an employee to be absent.

4. Scope

4.1. The policy applies to all employees appointed by the Governing Body.

4.2. All requests must be made to the head teacher or if it is the head teacher who requires a leave of absence the request must be made to the Chair of the Governing Body.

5. Review

5.1. This leave of absence policy was agreed by the Governing Body of Larkspur Primary School on 22 October 2026

5.2. It is a non-contractual policy and does not form part of an employee's contract of employment.

5.3. The School may amend it at any time subject to consultation with all employees and recognised trade unions.

Adoption Leave
For further details please refer to the School's Adoption Leave Scheme.

Adoption Support Leave
Employees will be given up to 3 working days' paid time off to attend pre-adoption training which may involve applicant interviews and familiarisation sessions.

Please refer to the Adoption Leave Scheme for further details.

Adverse Weather Conditions
Please refer to the School's Adverse Weather guidance.

Ante-Natal Care
Ante-natal care is the care you receive from a midwife or a healthcare professional during your pregnancy. This does not cover ante-natal classes such as parenting classes or aqua natal classes.

A pregnant employee will be given paid time off to attend for ante-natal care. The husband/partner of a pregnant woman will be given unpaid time off up to six and a half hours on no more than two occasions to attend ante-natal care.

The employee must produce evidence of appointments if asked to do so.

Employees are expected to return to work at the end of their appointment unless their return takes them beyond their normal working hours.

Armed Forces
Employees should organise their two weeks' paid leave to attend Reserve Forces Summer Camp during school closure periods. However, if this is not possible employees will be granted the two weeks paid leave during their working time.

Employees who are a reservist for the armed forces will be given unpaid leave for the period that they are called upon to exercise their armed forces duties. This will class as continuous service.

Bereavement Leave
One working day of paid leave will be given to attend the funeral of a close relative/partner. This can be extended to 5 working days paid leave at the discretion of the head teacher/chair of the governing body, following discussions with the employee.

In determining the amount of bereavement leave to approve, the factors to be considered are the:

- relationship of the employee to the deceased;
- funeral arrangements;
- arrangements which an employee has to undertake;
- location of the funeral.

In the case of the death of a partner/spouse, 5 working days' bereavement leave will be given.

Bereavement Leave – Parental

All employees will receive two weeks' parental bereavement leave paid at the rate of normal salary if their child who is under the age of 18 dies. For casual employees, pay will be at the statutory rate.

Parental bereavement leave may be taken in two separate blocks of one week, or as a single block of two weeks. For part-time employees, a week's leave will be based on their normal working week. Parental bereavement leave must be taken within 56 weeks of the child's death.

An employee is entitled to take parental bereavement leave if they are:

- The child's parent;
- The child's natural parent and named in an order under section 51A (2)(a) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 provided that the order has not subsequently been revoked or discharged;
- A person with whom the child has been placed for adoption (as long as the placement has not been disrupted);
- An adopter who has received official notification in respect of the child;
- An intended parent of the child – this applies in circumstances of assisted reproduction. An intended parent means a person who has applied or intended to apply within 6 months of the child's birth for an order under section 54 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 in respect of the child.
- The child's parent in fact – the child lived in the person's own home, and they had day-to-day responsibility for the child's care (for example a foster carer);
- The partner of the child's parent – 'partner' is defined as a person (whether of a different sex or the same sex) who lives with the child and the child's parent in an enduring family relationship.

Parental bereavement leave is also available if an employee's child is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Career Break

For further details please refer to the School's Career Break Policy.

Carer's Leave

Employees, from their first day of employment, will be entitled to one week's unpaid leave every 12 months to give or arrange care for a dependant who 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),
- care needs because of their old age.

The dependant does not have to be a family member. It can be anyone who relies on the employee for care. If an employee needs to care for more than one person, they cannot take a week's leave for each dependent. They can only take one week every 12 months. They can use the week of leave for more than one dependent.

Employees can either take a whole week off or take individual days or half days throughout the year, they must inform their head teacher they wish to take leave either

verbally or in writing. The notice period must be at least 3 days, if an employee wishes to take half day or a day. If the request is for more than one day, the notice period must be at least twice the requested leave. For part-time employees, a week's leave will be based on their normal working week.

Requests can only be refused if it would cause serious disruption to the school but must be rearranged within one month of the requested leave. Employees should receive written confirmation of any changes to their request, within 7 calendar days of their original request.

Compassionate leave

The School recognises that there are circumstances where an employee may be under undue stress and may need time off work. Therefore, the School offers up to 5 working days paid compassionate leave. Circumstances which may be covered by this are:

- death of a close relative/partner/spouse or child (in addition to the 5 working days' bereavement leave or 10 working days' parental bereavement leave);
- serious illness of child/partner/spouse/close relative.

Counselling Appointments

Employees will be given paid time off to attend counselling appointments provided or recommended by the School's occupational health provider. Paid time off will be granted for a maximum of 6 appointments. This may be increased on the advice of the occupational health provider.

Court Attendance

The School will give paid time off to an employee who is summoned to appear in court as a witness and has no choice about attending.

Employees must complete a claim form from the court for a loss of earnings allowance, which must be certified by the School's payroll provider. The School will then deduct the amount of the allowance from the employee's pay.

Where employees attend Court through their own choice, or they have instigated matters of their own doing, such as small claims court proceedings or to support a relative or friend, the School will give unpaid time off.

Emergency Leave/Family Emergencies/Unforeseen Events

The School will give an employee paid time off to deal with the initial emergency e.g., taking a child to A&E or arranging a plumber to attend a burst pipe.

The School will be mindful of various circumstances:

- relationship of the employee to those being affected by the emergency.
- whether there are others who can deal with the urgent matter
- the amount of annual leave/unpaid leave available/flexible leave arrangements/more flexible working for a set period of time.

The employee will then need to request a further leave of absence if they wish to be absent for longer. This could include annual leave (full year employees) or unpaid leave.

Elective Surgery

Where surgery is considered to be elective (including cosmetic surgery, which is concerned with the enhancement of appearance through surgical and medical procedures) and not medically necessary, there is no entitlement to paid time off, including any post-operative recovery.

Where time off is required, employees should use annual leave or schedule surgery during school closure periods.

For elective surgery that relates to a medical condition and is supported by a medical certificate or if the employee becomes medically unfit for work after the elective surgery, the School's Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedure will apply.

Examination and Study Leave

Paid leave will be granted to sit examinations for qualification courses approved by the School.

Paid study leave may also be granted for final revision just before an examination. This leave will normally be one half working day leave per examination. In determining whether this should be paid or unpaid leave the School will consider if:

- the examination is closed book; or
- textbooks and resources are allowed in the examination room.

External Recruitment Processes

Employees will be given paid time off, on request, to attend recruitment processes for posts in other maintained schools, Academies or Local Authorities.

Time off without pay will be given for recruitment processes for posts in other organisations other than those mentioned above.

Foster Carer Leave

Gateshead Council is a "Foster Friendly" employer, therefore any employee who fosters a child through Gateshead Council's fostering service will be granted:

- 3 working days paid time off to attend pre-approval training;
- approximately 1-2 days training per academic year to attend mandatory and core training as outlined in Gateshead Council's Carers' Training and Development Directory;
- 1 working day's paid time off following a placement match to settle a child into their new home;
- A maximum of 5 working days' paid leave per academic year to deal with the initial emergency with a foster child e.g., taking them to A&E.

Leave is pro rata for part time employees.

Employees should provide as much notice as possible of the request for leave to attend training, to enable the school to plan for their absence and for cover where necessary.

The above paid absence arrangements only apply to employees who foster children through Gateshead Council.

Hospital Appointments
All employees should, where possible, arrange all hospital appointments outside of their normal working hours. Where this is not possible employees will receive paid leave.

The employee must produce evidence of appointments if asked to do so.

IVF/Fertility Treatment
IVF/Fertility treatment will be recorded as attendance at hospital and therefore will be paid leave. If an employee chooses to take additional time off following treatment this should be taken as unpaid leave.

If the employee becomes medically unfit for work after treatment, the School's Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedure will apply.

Jury Service Leave
Paid time off will be given to employees called to jury service during their working time. Employees must complete a claim form from the court for a loss of earnings allowance, which must be certified by the School's payroll provider.

The School will then deduct the amount of the allowance from the employee's pay.

Maternity Leave
For further details please refer to the School's Maternity Leave Scheme.

Maternity Support Leave
An employee is entitled to 5 days' paid time off if they are the child's father, or the partner or nominated carer of an expectant mother. This time off may be taken at or around the time of birth. A nominated carer is the person chosen by the mother to assist in the care of the child and to provide support to the mother at or around the time of the birth.

An employee may also be entitled to 1 week of paternity leave. For further details please refer to the School's Paternity Leave Scheme.

Medical, Dental and Opticians Appointments
All employees must, where possible, arrange all GP, dental, or optician appointments outside of their normal working hours. Where this is not possible employees must seek approval in order to receive paid leave.

The employee must produce evidence of appointments if asked to do so.

If the appointment is to attend the School's occupational health provider, paid leave will be given to attend the appointment.

Organ Donation
An employee undergoing surgery as a living organ donor is entitled to paid time off for the surgery and the expected period of recovery (as advised by the surgical consultant). This also applies to bone marrow donation.

Where their recovery is longer than expected (for example, due to complications associated with the surgery or procedure, or other illness) this will be classed as sickness absence under the School's Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedure.

Outside Activities During Working Hours

Employees may be given leave of absence during working hours if they want to undertake the following activities outside their employment with the School. The maximum amount of leave is shown at the end of each activity. All leave is subject to the needs of the School but will not be unreasonably refused.

- Employees who are members of local authorities, their committees, or sub-committees. Up to 48 half working days' leave with pay each year plus unlimited leave without pay.
- Employees who are Justices of the Peace, members of committees, tribunals, panels, or similar bodies to which they have been appointed or nominated by a Government department or local authority. Up to 24 half working days' leave with pay each year plus unlimited leave without pay.
- Employees who are:
  - appointed to represent non-political organisations whose principal aims include the improvement of the standard of local government services (but not the improvement of the status and conditions of employment of employees) to enable employees to attend meetings of those organisations to which any question about the improvement of the standard of local government services is to be discussed.
  - appointed to represent a trade union or association of employees at meetings of both employers and employees established to recommend terms and conditions of employees of local authorities. Up to a maximum of 48 half working days' leave with pay each year.
- Employees who are appointed to represent organisations of employees whose objects include the improvement of status and conditions of employment of their members. Up to a maximum of 48 half working days' leave without pay each year.
- Employees appointed to represent political organisations at political conferences or as delegates from trade unions to attend political conferences. Up to a maximum of 11 half working days' leave without pay each year.
- Employees who are School Governors to enable them to carry out their duties and to attend meetings of School Governing Bodies. Unlimited leave without pay.

Parental Leave

For further details please refer to the School's Parental Leave Scheme.

Paternity Leave

For further details please refer to the School's Paternity Leave Scheme.

Physiotherapy Appointment

Employees will be given paid time off to attend physiotherapy appointments provided or recommended by the School's occupational health provider. Paid time off will be given for a maximum of 6 appointments. This may be increased on the advice of the occupational health provider.

Religious or Cultural Observance

Employees whose religious or cultural observance is not covered by weekends or public holidays may need time away from work. This can include days off for religious or cultural festivals, prayer or fasting.

Employees are entitled to request time off and the School will consider such requests sympathetically and on a case by case basis. The School will give consideration to:

- adjusting work patterns;
- approving annual leave for full year employees; or
- approving unpaid leave.

Relocation
An employee who is newly appointed to the School and has to relocate into the area (e.g., South East to North East) will be given 2 working days' paid leave when moving to a new house. This may be increased to 3 working days paid leave in exceptional circumstances.

Shared Parental Leave
For further details please refer to the School's Shared Parental Leave Scheme.

Special Leave relating to a disability.
Paid leave will be given to employees who have a disability for absences required for specific, known reasons relating to that disability: annual check-ups, hospital, doctor and medical appointments, treatments including therapies, counselling, surgery, and rehabilitation including rehabilitation activities (e.g., guide dog or sign language training).

As these absences are usually pre-planned, the employee must give reasonable notice of the date it is required, clearly stating the reasons, and providing supporting evidence such as appointment cards and doctors letters where appropriate.

If an employee becomes unwell or unfit for work as a result of their disability or any associated treatment or therapy the School's Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedure will apply.

Sporting and Recreational Activities
Employees may be given leave of absence during working hours if they want to undertake the following sporting and recreational activities outside their employment with the School. All leave is subject to the needs of the School but will not be unreasonably refused.

- An employee selected to officiate as a judge or a coach at national and international schools' competitions will be given paid time off.

- An employee selected to represent their country in international competitions sponsored by a national association, such as boxing, swimming, athletics, will be given paid time off.

- An employee selected to officiate on behalf of their country as a coach or a judge in international competitions sponsored by a national association will be given paid time off.

- An employee selected to represent their county in inter-county and national competitions will be given paid time off.

- An employee selected to officiate on behalf of their county or recognised organisation as a coach or a judge in inter-county and national competitions will be

given unpaid time off to carry out the training for the event, and paid time off to attend. Any additional time off will be taken as unpaid leave.

- An employee who wishes to take part in specific activities organised by a group of enthusiasts with a similar objective, such as choral festivals, eisteddfodau or expeditions will be given unpaid time off.

- An employee who wishes to take part in specific activities organised by national, international, and recognised associations will be given unpaid time off.

The total amount of paid time off must not be more than 10 working days during an academic year and all paid time off is given on the understanding that the employee does not receive any other payment apart from expenses.

Unpaid Leave

There may be circumstances which require an employee to be absent for reasons not referred to elsewhere in this policy. The school will consider unpaid time off for events which may be foreseen, but which are of a nature to require the employee's presence.

Employees must request unpaid leave as far in advance as possible.