**STAFF ABSENCE**

At Amberley we encourage all our employees to maximise their attendance at work while recognising that employees will, from time to time, be unable to come to work due to sickness. By implementing this policy, we aim to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of our business needs and the genuine needs of employees to take occasional periods of time off work because of sickness.

We aim to provide a healthy working environment and demonstrate commitment to health, safety and the welfare of staff in order to maximise attendance.

Exclusion periods for contagious illnesses

Working with children means that you are in contact with illnesses which can be highly contagious. We take the health of children and staff very seriously therefore if you have any contagious illness you must adhere to the same exclusion periods as children. This will ensure that you are able to recover appropriately and that this illness is not passed on to other staff, children or parents.

Management is responsible for regularly monitoring and taking appropriate action in connection with sickness and other unplanned absence.

Sickness absence reporting procedure

Reporting sickness absence should be done using the following guidelines. Failure to follow these guidelines could delay any sick pay due to you and could possibly result in disciplinary action.

If staff are unable to attend work they are required to make phone contact with the management team, before 7am to Give brief details of your illness and your expected length of absence. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, staff members are expected to make this phone call themselves, not a relative or friend. Text messages, emails or similar are not an acceptable form of communication for this purpose.

Monday to Thursday:

* Call Lisa first on XXXXXXXXXXX
* If no response is gained, call Jess on XXXXXXXXXXX

Friday:

* Call Jess first on XXXXXXXXXXX
* If no response is gained, Call Lisa on XXXXXXXXXXX

Staff members must then call the nursery landline (01424 212 472) by 3.30 of each day to confirm if they will be in attendance the next working day. (For longer periods of absence, staff may agree with the manager when they will need to update the nursery).

**Returning to Work**

1. On returning to work you must complete a copy of the ‘Employee’s statement of sickness self-certification form’. This should be signed by nursery management.
2. For absences of more than seven consecutive days, you must provide a ‘fit note’ completed by a qualified medical practitioner for the period of absence.
3. After returning to work from any absence, a ‘return to work’ interview will be undertaken by the employee and line manager, discussing

* The reason for absence
* Whether adjustments to the role (on a temporary or more permanent basis) are required and what they are. These might include adjusted work patterns, start and finish times and changes of duties
* Future requirements and expectations, e.g. improved attendance
* The return to work interview should be recorded and signed by both the manager and employee and a copy attached to the employee’s file.

Long-term sickness absence

Where absences have lasted over 10 working days or more, the manager should contact the member of staff concerned to obtain an initial assessment of the problem and to offer any further help or assistance.

At this point and where felt appropriate after further assessment of the problem, the manager will arrange a face-to-face meeting or telephone conference between themselves and the member of staff. The meeting should:

* Seek to confirm the reasons and nature of the absence and its likely duration
* Ensure that the member of staff is aware of the nursery’s concern regarding their health and necessary absence from work
* Consider offering alternative duties or a shorter working week if this would enable a quicker return to work subject to medical advice
* Give consideration to any personal problems being encountered and discuss possible ways of helping the individual resolve these
* Advise the member of staff that in their best interests they may be asked to see a registered medical practitioner or occupational health provider appointed by the nursery to enable a medical report to be prepared
* Alternatively, and if appropriate, gain agreement from the member of staff to contact their doctor or specialist in order to establish the likely length of absence and the long-term effect on capability in relation to job performance and attendance at work.

If all other avenues have been investigated, the absence continues or, following return to work, the attendance record does not improve, a subsequent meeting should be arranged. At this point, unless there are reasonable grounds to believe there will be an improvement in the foreseeable future, the manager should inform the member of staff that long-term sickness absence due to ill health may put their employment at risk and the possibility of termination by reason of capability or suitability to work with children might have to be considered, taking into account any medical information available.

The position will be reviewed periodically and ultimately it may become necessary from a business perspective to consider termination of employment. Any decision to terminate employment will be taken by Lisa Gray and Mark Ryalls, making sure the capability procedure has been exhausted.

Occupational health

The nursery reserves the right to request employees to attend an appointment with an Occupational Health Advisor (e.g. consultant, GP) during their employment, if it is reasonably deemed necessary due to sickness absence, changes in health or the role, or where it is necessary to seek an expert medical opinion as to whether or not the employee can fulfil their job role or whether any reasonable adjustments should be made to the employee’s role.

The nursery will seek to engage the services of an independent Occupational Health Advisor in situations where expert medical opinion is required and work with them to identify the best course of action in circumstances of sickness absence.

Access to medical records

The Access to Medical Records Act 1988 gives individuals the right of access to medical records relating to themselves which have been prepared by a medical practitioner for employment purposes. The Act provides that:

* Employers must gain the consent of employees before requesting reports from medical practitioners
* Employers must inform employees of their rights in respect of medical reports
* The employee has the right of access to the report before the employer sees it, provided appropriate notification is given
* The employer is responsible for notifying the medical practitioner that the employee wishes to have access
* The employee may ask for a report to be amended or may attach a statement to the report
* Having seen the report, the employee may wish to withhold consent to it being supplied.

Where the nursery requests further medical information about the health of staff from an individual’s General Practitioner or Specialist, or its own occupational health provider, the provisions of the Act will be followed.

Throughout any interviews regarding sickness absence, staff are entitled to the support of and/or representation by a work colleague or recognised trade union representative.

**Serious illness/injury of an employee’s immediate family**

This will be looked at on an individual basis and your manager will agree with you a reasonable period of leave. You need to also consider taking holiday/TOIL and working flexibly i.e. making adjustments to the length of the working day, changes in hours/days worked etc.

**Death of a member of an employee’s immediate family**

This leave applies on the death of an employee’s spouse, life partner, parent, brother, sister, grandparent, dependant or other relative for whom the employee has special responsibility or has had special ties. The amount of time off required will be at the manager’s discretion and will depend on individual circumstances.

**Monitoring of Attendance Levels**

We operate a system to monitor all absence. This is referred as the ‘Bradford Factor’. This works on a points system and any employee with a score of above 100 points in any twelve month period may be subject to disciplinary action. The absence score system gives higher scores for frequent short absences than for longer continuous periods of absence.

Staff whose absence score is above 100 in any twelve month period may be required to attend a disciplinary hearing.

The formula for counting this score is calculated by: Number of times absent squared, multiplied by the total number of days absent.

* + - 1. **Example 1**

One Continuous absence of three months.

1st absence - 91 days

1 x 1 x 91 = 91 points.

91 days continuous absence in twelve months = 91 points

* + - 1. **Example 2**

Frequent short absences varying in duration.

1st absence - 3 days

1 x 1 x 3 = 3 points

2nd absence - 4 days

2 x 2 x 7 = 28 points

3rd absence - 2 days

3 x 3 x 9 = 81 points

4th absence - 1 day

4 x 4 x 10 = 160 points

10 days absence in twelve months = 160 points

* + - 1. **Example 3**

1st absence - 1 day

1 x 1 x 1 = 1 point

2nd absence - 1 day

2 x 2 x 2 = 8 points

3rd absence - 1 day

3 x 3 x 3 = 27 points

4th absence - 1 day

4 x 4 x 4 = 64 points

5th absence - 1 day

5 x 5 x 5 = 125 points

5 days absence in twelve months = 125 points

* 1. In all instances of absenteeism a Return to Work Interview will take place. The aim of this meeting will be to allow an informal discussion to take place to discuss the absences, which have occurred. It is the Company’s policy that this meeting should be handled in an understanding and compassionate manner. It is not intended in any way to be a disciplinary interview.
  2. On following consideration of the reasons behind the absenteeism period, it may be that the employee will be informed that the Absenteeism Warning Procedure will be applied to them and that they will be allocated “points”. This is not a punishment; it is simply a case of the Company wishing to formally monitor absence with a view to keeping it under control and improving levels of attendance.
  3. Should the situation arise where the employee’s attendance at work is deemed to be at an unacceptable level, the Company may, after considering all factors including any medical evidence and the employee’s own views or opinions, decide to implement the Company’s Absenteeism Warning Procedure.
  4. Whilst each situation will be treated on its merits and with sensitivity, it should be recognised that frequent and persistent short-term absence may lead to disciplinary action which could eventually result in termination of employment.
  5. The Absenteeism Warning Procedure is intended to promote consistency and fairness in the way the company controls, reviews and deals with absence/non-attendance. This system is not intended to be punitive. Its aim is to help employees to be aware of the levels of their absenteeism, and the effect that their non-attendance is having on their colleagues and upon the Company.
  6. Once an employee’s scoring is approaching 100 his/her Line Manager at the employee’s return to work interview, will advise the employee that they are reaching the unaccepted level of absence.
  7. The Warning Procedure

Stage 1

When the target of 100 “points” has accumulated, an investigation into the cause of the absenteeism will take place, and may result in the employee being asked to attend a formal disciplinary hearing.

Stage 2 - First Formal Hearing – Possible Verbal Warning

Once the Procedure has commenced and a verbal warning has been issued, it is in force for three months.

Stage 3 – Second Formal Hearing – Possible Written Warning

In the event a further absence occurs in the rolling twelve-month period following stage 2 then a formal written warning may be issued. This warning remains in force for a period of six months. The employee will be informed at all stages that their overall attendance record is unacceptable, and in the event that no improvement is made, this could eventually lead to termination of employment.

Stage 4 – Third Formal Hearing – Final Written Warning

In the event that a further absence occurs in the rolling twelve months period following stage 3 then a formal written warning may be issued. This warning remains in force for a period of twelve months. Any further absence after this stage could result in the company terminating employment by reason of unacceptable attendance record.

Policy reviewed February 2019 Lisa Gray