

THE WESTGATE SCHOOL

Hampshire's First 4-16 'All Through' School

*"The Westgate School is a community of learners where partnerships inspire success for all:
learning together – achieving excellence"*

Headteacher: Mrs F A Dean, MA (Ed)

Initial Policy date	June 2009	Next scheduled review	June 2025
Governor approved	June 2024	Key person/people	HT
Model Policy		Model localised	Yes
Pupil leadership team review		Y / N N/A	

COLLEAGUE ABSENCE AND COVER

Purpose and background

The purpose of this policy is to ensure consistent practice in granting leave of absence to all colleagues within a framework which respects family and other personal commitments and supports a healthy work life balance. It applies to all employees of the school with respect to procedures for colleague absence. It ensures compliance with the requirement for teachers to "rarely cover" as set out in the National Agreement 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload (January 2003) whilst also enabling the school reasonable flexibility to support colleagues in activities such as professional learning.

Policy objectives

- To establish guiding principles that offer reasonable flexibility regarding absence in term time.
- To publicise the criteria used to ensure that decisions regarding leave of absence are fair and transparent.
- To implement the national strategy for workforce remodelling.
- To publish an annual school calendar that seeks to specify the times at which a colleague must be available to work/directed time. This is 1265 hours/195 days for a full-time teacher according to paragraph 51.5 of The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (2017); paragraph 51.7 states that: "a teacher must work such reasonable additional hours as may be necessary to enable the effective discharge of the teachers' professional duties".
- Wherever compatible with the educational and operational needs of the school, to support part-time and flexible working.
- To make arrangements for cover for absent teaching colleagues that offer best value for money and conform with the requirement to "rarely cover" with regard to specified "Preparation, Planning and Assessment time (PPA).

Practice and procedures

This policy is established and reviewed in consultation with all members of colleagues and professional associations represented within the school.

1. Colleague Absence

Absence due to illness

The school recognises the need for employees to be absent from school during a period of illness and that this period of absence should be sufficient to ensure a positive return to work. The school will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the impact of illness or disability and will consider a change in working conditions or role either on a temporary or permanent basis. In cases where there is a regular or sustained period of absence due to ill health, the headteacher may refer an employee for an occupational health assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to support the employee's return to work and identify any changes to working conditions that may be required. If an occupational health assessment recommends that an employee is no longer able to perform their role the school will seek

to provide alternative employment or to support in applying for early retirement if appropriate. In doing this the school will ensure full compliance with disability rights legislation.

Any colleague absent for over five consecutive days, or absent on the last day or first day of any new term, will upon return need to see the appropriate line manager for a return to work meeting.

Employees must notify their Faculty/Subject Leader and Cover Manager of absence due to illness at the earliest possible time and no later than 7.30am on the day of illness. The telephone number for reporting absence is found in the colleague handbook. All colleagues should ensure they have this number at home.

Procedures

Colleagues who are absent should:

- Contact the Cover Manager by telephone by 7.30 am on the day of absence (teaching colleagues only).
- Telephone their Faculty/Subject Leader/Line Manager to notify them of their absence (all colleagues)
- Ensure that work is sent in if possible, for their classes being covered (teaching colleagues only).

Absence due to professional responsibilities

Absence due to professional responsibilities such as attendance at meetings and case conferences or training must be approved in advance by notifying appropriate line manager. Requests for absence for training that do not meet the school's development priorities will not be approved. Absence for professional development reasons will normally be limited to 1 full time equivalent on any one day.

Absence for personal reasons

Leave of absence for personal reasons may be granted by the Headteacher within the framework of this policy. Any absence should be approved in advance by completing a leave of absence form and passing it to the Headteacher. There may be exceptional circumstances when this is not possible, and the colleague should see the Headteacher as soon as possible to discuss this.

Criteria for approval of leave of absence are as follows:

Compassionate leave

Compassionate leave will normally be granted in the case of personal crises: serious illness or death of a spouse, partner or other close relative, attendance at a funeral. Requests for compassionate leave will normally be discussed with the Headteacher. There is no set limit to the length of compassionate leave although it would normally not exceed five days. It is normally granted with pay but it may be granted with or without pay at the discretion of the Headteacher. A record of the leave taken and the reasons for it will be made. A leave of absence form must also be completed.

Care of dependants

Employees are entitled to reasonable unpaid leave to take action in one of the following circumstances:

- to provide assistance on an occasion when a dependant falls ill, or is injured or assaulted;
- to make arrangements for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured;
- because of unexpected disruption or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant;
- to deal with an incident which involves their child and requires their attendance.

Colleagues must make every effort to tell the school as soon as possible that they will be absent and the reasons for this. This leave will not normally exceed three days in any school year. In the case of the illness of a dependant, it would normally be expected that leave of absence will be granted for a short period of time until alternative arrangements for care can be made. It is normally granted with pay but may be granted with or without pay at the discretion of the Headteacher. A record of the leave taken and the reasons for it will be kept.

Other personal leave

Leave of absence may be granted for other personal reasons. This leave will not normally exceed three days in any school year and must be with the prior approval of the Headteacher. Leave of absence with pay will normally be granted for:

- attendance at interview;
- visit to new school prior to taking up appointment (one day only);
- moving home (one day only);
- graduation of self, spouse, partner or dependant (one day only);
- attendance at the wedding of an immediate family member (one day only).

Leave of absence may be granted without pay, or arrangements made to work time in lieu if practicable, for:

- attendance at a wedding other than of an immediate family member.

A record of the leave taken and the reasons for it will be kept.

Leave of absence in other circumstances may be granted with or without pay at the discretion of the Headteacher in line with the spirit of the procedures laid out above.

2. Flexible working

Any employee may request a reduction in working hours or flexible working hours. In deciding whether to grant this request, the Headteacher will consider whether the request is compatible with maintaining high quality of education for pupils and operational needs of the school. Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate the request, it will not always be possible within the limitations of the school's curriculum, timetable and operations.

3. Cover for absent teachers

The school will establish arrangements for cover for absent teachers that represent good value for money for the school, ensure a good standard of supervision and teaching for pupils, and comply with the National Agreement to "rarely cover" from PPA time.

Teaching responsibility

A teacher will be responsible for teaching of classes allocated to him/her on the school timetable and for groups formed specifically for calendared school events such as cross-curricular learning days, enterprise days and arts week.

Responsibility for supervising a class normally assigned to another colleague or a combination of classes normally assigned to other colleagues will be deemed to be cover. The exception to this is responsibility for supervising year 11 pupils during the summer examination period when teachers of year 11 will be deemed to have been reassigned. This supervision will not normally exceed two hours for this period.

Cover supervision

The school will employ cover supervisors on the following basis: 4.00 full time equivalent to cover absence due to professional responsibilities and cover required for illness and personal reasons (calculated for the previous school year). Cover supervisors will be used to cover for known and unknown absences, normally for up to a period of 5 days. Cover supervisors will not be required to prepare or mark work but will be expected to uphold high standards of work and behaviour and to follow the school's procedures for dealing with work and behaviour that fall below an acceptable standard. The school will provide induction and training for cover supervisors and will provide supportive line management and mentoring.

For absences in excess of 5 days, the school will endeavour to provide cover by supply teachers.

Providing work for cover

The teacher assigned to a class will be expected to set work for cover lessons. In cases where this is not possible, the Faculty/Subject Leader will set work or delegate this task to another member of the department with appropriate management responsibility.

Rarely cover

There will be occasional circumstances in which it is not possible to provide supervision of lessons by cover supervisors or supply teachers. On these occasions teachers may be asked to cover for absent colleagues. These circumstances will be rare: for example, when supply teachers are not available or there is a delay in their availability, or when a colleague goes home ill during the school day, or if there are particularly high levels of unexpected sickness. A record of cover by teachers will be kept to ensure this is equitable and conforms to the expectation to "rarely cover". Statistics on cover by teachers will be maintained termly and will be available on request. Where colleagues are in receipt of additional non-contact time above the minimum 10% PPA, this will be labelled as "School Support" and within reason, they may be asked to support the school by providing cover for absent colleagues.

School Support

The School seeks to support colleagues with additional non-contact time so far as budget and timetable allows. This is facilitated via an annual opt-in scheme under which additional non-contact time is scheduled, with the agreement that participating colleagues may be occasionally be required to cover others' lessons. In this way the School may permit colleagues to have leave of absence for personal reasons beyond the policy framework. Even if occasional cover duties are required, overall workload is reduced as fewer lessons need to be planned, prepared and assessed.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

The Headteacher and SLT will monitor and analyse the school's record of patterns of absence (planned and unplanned) and levels of cover used on a termly basis. The SLT link will also monitor the cover required in advance weekly and where necessary make changes. The Cover Manager will notify the SLT link on an ongoing day-to-day basis of any concerns, for example if a colleague is booked on a course but cover cannot be provided without using teachers.

The policy will be monitored by Deputy Headteacher responsible for CPD. It will be evaluated to ensure fair and consistent practice and reviewed by governors, following consultation with colleagues, on an annual basis.