Staff Sickness and Absence Policy March 2026 (Updates in red)

This Policy details the nursery's philosophy towards staff timekeeping, and the rules governing absence of employees from work which will include sickness, authorised and unauthorised absences.

TIME-KEEPING:

- Employees are required to attend punctually for work.
- Employees arriving late for work will have their wages / salary reduced accordingly, at the discretion of the SMT.
- Employees are not permitted to leave work before their finishing time without permission from a member of SMT.
- In the event of an employee requiring time away from the nursery during their normal shift hours then they must report back to work and continue their shifts without delay.
- Persistent lateness may constitute a breach of contract and may be subject to the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

ABSENCE:

- If a member of staff is unable to report for duty for any reason, they are required to notify a member of SMT on the Nursery phone number, before the start of the shift, ideally between 7.15am-7.30am. This is regardless of any previous communication, to ensure that the duty manager is aware of your absence and ensure that appropriate arrangements for cover are made.
- It is the responsibility of all employees to keep the nursery advised of the circumstances which prevent them from reporting for work, and of the likely duration of their absence. Ideally staff should let SMT know by 2pm on a day they are absent if they are likely to be absent or not the following day. If unsure, SMT will decide that they are to remain off until they are certain of their attendance.
- If an employee requires to be absent from work for reasons other than sickness, then prior permission must be obtained from the SMT. This request for cover for absence can be for the following reasons:
    - Jury duty or court appearances as a witness.
    - Medical appointments.
    - Compassionate leave for domestic/family reasons, bereavements etc.
- All periods of absence will be recorded in EyManage, and all sickness absences will go towards the individuals Bradford factor score, recorded in EyManage by SMT/ HR.
- Any period of unauthorised absence may be considered as a breach of contract.

SICKNESS

- All periods of absence for reasons of sickness lasting more than 7 calendar days must be supported by a GP's Medical Certificate which must be made available to the nursery at the earliest opportunity.
- Where periods of absence due to sickness extend beyond 7 days and are likely to be long-term, the employee is required to notify the nursery on a weekly basis thereafter and supply consecutive GP's certificates to cover the periods of absence.
- On return-to-work employees will complete a return-to-work review. This is so that the nature of the absence is fully understood including whether it is a work-related illness, and any changes required to reduce the risk of recurrence are understood. The other purpose is to ensure they are fit to return to work and any adjustments, such as returning on reduced hours or reduced physical exertion are considered to ensure a sustained recovery.

MONITORING OF SICKNESS

Employees who accrue numerous sick days regardless of whether certificated or not will be subject to the company discipline process using the Bradford Factor as a trigger for sickness reviews:

The Bradford factor scores are based on the frequency and length of an employee's absence during a 52-week period.

The formula used is:
$B = S^2 \times D$

Where:
B = Bradford factor score
S = total number of spells (instances) of absence for that individual in the given period
D = total number of days the individual was absent during the given period

The Nursery manager will use the following thresholds to trigger a sick review meeting:

51 points – consider verbal warning.
201 points – consider written warning
401 points – consider final warning
601 points – consider dismissal

This does not mean a verbal warning will automatically be given at 51 points or dismissal will automatically happen at 601 points; but it means that these actions will be considered and could be justifiable. Factors that will be considered are the nature of the illness, the likelihood of the employee's attendance improving, the impact the absence is having on colleagues and our ability to provide for our children.

LONG TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

Where absences have lasted over 10 working days or more, the SMT will contact the member of staff concerned to obtain an initial assessment of the problem and to offer assistance.

Where felt appropriate, after further assessment of the problem, a face-to-face meeting or telephone conference between SMT and the member of staff should be arranged to:

- 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
- Consider any personal problems being encountered and discuss possible ways of helping the individual resolve these

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. In these circumstances, the nursery will:

- Review the employee's absence record to assess whether or not it is sufficient to justify dismissal
- Consult the employee
- Advise the employee in writing as soon as it is established that termination of employment has become a possibility
- Meet with the employee to discuss the options and consider the employee's views on continuing employment
- Review if there are any other jobs that the employee could do prior to taking any decision on whether or not to dismiss
- Allow a right of appeal against any decision to dismiss the employee on grounds of long-term ill health
- Arrange a further meeting with the employee to determine any appeal
- Following this meeting, inform the employee of its final decision
- Always act reasonably towards the employee.
- Any decision to terminate employment will be taken by the SMT 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.

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. 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.

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.

Representation

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

SICK PAY

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be paid in accordance with statutory requirements and where eligible.

SICKNESS DURING ANNUAL LEAVE

Where an employee falls sick or is injured while on annual leave, the nursery will allow the employee to take sick leave and take the annual leave at a later time. This policy is subject to the following strict conditions:

- The employee must contact the SMT as soon as it is known known that there will be a period of incapacity during the pre-planned annual leave.
- The employee must submit a written request no later than five days after returning to work setting out how much of the annual leave period was affected by sickness and the amount of leave that the employee wishes to take at another time
- Where the employee is overseas when he/she falls sick or is injured, evidence must be produced that the employee was sick by way of either a medical certificate or proof of a claim on an insurance policy for medical treatment received at the overseas location.

Where the employee fulfils all the above conditions, we will allow the employee the same amount of annual leave as the amount lost due to sickness or injury.

SICKNESS BEFORE ANNUAL LEAVE

If an employee is ill or is injured before the start of a period of planned annual leave, we will agree to the employee postponing the annual leave dates to another mutually agreed time. Any period of sickness absence will then be treated in accordance with the employer's normal policy on sickness absence.

REPLACEMENT ANNUAL LEAVE DATES

Where it is agreed that an employee can take replacement annual leave at a later time, the employee should nominate replacement annual leave dates as soon as possible, with the dates being subject to the agreement of the employee's line manager in the usual way. Employees should endeavour to take any replacement annual leave within the same holiday year as the days lost because of sickness or injury. If part or all the annual leave is lost due to incapacity towards the end of the nursery's holiday year and there is insufficient time left during that year for the replacement annual leave to be taken, the employee will be permitted to carry over the replacement annual leave to the next holiday year. However, this leave must be taken as early in the new holiday year as possible.

SPECIAL LEAVE

Special Leave will be considered for staff when family circumstances could require time off work.

Serious illness/injury of an employee's immediate family:

This will be looked at on an individual basis and to agree a reasonable period of paid leave time initially, with additional unpaid leave if a significant amount of time off is required.

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. Generally, the amount of time off required will be at the SMT's discretion and will depend on individual circumstances but up to one working week paid leave would be considered.