



PROSPECT HOUSE
SCHOOL

ABSENCE OF STAFF POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2023

ABSENCE OF STAFF POLICY

Requisition and recording time off

The school uses a programme called 'HiBOB' (BOB) for staff to request time off work. All staff are required to use this platform to request any and all time off work, including sickness appointments. You will then receive notification whether your request has been approved. Emergencies are obviously an exception, but you will need to discuss this with the Deputy Head or the Head of Lower School. Where a staff member is absent for half a day or more, whether for sickness or any other reason other than school business, on return to school he or she must fill in the dates absent in BOB.

Please note that time off work will usually be unpaid

In the case where you have been absent from school, upon returning to school, you will need to fill this in on 'BOB'. The procedure will be the same as requesting time and will be submitted as a request, but this will obviously be automatically approved as you have been in on those days

Sickness

If a member of staff is ill and unable to come to work, he or she should contact the deputy head/head of Lower School (or other person stipulated in the relevant school's appendix to this policy) as soon as possible and give an indication of how long the absence is likely to last. In order that cover may be organised, the member of staff should contact the school the evening before the first day of absence by telephone to the deputy head's/head of Lower School's mobile number (appendix I) up to 9.30pm or, at the very latest, by 7.30am on the morning of the absence.

- If the illness is likely to be of no more than two days, the member of staff should contact the office before 4.00pm to communicate his or her intention to return the following day.
- The first five staff days of an illness are self-certificated; after that a doctor's fit note (statement of fitness for work) is always required. If a doctor's fit note is issued, this must be sent to school as soon as possible.

If a member of staff is absent for more than 7 calendar days due to illness or injury, he or she will need to give the school office a copy of a statement of fitness for work (now known as a fit note) provided by his or her doctor. Any fit note issued to an employee must be given to the school office without delay. If the fit note is issued in advance of the employee's return to work, the employee should email a soft copy of the note (one taken with a smart phone camera will suffice) to the school office as soon as possible after it is issued (usually on the same day), with a hard copy to follow by post or in person on return to work.

Where the returning member of staff is a member of a kitchen brigade or for any other reason may be handling food, and has suffered vomiting or diarrhoea, then the member of staff afflicted should as a minimum have been clear of symptoms for at least 48 hours. In the case of kitchen staff, the member of staff returning may not visit the kitchen until the self-certification form has been completed and the head or deputy head (or, if both these are absent, the senior school secretary) has counter-signed the form to show as signatory that he/she is content it is safe to permit the member of staff to return to food-handling duties. In the case of kitchen staff, one copy of the form should be placed on that employee's personnel file, one copy sent to the Bursary as a pdf and a third additional hard copy filed in the rear of the kitchen safety file/log.

Routine medical appointments

Routine dental and medical appointments must be made in the main or half-term holidays or after school hours.

Bereavement

Staff should inform the head as soon as possible if a bereavement prompts a request for compassionate leave. Each case is considered separately. As a general rule two staff days' paid compassionate leave will be allowed in the case of the death of a close family member. Depending on the individual circumstances, the head may grant additional unpaid leave. Only in very exceptional cases will the head (at his/her sole discretion) grant any additional paid leave.

Problems with care arrangements

Staff have a right under the general law to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work to take necessary action to deal with particular situations affecting those who depend on them (such as a spouse or partner, child, parent, grandparent or a person living in the same household as the member of staff excluding tenants, lodgers, boarders and employees). The law sets out the specific situations which are as follows:

- to provide assistance if a dependant falls ill, gives birth, is injured or assaulted;
- to arrange for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured;
- in consequence of the death of a dependant;
- to deal with the unexpected disruption, termination or breakdown of arrangements for the care of a dependant;
- to deal with an unexpected incident which involves the employee's child during school hours.

Other events are not covered and staff should note that the right to take time off is to deal with the immediate crisis, not to provide on-going care.

Staff with young children or other dependants are expected to make appropriate provision for their care and will not automatically be granted leave, paid or unpaid, to stay at home to care for them if they are unwell and unable to go to school or nursery or if care arrangements break down for one reason or another, unless the circumstances fall within the legal right described above. Staff should note that, in assessing the reasonableness of the need to take time off, the school is entitled to consider whether there is anyone else who shares care for the child, such as another parent, sibling, etc.

If a member of staff is caring for a dependant child or other dependant person who is ill, no claim to paid leave may be made on the false premise that the member of staff is him or herself ill. Such an untrue claim will, upon discovery, be treated as a very serious matter – a gross breach of trust – which would in almost all circumstances lead to a disciplinary procedure, which could result in a disciplinary sanction up to and including summary dismissal.

Individual cases should be discussed with the head and arrangements for staff with hospitalised or very seriously ill children or parents will always be treated compassionately.

The head may, at his/her sole discretion, grant up to two days' paid leave (in any rolling twelve-month period) for an employee to take time off to care for a dependant, in the situations described above. In exercising his/her discretion, the head will consider any circumstances which appear to him/her to be relevant, such as the reasons for the absence, the employee's previous absence record and what efforts the employee has made to avoid the absence.

Maternity, paternity, adoption, parental and shared parental leave

These types of leave are the subject of a separate policy – see the Maternity and Paternity Leave policy.

Jury service

In the interests of each member of staff (see "Salary during absence" below), if a member of staff should receive a summons to do jury service he or she must immediately consult the head who may ask the member of staff to apply for a deferral of service (until the school holidays), if the absence will have a serious impact on the school.

Absence to fulfil jury service in term time is unpaid (see the separate Jury Service policy).

Religious holidays

Should a religious day of observance fall in term time, the employee will need to speak to the head at least four weeks prior to the event should they wish to request time off work. Although there is no statutory right to time off work for religious reasons the school will endeavour to try and support requests where possible.

The school wishes to be as fair and, where possible, will try to grant requests for religious celebrations or days of observance; however it is not automatically granted. The following factors will need to be considered:

- the impact this will have on the children and their learning,
- the impact this will have their colleagues
- the impact this will have on the smooth running of the school

Please note that if a religious holiday falls on an important school event, greater consideration will need to be taken to this request and it may not be granted.

If permission is granted, for teachers who do not have annual leave, they will be allowed one paid religious day to celebrate or observe in an academic year and any further days taken will be unpaid. For those staff who are able to take annual leave, they will also be granted one day's paid leave for religious events. any additional days will need to be taken as annual leave.

Where several staff request the same time off for the same religious reason (for example, a particular religious festival), or other reasons having nothing to do with religion or belief, the school may not be able to grant this request.

Moving house

Staff should arrange to move house at weekends or during the school or half-term holidays. In exceptional circumstances a request for one day's paid leave on a staff day may be granted once in every three years and provided the applicant has completed a year's service; but staff should speak to the head before confirming arrangements. There is no automatic entitlement to a 'moving day'.

Inclement weather

Where there is exceptional disruption caused by heavy snowfall, the heads in consultation with the managing governor may decide to close one or more of the schools, in which case staff of a school so closed will be notified by SMS texts and the school's website and paid as normal. If, however, a school remains open during unusual inclement weather conditions, staff must make every effort possible to get to school consistent with avoiding any undue risk to personal safety. This may well mean a very early start to any staff member's journey, particularly for staff living a considerable distance from the school. Similarly, each school's head will do his/her best where feasible to release such members of staff earlier than usual in the afternoon to make the journey home. During such severe inclement weather, any member of staff facing the likelihood of a very difficult journey should consider whether he or she might be able temporarily to find accommodation closer to the school.

Where during inclement weather a school remains open but a member of staff is absent due to transport difficulties in getting to and from a school, there is no obligation on the school to pay the member of staff so absent.

Upon the request by a head to the Bursary, a discretionary payment may be made to such a member of staff absent on a day when the school was open and the staff member had been unable to travel to the school due to inclement weather. Any such discretionary payments will in any event be limited to a maximum of two days in any rolling twelve month period, ie any member of staff absent for more than two days due to adverse weather conditions when a school remains open will not be eligible for any further discretionary payments in this connection.

Job interviews

Members of staff who are candidates for jobs offered by other employers are expected to ensure that interviews are fixed for times that cause no or minimal disruption or inconvenience to the school. The head must be consulted before a member of staff confirms any arrangements.

Time off during term time

Time taken off during term time for any reason, other than the reasons listed above, permission must be sought from and the leave authorised by the head. Members of staff should assume that such leave will be granted only in unusual circumstances and that it will normally be unpaid.

Salary during absence

The standard conditions of employment, forming part of each member of staff's contract, explain clearly the payment arrangements for absence due to sickness and for any other reason. Broadly, absence on days that are not staff days does not affect pay at all, but unpaid absence on a staff day results in a deduction at a rate found by dividing the annual salary by the number of days worked in the year.



PHS APPENDIX I – Staff absence due to illness or any other reason

It is **essential** that the school is made aware of a staff member's absence with as much notice as possible, so that effective cover may be put into place with the minimum of disruption to the school overall

- If on the evening before a school day it is apparent to a member of staff at the school that he or she will not be fit to arrive for work the following day, then he or she should telephone or text the deputy head, Ms Deborah Lane on 07951 678129 or head of Lower School, Mrs Sarah Belshaw on 07769 350981. They will always respond that evening with a phone call or text to confirm he has received the message. If this response is not received staff should follow the procedure below until their message is acknowledged.
- If the deputy head does not respond, please call the head, Mrs Kelly Gray on her mobile 07919 358197. Again, a text message may also be sent to this mobile number.
- On such an evening and if no response can be obtained from, Ms Lane, Mrs Belshaw or Mrs Gray, if necessary a message may also be left on the school's answering machine (tel: 020 8780 0456) and an e-mail to info@prospecths.org.uk, copied to kelly.gray@prospecths.org.uk and also to deborah.lane@prospecths.org.uk and sarah.belshaw@prospecths.org.uk will also be helpful. In such circumstances, please nonetheless also call again the next morning and ensure that a message is left with the office or the deputy head.
- If the absence is only apparent on the morning of the day in question, please telephone or text the deputy head, Ms Deborah Lane or Mrs Sarah Belshaw as early as possible between 7.00 and 7.30am. If it is not possible to reach Ms Lane or Mrs Belshaw please follow the same procedure as above.
- Where a message has been left only on an answering machine, the member of staff absent should persist in attempting to contact the head, deputy head, head of Lower School or school secretaries until he or she has made contact with one of these
- In reporting an absence, each member of staff in his or her report should make every effort to provide a best estimate of when he or she is likely to return to work and where there is any departure from this estimate, notify without fail at the earliest opportunity the staff listed above

