



## **Managing Sickness/Absence Policy and Procedure**

### **Statement of intent**

Crofton Early Learners believes that employees are its most valuable resource and recognises the important contribution made by regular attendance at work to maintain high levels of service to the community.

Whilst CEL strives to achieve 100% attendance, it recognises that employees will have occasional absence. The aim of this policy and procedure is to help the Leader to minimise these occasions and provide a structured approach to managing absence.

Managing absence is not only about ensuring that employees do not take time off work unless they have a genuine reason, it is also about providing a healthy working environment and promoting and encouraging a healthy approach towards life.

### **2. PRINCIPLES**

2.1 As part of the induction process, new staff will be advised by the Leader of the arrangements in place covering the different types of leave that are available to them whilst employed by CEL

2.2 This policy recognises that day to day attendance management issues are best handled on an individual, one-to-one basis and the person best placed to do this is the line manager. An integral part of the line manager's responsibility is to maintain accurate record keeping in order to develop a fair and consistent managerial approach to work attendance.

2.3 CEL has adopted procedures to address circumstances where support will be provided to staff needing to take time off, for example to deal with a bereavement, childcare or other carer emergencies etc. The Leader and Trustees will act with sympathy and discretion when reconciling the immediate needs of the service with the needs of staff in times of personal difficulty.

2.4 Staff work during for 36 weeks during school term times. It is therefore expected that staff will take personal leave during school holidays. Holidays during term times will be at the discretion of the Leader – and generally only permitted in exceptional circumstances and availability of staff cover.

### **3. PURPOSE**

3.1 This policy and procedure is designed to set out the parameters for managing sickness absence, informing both staff and the Leader of their responsibilities.

3.2 It is also designed to provide a fair and consistent method of dealing with a poor attendance record; whether this is repeated periods of incidental absence, short-term or long-term absences, ensuring that the Leader operates within CEL's Procedure, giving staff the opportunity to improve poor attendance to an acceptable standard, by advising staff of the effects their absence may be having within their service, and the potential consequences if there is no improvement.

3.3 It is essential that every reasonable attempt is made to investigate an employee's ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of their post, seeking where necessary.

3.4 Before a decision to terminate an employee's contract is made all other options will be considered, including rehabilitation, phased return, or a return to work with or without adjustments.

### **4. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

4.1 CEL believes that unauthorised absences from work (absence where no prior agreement has been arranged between manager and staff) poor punctuality or failure to follow appropriate reporting procedures, are not good for staff morale and can have a negative effect on the children for whom they keywork, as well as having a detrimental effect on the performance of the individual. It is therefore considered unacceptable. Such behaviour is likely to be deemed a conduct issue and CEL may therefore take formal action in line with its Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

4.2 Where staff fail to comply with the terms of this Policy and Procedure and absences are deemed as being unauthorised, this may result in salaries being suspended and/or deducted throughout the period of the unauthorised absence.

## Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Staff: Child ratios

Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety

### 5. SICKNESS ABSENCE

5.1 CEL believes it is in the interests of staff and children that sick leave should be taken when a member of staff is unfit to carry out their duties.

5.2 Sick Leave is time off that is either paid or unpaid as set out in the contractual terms, to ensure recuperation during and after illness.

5.3 Although staff will not normally work when they are unwell, in cases of long term sickness or disability, there are circumstances when staff will be encouraged to return to work on a phased or planned basis as part of their recuperation.

### 6. RETURN TO WORK

6.1 The Leader is responsible for ensuring that staff have a return to work discussion on their first day back at work or as soon as possible thereafter. The purpose of the return to work discussion is:

- to talk about the reasons for their absence
- to ensure that the individual is well enough to resume work to determine any underlying cause for the absence which may require further investigation
- to determine whether any reasonable adjustment is required to support the member of staff's return to work
- to provide the employee with an opportunity to raise any concerns with their line manager in a confidential setting
- to ensure that self-certification documentation has been completed and/or medical certificates supplied, if appropriate.

6.2 Wherever practical, return to work discussions, which should reflect a supportive approach from the line manager, should be achieved through a face to face meeting.

### 7. SICKNESS REPORTING AND MONITORING

7.1 All staff have a responsibility to attend work regularly, on time and in a fit state to carry out their duties. If unable to do so, staff must follow CEL's procedure for reporting sickness. Staff must notify the Leader as soon as possible when they know that they are not fit for work and unless there are exceptional circumstances this must be no later than 8am on the day they are due to work. In all but exceptional circumstances (e.g. hospitalisation) staff must report their absence personally to the Leader, providing an estimated length of absence where possible and brief details of the reason for their absence.

7.2 Any unreasonable failure of staff to notify the Leader of their absence may be regarded as unauthorised absence which is a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with under CEL's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and may impact on pay.

7.3 The Leader has a responsibility to maintain attendance records and to monitor them on a regular basis. It is important that the Leader checks that self-certification forms and doctor's certificates are submitted in a timely manner.

7.4 Staff who are absent for more than seven consecutive days (including days which are not normally worked) must obtain a medical certificate from their doctor which should be sent to the Leader as soon as possible. The submission of medical certificates to cover periods of absence does not prevent a review of an employee's attendance record as the focus of the policy and procedure is based upon capability as opposed to validity of illness.

7.5 Any failure to provide appropriate medical certification for periods of sickness absence may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter under CEL's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and may result in stopping pay if the member of staff is salaried.

7.6 Welfare of staff within CEL is important. Staff should therefore expect to receive contact from the Leader during their sickness absence to ensure they feel supported and that their welfare needs are met. This will normally be through telephone contact but home visits may also be arranged in some cases.

7.7 Whilst off sick, staff have a responsibility to help their own recovery and should not undertake any activity whilst absent from work through sickness which could hinder their recovery and subsequent return to work e.g. taking part in any sports or other activities which may aggravate their illness.

## Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Staff: Child ratios

Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety

7.9 If medical certificates cover a period exceeding 14 days or staff have had to obtain more than one medical certificate during their period of sickness absence, they must, before returning to work, submit a final medical certificate to the Leader confirming that they are fit to resume their duties.

### **8. TIME OFF FOR MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS**

8.1 Wherever possible medical (hospital and GP) and dental appointments should be made outside working hours. If this is not possible they should be made at a time least disruptive to the working day for example first thing in the morning or late morning. Staff should make every effort to return to work as soon as their appointment is finished. However, CEL will adopt a flexible approach for staff who are unable to influence appointments systems and cannot therefore comply with this requirement.

8.2 Staff must give as much notice as possible of medical appointments or treatments and the Leader may ask staff to produce an appointment letter or similar to verify attendance.

### **9. CRITERIA FOR INSTIGATING A REVIEW OF SICKNESS ABSENCE UNDER THE ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE**

9.1 If the Leader believes a member of staff has an unacceptable level of absence, a review of the attendance record and the reasons for it should be conducted with the individual. In doing so, the Leader should exercise discretion throughout the process and give full consideration to any individual circumstances, particularly to health problems.

9.2 The Leader will review attendance with any member of staff whose absence rate can be categorised as follows:-

- Short term Absence: a total of 10 days or more or 3 incidents of absence (pro rata for part time staff) in a rolling 12 month period.
- Long term Absence: a single episode of 2 continuous weeks or more.

9.3 Whilst the above review points act as a benchmark, managers retain the right to meet with staff whose sickness absence is cause for concern.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of

Held on

Date to be reviewed

CROFTON EARLY LEARNERS

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27 June 2019

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May 2022

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