



## Sickness absence

This policy and procedure applies where you are absent from work for a health-related reason and includes being off sick for both frequent short periods or long periods of time.

**Short term sickness absence is defined as absence where there are frequent short periods of absence. Examples include (but are not limited to) viral illnesses such as colds and flu.**

**Long term sickness is defined as absence where there is a longer period(s) of absence. It usually occurs with a higher number of days of sickness absence but over few episodes. Examples include (but are not limited to) significant medical conditions such as clinical depression, back conditions/injuries, multiple sclerosis, and breaks or fractures to bones.**

If a member of staff is not able to attend work because of illness, they must notify the manager or their nominee as early as possible on the first day of their illness. If they are physically able they should telephone them providing details of the nature of the illness and the likely duration.

If a member of staff is absent for more than one calendar week it is expected that they would maintain contact with the manager via text message, telephone or email to ensure that relations remain. The member of staff will need to submit a medical statement of fitness for work (fit note), signed by a registered doctor and with a reason for absence. The fit note may explain that the member of staff is not fit for work or if they are fit for work it may indicate whether they are able to carry out certain aspects of their role.

After each and every episode of sickness absence there will be a return to work interview between the member of staff and manager as early as possible on the day of return which will take place prior to working with the children, if possible. Staff will be notified of this interview via email or letter and will be expected to confirm attendance. The aim of this meeting is to enable the manager to identify any factors that might be contributing to the absence and any preventative measures or support required. If absence re-occurs prior to the return to work interview it is expected that the member of staff will communicate with the manager to explain this.

If a member of staff is absent for more than four calendar weeks, it is expected that they remain in weekly contact with the manager as stated above. This would not be to determine their planned date of return but to ensure that staff feel informed and updated about any changes within the Pre-

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school. Absent staff must appreciate that due to the nature of the ratios involved, and the small team, their key children may be placed under the care of alternative staff and this may become a permanent change. Everything that staff work for is about the impact and benefit to the children and it is strongly felt that upheaval and changes can be detrimental to the children. The return-to-work process will continue at the end of each cycle (depending on length of the fit note and outcome – the date of this will determine the date of interview).

If absence continues past three months it becomes increasingly difficult to retain the hours staff are contracted to, for the reasons set out above. At this point, the Committee may question the likelihood of the member of staff returning and it is hoped that member of staff in question would be forthcoming in their possibility of return. At this stage we would ask the member of staff to attend a meeting to discuss possibility of return or phased hours/gradual return. This is not to determine a planned date but to discuss the likelihood of return at all. There may be no final outcome to this meeting. It is possible that staff hours are reduced or roles/responsibilities are removed as the preschool is such a small yet busy environment. The return-to-work interview process will continue as above.

At all stages it is hoped that staff will continue to communicate with the manager and to be honest and realistic about their absence and return.

After a prolonged absence, staff will attend a return-to-work meeting with the manager and Chair of Committee. This is essential prior to any return as staff will need an opportunity to discuss changes and plans. Gradual or phased returns will be discussed on an individual basis. If staff leave after a prolonged absence this meeting will still take place, as an exit interview. This will enable staff and management to receive feedback from both parties about the procedure and its outcome. At each stage staff are advised to attend with someone to support them.

### **COVID-19**

There is no longer a legal requirement for people with COVID-19 infection to self-isolate. The requirement to take a test to confirm they have COVID is only for specific groups of health and social care staff. For all other staff groups it is expected that should staff become unwell they are asked to stay away from their workplace for 48hrs post the end of their symptoms (particularly if they have a fever, D&V, respiratory symptoms) irrespective of a COVID test to prevent any onward transmission of any communicable disease.

The public health advice is to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

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