

# Compassionate and Parental Bereavement Leave Policy - Schools

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<b>Document History</b>	
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<b>Version control</b>	<b>Reviewers</b>
Version 1.0	Initial draft – October 2018
Version 1.1	Draft – February 2019 following HR professionals’ feedback
Version 1.2	Agreed by Schools Joint Forum on 23 April 2020 to include Parental Bereavement changes as per changes in Employment Law
	To be reviewed when changes are needed in line with government updates.

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## 1. Objectives and scope

- 1.1 The purpose of compassionate leave is to help employees come to terms with a bereavement, to care for sick dependants, accompany dependants to certain appointments or provide emergency care for a dependant where regular arrangements have broken down. It may also be used to come to terms with severe personal problems or the injury or critical illness of an immediate family member.
- 1.2 The Council recognises that, while dealing with any bereavement is difficult, the death of a child is among the most devastating events that an employee can ever face. This policy sets out the Council's commitment to supporting bereaved parents through their grief by ensuring they can take parental bereavement leave (see Section 4)
- 1.3 The provisions apply to all employees, irrespective of length of service.
- 1.4 Headteachers have delegated authority to grant compassionate leave and may delegate this within their service. They will be responsible for ensuring consistency within their service.
- 1.5 Headteachers should contact HR for support and advice on the application of this policy if needed.
- 1.6 The amount of time off stated within this policy is the normal expectation. It may be appropriate to take other leave (annual leave, flexi time, time off in lieu or unpaid leave as appropriate) or a combination depending on the circumstances.
- 1.7 Headteachers may grant additional paid or unpaid leave in exceptional circumstances. The reason for the decision must be recorded.
- 1.8 It is recognised that it may not always be possible to complete the Compassionate Leave Request Form prior to needing to take the leave. In these circumstances it should be completed on return to work.
- 1.9 In the first instance, employees should discuss intentions with direct Line Managers. Managers should take account of the individual circumstances and practicalities which includes those arising from faith and cultural observances and practices when discussing the request with the Headteacher.

## 2 Definitions

- 2.1 **Immediate family member:** the employee's spouse, civil partner, partner, parent, child, sibling or grandparent.
- 2.2 **Dependant:** the employee's spouse, civil partner, child, parent and any person who lives at the same house (other than as a lodger, tenant, boarder or

employee) or someone who would reasonably rely on the employee for assistance or arrangements for care in the event of illness or injury.

- 2.3 **Child:** son, daughter or ward, including step, adoptive and foster children.
- 2.4 **Close relative or friend, who is not a dependant:** includes aunt, uncle, cousin, parent-in-law or a close friend.
- 2.5 The time granted will be pro-rata of the employee's weekly contractual hours
- 2.6 A year for the purpose of this policy is September to July for the academic year.
- 2.7 Unpaid leave does not constitute a break in service.
- 2.8 Care for Dependants includes:
- To accompany a sick dependant or a dependant with a disability to medical or professional appointments such as GP, hospital, clinic or dentist.
  - To care for a sick dependant. This covers a dependant falling ill, giving birth (link to Maternity Support Leave), being injured or assaulted or where arrangements need to be made to provide the care.
  - To care for a dependant as an emergency when regular care is unexpectedly disrupted.
  - To deal with an emergency relating to the employee's child that occurs unexpectedly at the child's school.
- 2.9 Compassionate leave may also be requested to come to terms with severe personal problems. This could include for example significant concerns such as serious financial issues, a house fire or serious flood (see Section 6).

### **3 Compassionate Leave - Bereavement**

- 3.1 In the event of the death of an immediate family member, dependant or close relative or close friend, an employee can request up to 5 days paid leave.
- 3.2 The Headteacher will take account of the individual circumstances, relationship with the deceased, domestic responsibilities and travel requirements when deciding how many days to grant. Additional paid leave may be granted at the discretion of the Headteacher, for example if the employee is responsible for making funeral arrangements, an extra 5 days can be granted. The reason for the decision must be recorded.
- 3.3 If the employee is unfortunate to have a further bereavement during the academic year, a further request for up to 5 days paid leave can be made for each additional bereavement.

## 4 Compassionate Leave - Parental Bereavement

- 4.1 A new right for bereaved parents came into effect from April 2020 which allows parents of a child under the age of 18 who has died to take two weeks' paid leave. This includes parents who suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy.
- 4.2 The School recognises the need to provide bereaved parents with as much support as possible and will continue to pay normal pay during the two weeks' leave (this is not in addition to normal bereavement leave - see section 3 above).
- 4.3 It will be available to the birth parents or those with parental responsibility for the child and can be taken within 56 weeks of the child's death, in a block of two weeks, or two blocks of one week. The leave cannot be taken as individual days.
- 4.4 If employees wish to take parental bereavement leave within the first 56 days after a bereavement, they can take the leave straight away and do not have to provide any notice. Employees should let their line manager know as soon as they can. If the leave is to be taken in two separate blocks, employees should give at least one week's notice of their intention to take the second week's leave. Additional paid leave may be granted at the discretion of the relevant Headteacher. The reason for the decision must be recorded.

## 5 Compassionate Leave – Care for Dependants

- 5.1 A maximum of 5 days paid leave in a year can be requested to care for dependants.
- 5.2 For leave to *accompany a dependant* to an appointment, the employee will be required to provide their manager with an appointment letter, card or screenshot. They should give as much notice as possible, unless it is an emergency. If evidence cannot be provided, then annual leave or unpaid leave should be taken. Where appointments can be arranged outside the employees normal working hours, compassionate leave will not be granted.
- 5.3 For leave to *care for a sick dependant*, the employee will be required to provide a doctor's certificate confirming the need for assistance. The School will reimburse the cost of this when it is accompanied with a receipt.
- 5.4 In circumstances of *disrupted care or emergency related to school*, the employee should make every reasonable effort to make alternative arrangements. If that is not possible and leave is requested, the employee will be required to provide evidence.

## **6 Compassionate Leave – Severe Personal Problems**

- 6.1 This leave can be requested up to a maximum of 5 days paid leave days in a year. Severe personal problems could include for example significant concerns such as serious financial issues, a house fire or serious flood.

## **7 Appeals**

- 7.1 In the first instance, an appeal should be made to the appropriate Vice Chair of Governors. If an individual is still unhappy, or if the leave requested was in excess of what was provided for in the policy, then they may appeal to their Chair of Governors. This process should ensure that a decision is arrived at as soon as possible.
- 7.2 Employees who wish to raise a concern about the application of this policy are advised to seek the support of their trade union representative if they are a member. If this situation occurs, an employee can raise their concern using the Grievance Policy.
- 7.3 Employees are also encouraged to contact HR for guidance regarding compassionate and parental bereavement leave.

## **8 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

- 8,1 The Employee Assistance Programme is available to employees. It is available 24/7, 365 days a year to support employees with a variety of issues. To access the EAP, please call 0800 243 458. You will be asked where you work and you should say 'Reading Borough Council'.

E-MAIL: [assistance@workplaceoptions.com](mailto:assistance@workplaceoptions.com)

WEBSITE: <http://tiny.cc/ReadingEAP>

# Compassionate Leave Request Form

\*\*\*CONFIDENTIAL\*\*\*

This form should be completed by the requesting employee and forwarded to their line manager.

Name: .....

Job Title: .....

Dates Leave Requested: From: ..... To: .....

Number of Days or Hours requested:.....

Number of Days or Hours to be paid and/or unpaid:

Paid: ..... Unpaid: .....

Reason for Leave (*tick as appropriate*)

Bereavement Leave	
Parental Bereavement Leave	
Accompany dependant	
Care for Sick Dependant	
Regular Care Disrupted	
Emergency relating to School	
Severe Personal Problems	

Employee's signature:.....

Date:.....

Leave Granted?  Yes  (tick as appropriate)

Number of Days or Hours granted: Paid ..... Unpaid .....

Headteacher with delegated authority's brief comments on reason for decision:

.....

Name of Headteacher with delegated authority, please print:.....

Signature: ..... Date:.....

**Actions now needed:**

**EMPLOYEE - Forward a signed copy of the request form to your manager.**  
**LINE MANAGER - get sign off from Headteacher and forward the request for compassionate leave or unpaid leave to the School Business Manager/Bursar to process.**