



Staffing Policy

The pre-school values all its practitioners and recognises that they are one of the most valuable assets of the setting.

We require all practitioners to abide by our policies at all times and to sign to say they have read any reviewed policies. All practitioners are required to bring any concerns or queries about policies to the immediate attention of the Pre-school Manager. All policies are reviewed annually.

Staff ratios

We provide a high practitioner ratio to ensure that children have sufficient individual attention and to guarantee care and education of a high quality. OFSTED dictates the following ratios of adult to child:

- children two years of age: 1 adult: 4 children
- children three–five years of age: 1 adult: 8 children

However, we aim to offer a higher ratio of 1 adult: 6 children three–five years of age.

We use a Key Person system to ensure that each child and each family has a member of the practitioner team to link with to share information about their child on a regular basis. Parents will be notified of the child's Key Person on joining the pre-school.

Staff recruitment and selection

Our practitioner team are appropriately qualified and are checked for criminal records through the Disclosure and Barring Service in accordance with OFSTED's requirements. (See Employment Policy.)

Staff training and qualifications

The Pre-school Manager and both Room Leaders will hold a minimum Level 3 Qualification appropriate for the care and development of children.

As required by OFSTED, a minimum 50% of our practitioner team will hold a Level 2 Qualification appropriate for the care and development of children. But the pre-school encourages all practitioners to be qualified up to this minimum requirement.

The Pre-school SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) will receive regular training to support their role.

The pre-school will only fund training up to OFSTED requirements, including course costs and overtime if required. Relevant training beyond OFSTED requirements may be funded at the discretion of the Committee. However, practitioners are encouraged to maintain their professional development through regular training, and the Committee will help to facilitate this.

All practitioners are expected to undergo First Aid and Safeguarding training, with refresher courses being completed at least every three years. The pre-school will fund overtime and the costs of these courses.

Dress code

All members of the practitioner team will be provided with a St Marks Pre-school uniform and name badge when working in rooms with the children. Members of the Bank practitioner team will be provided with a St Marks Pre-school tabard and name badge.

All practitioners are expected to wear suitable clothes for the job at all times. This will include making sure that shoulders are covered with wide straps and underwear is not visible when practitioners lean over. Footwear should also be suitable and should cover the feet and toes. Flip-flops and open toed sandals are not allowed as they may leave practitioners open to injury. It is expected that long hair will be tied back.

Protection of practitioner team

We expect all children and parents involved in our setting to respect the rights of our practitioners not to suffer abuse, either verbal or physical. Anyone who does not respect this basic right may be subject to exclusion from the building, the setting or, in extreme cases, to prosecution.

Absences and compassionate leave

All practitioners take their annual leave when the setting is closed.

If practitioners require compassionate leave, a written request must be made to the Committee. Requests will not automatically be granted, and no assumptions should ever be made.

If leave is needed at short notice or if practitioners are unable to attend work due to illness or other medical condition, they must contact the Pre-school Manager prior to the start of the working day, giving as much notice as possible so a replacement can be organised. In the case of the Pre-school Manager not being reachable they must contact the Chair. Practitioners should indicate why they are unable to attend work and when they expect to return.

(A written explanation of the reasons for the leave may be requested after the event.)

Frequent and persistent short-term absences will be investigated promptly, and the employee will be asked for an explanation at a return to work interview.

Please refer to Appendix 1 'Short-Term and Long-Term Absences' for the full policy.

If it is found that time during an absence has been used for reasons other than those originally stated to the Committee or Pre-school Manager, this will be thoroughly investigated and may lead to disciplinary procedures.

The Pre-school Manager will keep records of all sick leave, other absences and lateness.

Return to work interviews

A return to work interview will be conducted, if necessary, by the Pre-school Committee and Pre-school Manager for frequent and persistent short-term absences and long-term absences.

The return to work interview gives the opportunity to:

- Check that the employee is fit to return to work and agree any actions, such as short-term changes to working arrangements to facilitate the return to work.
- Complete an absence form and review the attendance record of the employee.
- Ensure the appropriate certificates have been submitted covering their absence.
- Discuss any medical, work or domestic problems that may exist.

For absences of longer than seven days, a doctor's certificate must be submitted to the Pre-school Committee.

Statutory sick pay (SSP)

Statutory sick pay (SSP) is payable to employees who are unable to work through illness or injury for at least four calendar days – this is called a period of incapacity for work (PIW).

Please refer to Appendix 2 'Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)' for the full policy.

Jury service and witnesses

Employees called for jury service should inform the Pre-school Manager.

Employees will continue to receive their adjusted salary during jury service less any allowance paid by the Court for loss of earnings.

Employees should claim all allowances available from the Court and forward a statement from the Court to the Pre-school Manager giving the times and days they were required. A deduction will be made from the employee's salary for any allowance that they receive from the Court. Employees should attend work on any days or half days when they are not required by the Court.

The same arrangements apply for witness attendance in the course of civic duty and in the event an employee is compelled by a Court to attend. However, if an employee's attendance in Court is on a voluntary basis, the employee will be required to take any day when they are needed in Court as unpaid leave.

Time off for dependants

All employees, including those on short-term contracts, are entitled to take a reasonable amount of time off work to deal with unexpected or sudden emergencies involving a dependant.

A dependant is a husband, wife, partner, civil partner, child or parent. It also includes someone who lives in the same household as a member of the family (other than an employee, tenant, lodger or a boarder).

The circumstances in which employees can take time off are:

- if a dependant falls ill, gives birth or has been injured or assaulted;
- to deal with the death of a dependant;
- to deal with an unexpected disruption or breakdown of care arrangements for a dependant;
- to deal with an unexpected incident involving an employee's child during school hours.

APPENDIX 1

Short-term absences

Frequent and persistent short-term absences will be investigated promptly, and the employee will be asked for an explanation at a return to work interview.

If there is no acceptable reason, then the matter will be treated as a conduct issue and dealt with under the pre-school's disciplinary procedure.

Where there is no medical certificate to support frequent short-term, self-certified, absences then the employee will be asked to see a doctor to establish whether treatment is necessary and whether the underlying reason for the absence is work-related. If no medical support is forthcoming, the Pre-school Committee will consider whether to take action under the disciplinary procedure.

If the absence could be disability related, the Pre-school Committee will consider what reasonable adjustments could be made in the workplace to help the employee.

In all cases the employee will be told what improvement in attendance is expected and warned of the likely consequences if this does not happen. If there is no improvement, the employee's length of service, performance, the likelihood of a change in attendance, the availability of suitable alternative work, and the effect of past and future absences on the pre-school will all be taken into account in deciding appropriate action.

Long-term absences

Long-term sickness absence is defined as extensive absence due to serious or significant illness covering a prolonged period, e.g. four weeks or more.

The following steps will be taken when considering the problem of long-term absence:

- the employee and the pre-school should keep in regular contact with each other;
- the employee will be kept fully informed if there is any risk to employment.

Third party confirmation

If the pre-school wishes to contact the employee's doctor or other specialist treating them for a medical report, the pre-school will notify the employee in writing that they intend to make such an application and they must secure the employee's consent in writing. The employee will be informed that they have:

- the right to withhold consent to the application being made;
- the right to state that they wish to have access to the report;
- the right to withhold consent to the report being supplied to the employer;
- the right to request amendments to the report.

Employees' access to the report

Where the employee states that they wish to have access to the report, the pre-school must let the GP know this when making the application and at the same time let the employee know that the report has been requested:

- the employee must contact the GP within 21 days of the date of application to make arrangements to see the report;
- if the employee considers the report to be incorrect or misleading, the employee may make a written request to the GP to make appropriate amendments.

If the GP refuses, the employee has the right to ask the GP to attach a statement to the report reflecting the employee's view on any matters of disagreement.

The employee may withhold consent to the report being supplied to the pre-school.

Pre-school considerations

On the basis of the GP's report the pre-school will consider whether alternative work is available.

The pre-school is not expected to create a special job for the employee concerned, nor to be a medical expert, but will take action on the basis of the medical evidence.

Where there is a reasonable doubt about the nature of the illness or injury, the employee will be asked if they would agree to be examined by a doctor to be appointed by the pre-school.

Where an employee refuses to cooperate in providing medical evidence, or to undergo an independent medical examination, the employee will be told in writing that a decision will be taken on the basis of the information available and that it could result in dismissal.

Where the employee's job can no longer be held open, and no suitable alternative work is available, the employee will be informed of the likelihood of dismissal.

APPENDIX 2

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

Statutory sick pay (SSP) is payable to employees who are unable to work through illness or injury for at least four calendar days – this is called a period of incapacity for work (PIW).

To qualify for SSP an employee must:

- be sick for four or more calendar days in a row;
- notify the Pre-school Manager of their absence in accordance with normal procedures. However, for SSP purposes, the pre-school cannot insist that the employee notify the pre-school in person or earlier than the first qualifying day in a spell of sickness or by a fixed time on the first qualifying day or more than once a week during the sickness absence, but failure to notify the pre-school in accordance with normal procedures may result in payment of SSP being withheld for the period of the delay;
- provide evidence of their inability to work;
- have earnings that attract liability for employer's Class 1 National Insurance Contributions (NIC) or would if they were high enough;
- have average weekly earnings equal to or more than the current lower earnings limit during the relevant period, the relevant period being the eight weeks leading up to the last payday before they went off sick.

Categories of employees excluded from claiming SSP include:

- short-term contract workers on a specified three-month contract, who have not had a previous contract with the pre-school and have been working with the pre-school for less than three months;
- new employees who have not actually done any work for the pre-school yet;
- employees who are taking part in a trade dispute on the first day of their PIW;
- employees in legal custody on the first day of their PIW;
- employees in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance, Maternity Allowance.

SSP will be paid at the current rates up to a maximum of 28 weeks in any period of illness. Employees will only be able to claim SSP for days counted as 'qualifying days'. These are the days the employee normally works. To claim SSP the employee must have been ill for at least four days in a row, including weekends and bank holidays. The days that count for this need not all be qualifying days. The first three qualifying days of any illness count as 'waiting days'. So if an employee is ill for no more than four days, SSP is payable for the fourth qualifying day only.

Any two PIWs that are less than eight weeks apart are linked and treated as one PIW. Linking PIWs must each be at least four days long – odd days off sick do not accumulate to make a whole. Income tax and employee's NIC are still applicable to SSP.

If SSP runs out, or an employee is not entitled to it but their PIW has been at least four days long, form SSP1 will be given to them so that they can claim Employment and Support Allowance.

Eligible employees will be entitled to SSP only and no contractual sick pay will apply.