



Sickness Absence Policy (Staff)

Toddington Childcare and Forest School is committed to maintaining the health, well-being and attendance of all our employees. We value the contribution our staff make to our success and we miss that contribution when any employee is unable to work. The overall aim of this policy is to strike an effective balance between the operational needs of Toddington Childcare and Forest School and those of the employee, giving time to recover.

This policy sets out:

What employees can expect from Toddington Childcare and Forest School

What responsibilities employees have in relation to their attendance at work

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide a Framework and formal guidelines within which Toddington Childcare and Forest School will address sickness absence, in order to ensure all employees are treated fairly and consistently.

The policy applies to all employees and a copy will be given to all new employees as part of their Staff Induction. This policy does not apply to accidents at work.

Principles:

This absence policy is based on the following principles:

Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee's contract of employment and we ask each employee to take responsibility for maintaining good attendance and reporting absence accordingly in the procedures set out below and in the Staff Handbook.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will ensure that short and long term sickness is dealt with in accordance with relevant Legislation and the Arbitration Conciliation Advisory Service (ACAS) Code of Practice.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will calculate Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) as appropriate with the Early Years Alliance payroll team. .

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will monitor levels of sickness and absence for all employees.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will seek to identify any action which can be taken to improve working conditions and promote the health, safety and well-being of employees.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School recognises that sickness absence may relate to mental health and will provide appropriate support, including access to well-being discussions and reasonable adjustments where required.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will work with employees to identify any practical solutions in order to reduce absence levels.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will support employees with genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will seek consent to access medical reports and advice in order to decide the best way forward.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will respect the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee's sickness and store information in line with all Data Protection Legislation.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will be sensitive to the fact that an employee may not feel able to discuss their medical problems with their Manager and may wish to make alternative arrangements if necessary e.g. arrange for the employee to discuss health problems with a member of the Parent Management Committee.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will use the Disciplinary Procedure if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory. No employee will be dismissed on the grounds of sickness absence without due warning and the appropriate procedure being followed.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will treat sickness absence as a result of disability in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Procedures:

Absence Reporting Procedure

Employees should follow the reporting procedures outlined in their contract of Employment and Staff Handbook.

Notification

Notification of absence from work due to illness must be given to the Setting Manager or Deputy Manager by telephone at 7.30am and as early as possible if working Breakfast Club. Where possible notification should be made the previous day to enable cover to be arranged. In the event the Setting Manager is not available, a message should be left on the office telephone (01525 875400). When giving notification of absence, the employee should give a clear indication of the nature of the illness and the likely date of return to work.

Certification

Sickness certificates are required for all absences and should cover all calendar days, including work days, weekends, public holidays and any days not normally worked by the member of staff.

Day 1 to Day 7

Employees may self-certificate for up to 7 days. These days include weekends and non-working days.

Day 8 onwards

Periods of sickness in excess of seven days must be covered by a Medical Certificate signed by a doctor, commencing on the eighth day of the illness, irrespective of days which would normally have been worked. This must be received by the Setting Manager within 3 working days. Consecutively dated medical certificates must be received for the full sickness period. Absence which is not continuously covered by a Self-Certification Form, Medical Certificate or In-Patient Certificate, may be treated as unauthorised absence and could be treated with using the Disciplinary Policy.

Sent Home

Employees who leave work early because they feel unwell, must inform the Setting Manager before they leave the Setting.

Where employees have not completed their full shift they will only be paid for hours worked. A Self Certification Form must be completed for this absence.

Statutory Sick Pay is calculated in accordance with HMRC rules and applies to qualifying days rather than hours worked.

Employees on sick leave will continue to accrue Statutory Annual Leave and may request to take annual leave during periods of sickness absence in accordance with Setting procedures.

Medical, Dental or Optician Appointments

Where possible, staff are expected to arrange routine medical, dental or optician appointments outside of their normal working hours. Where this cannot be avoided, time taken to attend these appointments will ordinarily be treated as unpaid sickness/medical leave, or staff may make up the time during normal working hours, if their contracted hours and staff rotas allow. For example; this may be cover for staff sickness or using a non-working day to cover another colleagues annual leave.

In cases where the appointment is a one-off and unavoidably scheduled during working hours, payment for the time taken will be at the discretion of the Setting Manager, who will consider the individual circumstances and the operational needs of the Setting when making this decision.

Sickness Pay

Employees may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) provided they meet the qualifying criteria set by HMRC, including minimum earnings thresholds and notification requirements.

Information on Statutory Sick Pay can be obtained from the HM Revenue and Customs website.

Infectious Illness/Diseases

In line with UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) guidance, employees must not attend work if they have an infectious illness that could pose a risk to children and/or colleagues.

Employees must inform the Setting Manager if they;

- Have symptoms of infectious illness (e.g vomiting, diarrhoea, fever)
- Have been diagnosed with or exposed to a contagious disease

Exclusion periods will follow UKHSA guidance (i.e 48 hours after last sickness and/or diarrhoea episode).

Return to Work

Employees must ensure they are fit to work with children at all times. Any illness, medication or condition that may impair judgement, alertness, or ability to safely care for children must be disclosed immediately.

A 'fit for work' certificate is required should an employee wish to return to work before their Medical Certificate runs out.

After absences of more than one week the Setting Manager will have an informal discussion with the employee in order to establish:

- The reason for the cause of absence
- The employee is fit to return to work
- Whether the employee needs any support to return to work

The purpose of this discussion will be to consider any action required to improve the employee's attendance and wellbeing.

Frequent or Short Term Absences

Frequent absence refers to cases where an employee is frequently absent from work for relatively short periods of time, due to sickness. Most employees have some short term sickness absence. However, it is essential that frequent absence is dealt with promptly and consistently.

Following 3 periods of absence within the preceding 12 months, an informal interview will take place at the earliest opportunity to discuss the reasons for the absences, ways in which the situation might be improved and ways in which Toddington Childcare and Forest School can support the employee. Trigger points are guidelines only and each case will be considered individually, taking into account underlying medical conditions, disability and personal circumstances.

A summary of the interview, including any actions required to address the situation, will be given to the employee and will be kept on file.

If the employee's attendance does not improve satisfactorily within the specified timescale, the organisation will decide whether it is appropriate to seek a medical report from the employee's GP or Consultant. Written permission

will always be sought from the employee. Employees have the right under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 (AMRA) to see their own reports before it is given to the employer.

Following the receipt of the report, a further meeting will be arranged at which the employee may be accompanied by a work colleague or other suitable representative. The employee will be given the opportunity to respond to the report and supply any other relevant information. At this point a decision will be made as to whether it is reasonable to require an improvement in attendance within a reasonable time frame. The decision will be confirmed in writing, noting that a failure to improve could result in disciplinary action. If attendance does not improve within the time limit set, the matter will be dealt with under the formal Disciplinary Procedure.

Long term sickness Absence

Sickness absence of one month or more is generally considered to be long-term absence. Employees may be absent on long term sick leave for a variety of reasons (e.g. injury, operation, convalescence from illness, diagnosis of a long term disability, terminal illness etc.) and any action taken will vary according to the circumstances of the particular case. This section gives broad guidance and establishes standards of good practice.

Where an employee has been absent for more than two months and there is no identified return date in the near future, the Setting Manager will contact the employee to arrange an informal welfare meeting to discuss their current situation and when a return to work can reasonably be expected. The employee will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or suitable representative. The response will determine the next stage in the process, as the options will depend on individual circumstances. In the event that the employee is too ill to attend the meeting, the Setting Manager will seek to obtain the necessary information from them in an appropriate manner, e.g. a home visit or through a letter/e-mail.

Obtaining Medical Reports

A medical report will be obtained by the Setting Manager from the employee's GP and/or Consultant to establish the nature of the illness (including the cause and prognosis), the expected period of absence, any required adjustments to the employee's work and in accordance with the **EYFS Section 3 - The Safeguarding And Welfare Requirements** - advice on medication which might impair the employee's judgement when looking after children.

Formal Meeting

On receipt of the appropriate medical reports the employee will be invited to a meeting to discuss the findings. The employee will be offered the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or suitable representative.

The outcome of the meeting will include:

- The employee returning to work in their present job, at an agreed date.
- The employee unfit to return to their present job and alternative work or adjustments agreed along with a return date.
- The employee unable to return to work in their present job, reasonable adjustments are not feasible, and where suitable alternative employment cannot be offered. In this case the employee will be invited to a further formal meeting to discuss the termination of their contract on the grounds of ill health.

Obtaining permission to obtain a Medical Report

Written permission will always be sought from the employee and the employee has the right under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 (AMRA) to see their own reports before they are passed to the manager. If permission is not given to seek a Medical Report or the employee withholds the report on receipt, the Setting Manager can make a decision based on the information they hold on the grounds of Capability to terminate that employee's contract with Toddington Childcare and Forest School. The employee will have seven working days to appeal to this decision and this appeal should be made to the Chair of Toddington Childcare and Forest School's Parent Management Committee. If for any reason the Chair has been compromised, the Setting Manager will seek an independent party to hear the appeal. The appeal must be made in writing and the decision of this appeal is final.

Terminal Illness

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will approach cases of terminal illness with as much sensitivity and flexibility as possible. When the Setting Manager becomes aware that the employee whose absence is due to a terminal illness they will seek confidential advice from the Chair and, where appropriate, from the employee's GP, Consultant, on the medical prognosis and the possible effect on the employee of terminating their employment. If the affected employee wishes, Toddington Childcare and Forest School will make every effort to

facilitate the employee in continuing to work for as long as is reasonably possible, either on a full-time or part-time basis, or with periods of absence to take rests from work.

Disability Related Absence

Where an employee experiences sickness as a result of a disability it will be recorded separately and treated in line with the Disability and the Equality Act 2010.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will make reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities or long-term health conditions in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

A disabled employee's absence may be related to their disability rather than illness e.g. they require a period of absence in order to manage their disability to be fitted for a new wheelchair or for a treatment.

If an employee's disability worsens, Toddington Childcare and Forest School will consider making reasonable adjustments if they become unable to carry out their job. This will include considering whether or not it is reasonable to make adjustments to working conditions or the workplace.

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will make reasonable adjustments to ensure an employee with a disability has adequate time off for rehabilitation training. A similar adjustment would be appropriate if a disability worsens or if a disabled employee needs occasional treatment.

Pregnancy Related Sickness Absence

Pregnancy related sickness absence will be recorded separately and will not be used as part of absence trigger or disciplinary procedures.

This policy was revised and accepted at a Committee Meeting of Toddington Childcare held in May 2026

Signed on behalf of Toddington Childcare & Forest School

Sarah Malcolm

Chair to the committee of Toddington Childcare & Forest School