



Pandemic (Human Resources) Policy For Schools and Academies

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For further advice and guidance in relation to this policy, please contact HR ONE at hrdirect@devon.gov.uk or on 01392 385555.

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POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease. They occur when a new virus emerges and spreads around the world, and most people do not have immunity.

This policy and procedure is to address human resources (HR) issues and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff while seeking to sustain Honiton Primary School's ('the school's) key functions and services during a pandemic, as far as is practicable and can be envisaged.

2 SCOPE

2.1 This policy and procedure applies to all Devon County Council staff employed within schools, i.e. in Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, including teachers and support staff. It can be adopted by Devon County Council maintained schools where Devon County Council is not the employer, i.e. in Voluntary Aided or Foundation/Trust schools (see 6.2.4).

2.2 This policy is provided to Academy schools for adoption subject to local agreement.

2.3 This policy is based on the Devon County Council Pandemic Policy and only applies when it has been activated (see section 3).

3 ACTIVATION OF THIS POLICY

3.1 The activation of this policy and procedure is linked to the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Phases for the development of a pandemic and the UK Alert Levels that apply when a pandemic is declared. Activation of this policy will be endorsed by the Governing Board. The operation of different parts of the policy will be dependent on local circumstances at any given time.

4 REVIEW

4.1 As the pandemic evolves, the Government will issue additional public health information which the school will reflect in further information and advice to staff.

5 COMMUNICATION

5.1 The school acknowledges that effective communication arrangements with staff, parents/carers will be of paramount importance before a pandemic is declared, during

and after as part of the recovery process, and will ensure that it communicates with these groups accordingly.

- 5.2 Updated communications for staff will be provided on a regular basis, referencing the latest Government, Public Health England and NHS advice, as we plan and respond as the need arises.

PROCEDURE

6 WORKING ARRANGEMENTS DURING A PANDEMIC, INCLUDING DURING A PERIOD OF SCHOOL CLOSURE

- 6.1 Throughout the period of a pandemic, including in circumstances where the school is required to close, staff are expected, if they are well enough to work, to continue to work as normal as far as is possible while taking additional precautions e.g. to protect themselves from infection and to lessen the risk of spread to others. This may include allowing work from home where practicable. While senior leaders will make every effort to support staff and take into account individual personal circumstances, any unexplained absences may be dealt with under the school's Disciplinary Policy.

- 6.2 During a period of school closure, including where the school is required to remain open to accommodate the children of critical / key workers, Senior Leaders may have to devise alternative working arrangements in order to maintain educational provision.

6.2.1 Temporary working arrangements

In seeking to sustain the school's key functions and services, whilst aiming to reduce the risk of spread of infection throughout the period of pandemic, a number of temporary working arrangements may be identified and implemented, where appropriate and practical. All staff may therefore need to review the way that they work as well as the duties and responsibilities that they undertake with a view to becoming more flexible. Such working measures and arrangements will be notified to you by the Headteacher / Senior Leaders.

6.2.2 Social distancing measures

In order to reduce the spread of infection, a range of social distancing responses will be introduced, where practicable, to avoid face-to-face contact. Any social distancing measures introduced will reflect the latest Government advice and information

6.2.3 Temporary deployment elsewhere

If the school is required to close to all or the majority of pupils, i.e. other than for the children of critical/key workers, it will continue in its duty to provide an education provision although this might be on a reduced basis. All staff will be advised of the specific arrangements for the School by the Headteacher/Senior Leaders and the Governing Body.

In addition, there are roles and functions that are identified within the school as critical and every effort will be made to sustain these during a pandemic. Other less crucial functions could be suspended for a period of time.

The school, in conjunction with Devon County Council (subject to 6.2.4), reserves the right to temporarily redeploy staff as the need arises. Senior Leaders may therefore ask staff to work in a different job and/or at a different site and/or work different hours, from those stated in individual Statements of Particulars.

Such requests will take into account individual skills and personal circumstances balanced against the needs of the school and, where necessary, the wider County Council area and requirements, as a whole. Training will be provided, health and safety risk assessments completed and additional personal protective equipment (PPE) will also be provided, as appropriate. All requests will be reasonable. Local procedures will apply.

Staff at high risk of health complications may be temporarily deployed away from direct pupil care to minimise the risk of infection in line with the latest Government and NHS guidance. These staff may include, for example, pregnant women, and those who have pre-existing respiratory disease or who are immunocompromised. Staff who believe they fall into this category should inform the Headteacher immediately who will make the necessary arrangements for temporary deployment. This will include supporting working from home (where appropriate) or another location, subject to the requirements of the school.

Where staff are deployed elsewhere (or where the school receives staff deployed from elsewhere to work at the school), safeguarding checks (e.g. DBS Disclosure) will still apply for roles working in an unsupervised capacity with children if they have not been previously checked to the level required for the type of role they are to perform.

Management requests to make changes to working arrangements on a temporary basis will not be unreasonably refused by staff and they will be for the duration of the pandemic period only. There will be no change to individual Statements of Particulars and normal terms and conditions of employment will resume at the end of the pandemic.

6.2.5 Special Leave - Pandemic

If some functions and services are suspended for a period of time, staff who normally work in these areas may be temporarily deployed, as set out in 6.2.3. However, where there is no immediate deployment requirement, senior leaders will have the authority to permit members of staff to stay away from work, i.e. have some time off, for a fixed period of time on normal pay (i.e. full pay plus allowances, not overtime and other one-off payments). Decisions will be made on an individual basis and reviewed regularly. Such absences will be categorised as '*Special Leave – Pandemic*'.

Where this type of leave has been authorised, staff will have to be continually available for work (and so cannot arrange leave or be out of travelling distance from work without going through the normal request for leave process) and may be required to work at short notice, including working from home. Senior Leaders will keep in regular contact, as far as is practicable.

The school will keep a record of all absences which will be recorded on the school's iTrent payroll system as 'Special leave – Pandemic'.

6.2.6 Travel claims

If staff are required to work at a different location to their normal place of work, travel claims should be submitted in respect of any additional expenses incurred.

6.2.7 Non-standard patterns of work

If staff are required to work outside of their normal contractual hours, including non-standard patterns of work, they will be compensated via payment for additional hours.

For support staff, overtime rates will apply for any hours worked in excess of the normal working week (37 hours).

6.2.8 Working time

Staff should avoid working excessive hours and ensuring adequate rest breaks are taken.

6.2.9 Lone working

Staff should continue to refer to the school's Lone Working Policy where they are required to work alone or unsupervised as part of their work.

6.2.10 Use of school communication systems

Staff who remain at work will be allowed reasonable use of the school's communication systems (e.g. email, internet and phone facilities), as far as practicable, to remain in contact with their families during their working hours so long as they comply with the respective school policies in all other respects.

6.2.11 Annual leave arrangements

It may be necessary to limit annual leave to sustain services, however, senior leaders will allow pre-booked leave unless there are exceptional circumstances.

6.2.12 Work During School Holiday (non-term) time

During a period of school closure, the school may seek to, or be obliged to dependent upon government advice or instruction, provide childcare outside of the normal term time (e.g. during the Easter, half-term and summer holidays). In these circumstances, the school will seek staff volunteers to fulfil this requirement to maintain staffing. Compulsory measures will be avoided and only used if necessary.

Staff who agree to undertake additional hours during school holiday will be remunerated accordingly. Alternatively, the equivalent time off can be taken at another point in the year once the pandemic has ceased, or a mixture of both.

7 STAFF SICKNESS ABSENCE DURING A PANDEMIC

7.1 Staff reporting symptoms

If staff report symptoms, which are typical of the virus causing the pandemic, the latest Public Health England and NHS guidance must be referred to, particularly with regards to any requirements to self-isolate, or remain away from work.

During a pandemic the school will encourage staff who are unwell to stay at home, take the appropriate steps as directed by the national guidance, and fully comply with medical advice and any requirement to self-isolate.

Staff who feel that they are developing symptoms must take the appropriate steps as directed by the national guidance, fully comply with medical advice, and advise the Headteacher/senior leader and leave in a way that minimises face-to-face contact with anyone to reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others.

Senior Leaders will be responsible for ensuring that staff with symptoms, as far as they are aware, do not remain at work, and that the national guidance is followed. They should also ensure that the staff member can get home safely.

7.2 Staff who have been in recent close contact with others reporting symptoms of the pandemic virus, including confirmed cases, but do not have symptoms themselves

Staff are required to take the appropriate steps as directed by the latest national guidance, and, if they are not unwell can continue to work as directed by the guidance e.g. self-isolating at home, working as normal, working from home etc.

7.3 How sickness absence will be managed during a pandemic and how this links to the school's Managing Sickness Absence Policy

7.3.1 As far as possible, staff who are absent as a result of illness (whether it is directly related to a pandemic or not) should follow the procedures as set out in the school's Managing Sickness Absence Policy.

7.3.2 Senior Leaders will handle sickness absence with care and sensitivity, and any concerns will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and consider the difficulties that staff may encounter with regards to complying with procedures during the period of a pandemic. Senior Leaders will make every effort to support staff, especially those who have been bereaved.

7.3.3 Notifying absence

Absence should be notified in the normal way unless other arrangements for reporting are put in place during the period of the pandemic.

7.3.4 Certification

All staff should follow the Managing Sickness Absence Policy in regard to certification. If the Government guidelines differ i.e. if people are advised not to go to their GP, then the Government guidelines should be adhered to.

Alternative forms of evidence rather than a fit note may be made available on-line by the NHS.

All sickness absence should be recorded on the iTrent system in the normal manner.

If a manager has concerns about a member of staff's fitness for work, the member of staff should be asked to provide a medical certificate (where appropriate) of fitness for work and the manager should follow the guidance as set out in the Managing Sickness Absence Policy. Any member of staff encountering difficulties in obtaining a doctor's certificate(s), will remain on normal pay (i.e. full pay plus allowances, not overtime and other one-off payments), not sick pay, until the Headteacher/Senior Leader can arrange an appointment with Occupational Health to review the case.

7.3.5 Keeping in contact

Senior Leaders and staff should keep in contact during periods of sickness absence, as far as is practicable.

7.3.6 Return to work meetings

Staff must fully comply with any medical advice before they can return to work. Throughout the period of a pandemic, return to work meetings should be held as set out in the Managing Sickness Absence Policy. These may be held via telephone according to social-distancing measures.

7.3.7 Monitoring levels of absence/ formal sickness absence review procedure

When managers review the sickness absence history of an individual member of staff, the unusual circumstances of absences directly related to a pandemic will be taken into account.

7.3.8 Sick pay entitlements

Throughout the period of a pandemic, there will be no changes to the period during which sick pay shall be paid, or the rate of sick pay, in respect of any period of absence due to personal illness.

Entitlement to sick pay during a pandemic will however take into account that, in some instances, staff may need to follow the guidance as set out in this policy rather than the procedures that would normally apply as set out in the respective sickness policy, for example, in respect of the conditions for certifying sickness absence.

8 STAFF REQUESTS TO MAKE TEMPORARY CHANGES TO THEIR WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND OTHER TYPES OF ABSENCES DURING A PANDEMIC

- 8.1 During a pandemic, in addition to staff being absent from work due to personal illness, there are a number of other reasons why individual members of staff may not be able to attend work such as family member sickness, bereavement, and possible disruption to nurseries and schools.
- 8.2 Senior Leaders will handle all absences and temporary working arrangements requests made by staff with care and sensitivity, and any concerns will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Every effort will be made to support staff, especially those that have been bereaved.

8.3 Staff requests to make temporary working arrangements during a pandemic

As already stated in this policy, while seeking to sustain the school's key functions and services, and, in order to reduce the risk of spread of infection throughout the period of a pandemic, a number of temporary working arrangements (e.g. temporary deployment including homeworking) will be identified and implemented, where appropriate and practicable.

At the same time, it is acknowledged that the school's duty to sustain key functions and services will need to be balanced with the pressures that will fall on members of staff who have caring responsibilities and their work commitments. In light of this, an individual member of staff may make a request for a temporary change to their place of work/location, and/or, their hours of work/working pattern, providing that their request is made in order that they can fulfil a caring role.

Any requests of the nature outlined above made by members of staff who do not have caring responsibilities but have special circumstances that they feel should be taken into account will also be considered.

All requests should be made by individual members of staff to their manager and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Requests to make these temporary working arrangements will be for the duration of the pandemic only, there will be no change to individual Statements of Particulars and normal terms and conditions of employment will resume at the end of the crisis.

8.4 Special Leave - Pandemic

As already outlined in Section 7.2.4, if some school functions and services are suspended for a period of time during a pandemic and there is no immediate requirement for some members of staff to be temporarily deployed elsewhere, senior leaders may permit some individuals to stay away from work, i.e. have some time off, for a fixed period of time and this will be treated as '*Special leave – Pandemic*'.

8.5 Other types of absence - Existing emergency time off for dependents, compassionate leave provisions, and, additional paid leave and unpaid leave arrangements

In addition to the special provisions that will apply during a pandemic outlined in the above sections, the school has existing provisions to support staff with caring responsibilities with regard to managing their caring role alongside their work commitments, as well as those who have been bereaved. These provisions will apply as normal during a pandemic and are outlined in the school's Staff Leave and Absence policy. The Headteacher and/or Governing Board may use discretion to allow further types of leave, both paid and unpaid.

8.6 Keeping in contact

Managers and staff should keep in contact during periods of absence, as appropriate and as far as is practicable.

8.7 Recording absences

Throughout the period of a pandemic, the school will keep a record of all absences.

8.8 Unexplained absences

All members of staff will be expected to attend work throughout the period of a pandemic unless their absence is authorised by the Headteacher/Senior Leaders, or, they are sick and they have complied with the procedures as set out in the sickness absence policy and/or the guidelines set out in this Pandemic policy.

Senior Leaders will handle unexplained absences with care and sensitivity, and any concerns will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and take into account the individual personal circumstances as well as any difficulties that staff may be encounter with regards to complying with procedures during the period of a pandemic. However, any absence from work that is not in accordance with the above, may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and result in loss of pay.

9 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

9.1 Pandemics are first and foremost a public health matter. There are, however, clear health and safety requirements to protect our staff and clients.

9.2 Throughout the period of a pandemic, the school will continue to use our Health and Safety service and occupational health services who can provide health advice and

referrals as far as practicable. Referrals to occupational health may not be provided face-to-face in order to reduce the spread of infection.

9.3 **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The school promotes the mental health and wellbeing of its employees during the course of a pandemic.

- 9.4 The school acknowledges that in the aftermath of a pandemic it will be likely that staff need some time before they can return to ordinary performance at work. This will be taken into account, for example, where the capability of an individual member of staff is in question. Each situation will be handled with care and sensitivity on a case-by-case basis.

10 **DISCIPLINARY, CAPABILITY AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Throughout the period of a pandemic, the operation of disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures may need to be amended, as for example, conducting investigations and hearings is likely to be impracticable. Timescales may also need to be adjusted by mutual agreement. The respective processes may therefore be suspended as a precautionary measure pending return to normal conditions. Each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

11 **HR INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT**

Throughout the period of a pandemic, where practicable, information, advice and support on all HR matters and on the interpretation and application of this policy will be sought from the school's HR provider.

POLICY HISTORY				
Policy / Version Date	Summary of change	Contact	Implementation Date	Review Date
01.05.09	New HR policy to support the DCC Pandemic Influenza Plan.	P&S	13.07.09	As necessary and appropriate
25.02.2010	Policy deactivated.	P&S	25.02.2010	As necessary and

