**Sickness Management Policy**

At Windmill Pre-School we encourage all our employees to maximise their attendance at work while recognising that employees will, from time to time, be unable to come to work due to sickness. Our aim is to strike a balance between our small business needs, the children’s welfare and the genuine needs of employees to take **occasional** periods of time off work due to sickness. This policy and procedure establishes a framework to support individuals and Windmill Pre-School in times of sickness absence. It ensures that appropriate and consistent advice is provided and that assistance and support is offered to employees and, where necessary, action is taken.

We aim to provide a healthy working environment and demonstrate commitment to health, safety and the welfare of staff in order to maximise attendance. The Manager and Management Committee is responsible for regularly monitoring and taking appropriate action in connection with sickness and other unplanned absence.

Exclusion periods for contagious illnesses

Working with children means that you can be in contact with illnesses which can be highly contagious. We take the health of children and staff very seriously therefore if you have any contagious illness you must adhere to the exclusion periods. This will ensure that you are able to recover appropriately and that this illness is not passed on to other staff, children or families. The manager will advise you of any exclusion times required.

Sickness absence reporting procedure

Reporting sickness absence should be done using the following guidelines. Failure to follow these guidelines could delay any sick pay due to you and could possibly result in disciplinary action.

1. On your first day of absence, you must:
* Telephone the manager on the provided numbers.
* Give brief details of your illness and your expected length of absence.
* Telephone and speak to someone yourself. Text message and emails are not an acceptable form of communication for this purpose.
* Staff should phone in by 7.00am if they are unable to work so that the manager can find suitable cover before the pre-school day begins.
* If possible staff should inform the manager that they are unwell the evening before.
1. If you are unable to return to work the following day you should phone the manager in the afternoon to inform her of this.
2. On returning to work you must discuss with the manager any necessary adjustments on your return to work.
3. Any sickness absence of less than seven days requires an employee to complete a “self-certificate” form.
4. For absences of more than seven consecutive days, you must provide a ‘fit note’ completed by a qualified medical practitioner for the period of absence.
5. After returning to work from any sickness absence leave, a ‘return to work’ interview may be undertaken by the employee and Manager. This will not happen in all circumstances, and we may hold such meetings at our discretion. However, such meetings will normally be held in the following circumstances:
* Where the absence has exceeded 14 days
* Where the nature of the illness means that duties on return to work may need to be altered and clarification and/or consultation is required
* Where a member of staff has had two or more absences in 12 weeks.

During the return to work interview the following will be discussed:

* The reason for absence
* Whether adjustments to the role (on a temporary or more permanent basis) are required and what they are. These might include adjusted work patterns, start and finish times and changes of duties
* Future requirements and expectations, e.g. improved attendance
* The return to work interview should be recorded and signed by both the manager and employee and a copy attached to the employee’s file.

Where an employee’s attendance record gives cause for concern because of the duration or frequency of absence, this should be brought to the attention of the employee through a discussion with the Manager. Throughout any stage of discussions on sickness absence, employees may be accompanied by a work colleague.

The abuse of sick leave and pay regulations may be classified as misconduct and will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure.

Frequent and/or persistent short-term sickness absence

Short-term absence may be short periods of one or two days occurring frequently.

Absence of this nature can be identified by one of the following indicators and should be classed as a trigger:

* Four self-certified spells of absence in one calendar year.
* A total of 10 working days or more of self-certified absence in one calendar year.
* Patterns of absence over a period, e.g. an individual regularly taking Mondays or Fridays off.
* Where an employee’s attendance record is significantly worse than those of comparable employees, or absence problems have gone on for a considerable length of time.

Long-term sickness absence

For the purposes of the policy, long-term sickness absence is defined by Windmill Pre-School as absences lasting over 3 weeks.

Where absences have lasted over 14 calendar days or more the manager should contact the member of staff concerned to obtain an initial assessment of the problem and to offer any further help or assistance. This informal contact may be maintained with the employee’s agreement until one month’s continuous absence.

At this point and where felt appropriate after further assessment of the problem, the manager will arrange a face-to-face meeting or telephone conference between themselves and the member of staff. The meeting should:

* Seek to confirm the reasons and nature of the absence and its likely duration
* Ensure that the member of staff is aware of the Pre-School’s concern regarding their health and necessary absence from work.
* Consider offering alternative duties or a shorter working week if this would enable a quicker return to work subject to medical advice.
* Give consideration to any personal problems being encountered and discuss possible ways of helping the individual resolve these.
* Gain agreement from the member of staff to contact their doctor or specialist in order to establish the likely length of absence and the long-term effect on capability in relation to job performance and attendance at work.

If all other avenues have been investigated, the absence continues or, following return to work, the attendance record does not improve, a subsequent meeting should be arranged. At this point, unless there are reasonable grounds to believe there will be an improvement in the foreseeable future, the manager should inform the member of staff that long-term sickness absence due to ill health may put their employment at risk and the possibility of termination by reason of capability or suitability to work with children might have to be considered, taking into account any medical information available.

The position will be reviewed periodically and ultimately it may become necessary from a business perspective to consider termination of employment. In these circumstances, the nursery will:

* Review the employee's absence record to assess whether or not it is sufficient to justify dismissal.
* Consult the employee.
* Obtain up-to-date medical advice.
* Advise the employee in writing as soon as it is established that termination of employment has become a possibility.
* Meet with the employee to discuss the options and consider the employee's views on continuing employment.
* Review if there are any other jobs that the employee could do prior to taking any decision on whether or not to dismiss.
* Allow a right of appeal against any decision to dismiss the employee on grounds of long-term ill health.
* Arrange a further meeting with the employee to determine any appeal.
* Following this meeting, inform the employee of its final decision.
* Act reasonably towards the employee at all times.

Any decision to terminate employment will be taken by manager and the Management Committee making sure the capability procedure has been exhausted.

**Sick Pay**

During the first six months of employment, there is no entitlement to company sick pay. Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be paid in accordance with Department for Work and Pensions requirements and no payment will be made for the first three working days in a period of incapacity for work.

After six months of employment, an employee will be entitled to the equivalent of one week (a maximum of 5 days for full time staff) company sick pay per year (September-August). After this an employee will be paid SSP and no payment will be made in the first 3 working days.

Company sick pay is calculated according to an employee’s basic rate of pay and their normal working hours on the relevant day(s) of absence.

**Maternity**

Absence relating to pregnancy will be recorded separately from sickness records. Employees are entitled to reasonable time-off with pay, to attend antenatal clinics. Statutory Maternity Pay will apply as appropriate. Staff should endeavour to make routine appointments outside of work time where possible.

**Disability**

Absence relating to disability will be recorded separately from sickness records. We work within the framework of the “Equality Act 2010” to ensure an inclusive and anti-discriminatory approach.

**Time off for Dependants**

In emergencies where normal childcare arrangements break down or where an employee is primarily or solely responsible for a child, dependant relative or partner who becomes ill or incapable, then an employee can request up to two days leave to organise appropriate care. This leave will be unpaid and the request should be made to the Manager as soon as a problem is identified.

**Time off for Medical Appointments**

Appointments for Doctor, Dentist, Optician, Hospital etc should be made outside of normal working hours. Unpaid time off for this will be given at the discretion of the management.

**Bereavement/Compassionate Leave**

Following the death of a close relative, paid leave will be given at the discretion of the Manager and Management Committee.

**Annual Leave/Holiday Entitlement**

All annual leave should be taken during School holidays. Any request for time off during term time will be considered and only granted in exceptional circumstances. Any time granted will be unpaid.

**For further Guidance** on all matters relating to sickness and absence, including your rights as an employee and the relative legislation please refer to guidance found at [www.acas.or.uk](http://www.acas.or.uk) and/or [www.gov.uk/taking-sick-leave](http://www.gov.uk/taking-sick-leave) and/or [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

Gov.UK Sickness Guidance Library [www.gov.uk/search?q=Sickness](http://www.gov.uk/search?q=Sickness)

Gov.UK Statutory Sick Pay: Employee Fitness to Work

www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-sick-pay-fitness-to-work-~doctors-fit-note--statements-for-work

These sites were also used as a point of reference/guidance in the process of creating this document.

This policy was created and adopted on 24th May 2019

This policy was reviewed on 11th May 2023.

Bryony Smith – Chair of Windmill Pre-School Management Committee

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Claire Baker - Manager

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