



Dame Alice Owen's School
The Dame Alice Owen Foundation - 1613

LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY

Agreed by the Governing Body Personnel & Remuneration Committee
2023 To be reviewed
(reviewed every 2 years)

September
Autumn 2025

To be monitored by the HR Manager and Headteacher

1. INTRODUCTION

This leave of absence policy is to assist the Headteacher and Governing Body of Dame Alice Owen's School in making decisions about requests for leave in accordance with legal, contractual and moral obligations.

This policy covers annual leave, family leave and miscellaneous leave. A principal purpose in setting out this policy is to ensure that requests are dealt with fairly and consistently, taking into account the educational, operational and budgetary needs of the School.

The policy applies to:

- All staff of the school, including the Headteacher;

The procedure does not apply to;

- School meals staff employed by Hertfordshire Catering or by external contractors;
- Staff of external contractors and providers of services (such staff are covered by the relevant procedures of their employing body).

2. PURPOSE SCOPE & PRINCIPLES

- Annual leave and occupational sick leave will be in accordance with the relevant conditions of service for teachers and support staff.
- Other leave of absence **will normally be on an unpaid basis**, unless otherwise stated.
- All leave allowances should be applied pro rata to a staff member's contracted hours,

unless otherwise stated.

- The operational needs of the school will be paramount and, except in emergency circumstances, adequate notice of a request for leave of absence must be given.
- The responsibility for exercising discretion on behalf of the Governing Body is the Headteacher's in accordance with the professional duties defined in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document.
- Any dispute or grievance about a request for leave of absence or payment during leave of absence will be dealt with through the Schools Grievance Procedure. There is no right of appeal to a leave request being declined.
- It should not be assumed approval has been given until a response has been provided by the Headteacher.
- Where the request for leave concerns the Headteacher, requests should be made to the Chair of Governors.

3. LEAVE ENTITLEMENT FOR STAFF COVERED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

For support staff contracted to work 52 weeks per year, the leave entitlement is dependent on grade and continuous Local Government service. See Appendix 1. This leave will normally be taken during the school holidays and must be agreed with the Headteacher or nominated person in reasonable time, prior to the leave being taken. Only in exceptional circumstances and with the express consent of the Headteacher, can leave be taken at other times. Support staff may carry forward up to 5 days to the next annual leave year, provided this is done with the Headteacher's consent and leave is taken prior to 31st May.

Staff will not be permitted to take leave during the term unless express consent from the Headteacher has been given. If leave is granted, this will be unpaid for term-time only staff unless the Headteacher agrees that their work could be effectively carried out during holiday time.

All staff should make partners, other family members or alike aware that, as a rule, time off in term time will not be granted, this is in order to avoid costs incurred from the cancellation of surprise holidays for birthdays or anniversaries.

4. TEACHERS' WORKING TIME

A Teacher employed full-time must be available for work for 195 days in any school year. 190 of those days must be days of which they may be required to teach pupils and perform other duties and 5 days must be days on which they may only be required to perform other duties. The same applies for a Teacher employed part-time, except the number of hours they must be available for work must be a proportion of full-time hours.

In addition to the hours a teacher is required to be available for work, they must work such **reasonable additional hours** as may be necessary to enable them to discharge effectively their professional duties.

These provisions do not apply to staff on either the **Leadership or Leading Practitioner** pay ranges or those acting up in such a role.

5. SPECIAL OCCASIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The School's policy as agreed by the Governing Body is:

5.1. Disability Leave (*only applicable to support staff employed on the HCC Collective Agreement terms and conditions*)

For support staff only who have declared to their employer a disability as defined by the Equalities Act 2010, up to 5 days paid disability leave may be granted (pro rata for part time staff).

Reasons for using disability leave might include:

- Attending a doctor's or complementary medicine practitioner's appointments
- Assessment for conditions such as dyslexia
- Hearing aid tests
- Training with guide or hearing dog
- Counselling/ therapeutic treatment or recovery time after blood transfusion or dialysis
- Treatment for physiotherapy (sessional or residential)

Disability leave may not be used to cover an absence due to ill health.

5.2. Time off for a sick child

The first day is normally paid to allow the member of staff to make arrangements for childcare. Any further absence should be unpaid except in exceptional circumstances e.g. hospitalisation.

5.3. Compassionate, Emergency or Exceptional Leave

Staff will normally be granted up to 5 days pro rata paid leave in compassionate, emergency or exceptional circumstances, such as the death or serious illness of a close relative or equivalent. The leave is to deal with the immediate issues and to sort out long term arrangements if necessary. In some cases, a longer period of absence may be approved on an unpaid basis.

5.4. Other personal reasons

Exceptionally, there may be other personal reasons for requesting leave of absence. Usually these will be one off events affecting family. An example might be attendance at a child's graduation ceremony. **Such leave, where granted, will normally be unpaid** and subject to adequate notice so that replacement staff can be employed if necessary.

5.5. Career Break/Extended leave of absence

Requests for longer periods of leave will be considered on an unpaid basis, for example, in the case of a lengthy period of caring for a chronically sick, disabled, or terminally ill, dependent relative. Extended leave can be for up to a year in duration. Sufficient notice that allows the appointment of a replacement should be given wherever possible. Further guidance on Career Breaks is set out in appendix 2.

5.6. Moving house

Up to 2 days' paid leave will be granted over a period of one academic year.

5.7. Service with Auxiliary Forces

Reservists are required to inform their line manager that they are a member of the Reserve Forces. Reservist staff will also be required to grant permission for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to write to the Headteacher to make sure the school is aware and provide details of mobilisation obligations and rights as a staff reservist.

Reservist training normally takes place during evenings and weekends. Line managers may however grant up to 5 days leave at their discretion where training falls within a member of staff's normal working hours.

Additionally, up to 2 weeks' per year can be granted to attend 'annual camp'. Staff are required to give as much notice as possible for annual camp in order for line managers to arrange appropriate cover.

Leave may be refused if it would have a detrimental impact on service delivery. In any case teachers and other classroom based staff will only be granted paid leave if the force's unit cannot arrange exercises during holiday periods.

5.8. Mobilisation

Mobilisation is the process of calling Reservists into full-time service to serve alongside the Regular Armed Forces on operations. The Ministry of Defence aims to give as much notice as possible of mobilisation (but at least 28 days). In circumstances where a reservist staff member is mobilised they will not be paid by the school and should be placed on a Career break for payroll purposes to ensure their continuous service is not broken.

If a member of staff who is mobilised wishes to remain in the LGPS, the school's payroll provider should be informed who will calculate the amount of contributions that the staff member and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) must pay. For Teachers the relevant form must be completed, available online at www.teachers.pensions.com.

For further information on mobilisation, please refer to the SaBRE (Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers) website: www.sabre.mod.uk

5.9. Religious Festival

Where staff can show that they are bona fide adherents of any organised religion and that they require leave for the purpose of an official holy day, the Governing Body will allow appropriate leave. Staff taking such leave are asked to make up this time at a later date or if this is not possible any leave granted beyond 2 days should be unpaid. On behalf of the Governing Body, the Headteacher will use discretion as to how much time a member of staff can make up.

5.10. Sporting Events

Where staff can show they are representing their country, they should write to the Headteacher to determine whether their attendance would have a detrimental impact on service delivery. If there is no additional staffing costs to be incurred then this may be granted as paid leave, if this is not possible any leave granted should be unpaid.

5.11. Attendance at Court Proceedings

5.11.1. Jury Service

Staff will be notified of a requirement to carry out Jury Service by letter from the courts. A copy of this letter should be given to their line manager and a request made for the absence from work.

Unless the absence would have a serious impact on the School, we recognise that we must approve the time off. Jury service normally lasts for 10 working days, however, can be longer.

Employees will receive normal pay during the period of Jury Service on the condition that they complete the Certificate of Loss of Earnings or Benefit form to receive reimbursement from HM Courts and Tribunals Service. Employees will be paid as normal until the reimbursement has been processed whereupon they will provide the School with the Remittance Advice Slip they receive, and the School will make the appropriate deduction for equivalent monies from the employee's pay.

5.11.2. Witness summonses and subpoenas

Staff subject to a witness summons or subpoena will be allowed paid time off work to attend court as much notice of such a requirement should be given.

5.12. Public Duties

School staff may be granted up to 18 days per annum paid leave to carry out the duties of the office of Leader, Mayor, JP or Chairman of Local Authorities. For staff who are School or College Governors, up to 3 days per annum will be paid, In addition to this, unpaid leave can be granted for staff carrying out public duties.

5.13. Study/Examination Leave

For staff who are sitting examinations relevant to their current post or career, half a day study per examination plus half a day per examination will be paid.

5.14. GCSE Duties & Activities

For teachers who are engaged in activities for examining groups, please refer to appendix II of the Burgundy Book, Memorandum of Agreement for the Release of Teachers.

5.15. Time off for Trade Union duties

The school recognises the legal requirement for employers to allow reasonable time off work for the school's elected representatives of recognised trade unions to carry out their duties in the school in which they are elected. Duties that warrant time off with pay include:

- consultation on terms and conditions of employment or the physical conditions of work;
- consultation on recruitment and selection policies, redundancy and dismissal arrangements;
- meetings with school management or LA officers on matters of joint concern;
- representing a union member at grievance, or disciplinary hearing;
- attendance at relevant training courses organised by the trade union.

The County Council has a separate agreement with Trade Unions and Professional Associations to provide paid time off for their county representatives. The nominated county representatives are allowed pre-agreed time off each week to carry out their duties and the school is reimbursed from a council budget.

5.16. Bad weather conditions

There may be circumstances when the member of staff is unable to attend work due to bad weather, but the school remains open as usual. All reasonable effort should be made to attend work. Alternative arrangements may be agreed with the Headteacher, e.g. working from home or at a different location if this can reasonably happen without detriment to the execution of the role. Where this is not possible, **non-attendance will normally be treated as unpaid leave.**

5.17. Time off for medical appointments

The school will allow reasonable paid time-off for staff to attend medical appointments, which are **unable to be arranged out of working hours**. Before arranging non-urgent doctor's medical appointments, members of staff should seek the approval of their Headteacher if it is necessary to take time off work. Staff should make every attempt to make these appointments at the beginning or end of the day or during lunch breaks to minimise the time they have to be absent from work.

Routine doctor or dentist appointments, e.g. check-ups, should not be taken during term time.

Elective procedures should be arranged during holiday periods and will usually be unpaid.

6 MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND ADOPTION LEAVE

There are specific entitlements for [maternity](#), [paternity](#) and [adoption leave](#), contained in the relevant policies. Please see the HR Manager for more information.

6.1 In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF)

All staff, regardless of hours worked or length of service, are entitled to 5 days paid leave per annum (pro rata for part time staff) for the purpose of attending IVF appointments and undergoing fertility treatment. The Headteacher may also grant unpaid leave at their discretion

7 INTERVIEWS

The Governing Body recognises the increasing tendency for prospective employers to require interviewees to attend for more than one day, especially for school management posts. There is also a growing tendency to expect prospective candidates to undertake a preliminary visit before the formal interviews.

In order to maintain a fair balance between the operational needs of the school and to minimise the burden on other staff, and to be fair to staff who will be seeking to further their career in the education sector, the Governing Body will grant leave of absence for interviews as follows:

- a) The Headteacher is empowered to approve up to a **maximum of 5 days paid leave** of absence for interviews, to cover both formal and informal stages of the process, during any one academic year.
- b) Further leave of absence for this purpose will normally be agreed and will be on an unpaid basis.
- c) For support staff any days beyond the initial 5 days could be made up during holiday periods, instead of being on an unpaid basis, provided that their work can be carried out during holiday time.

8 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

If a member of staff takes leave of absence without the prior consent of the Headteacher, this will be investigated and could be considered Gross Misconduct under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

APPENDIX 1

HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENTS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF

The leave year runs from the 1 April to the following 31 March. For school based staff working 52 weeks per year, leave will normally be taken during the school holidays. Only in exceptional circumstances and with the express consent of the Headteacher can leave be taken at other times or carried forward to the next leave year.

	Less than 5 years	5 to 10 years	Over 10 years	Bank Holidays
Up to H7	24	28	29	8
H8 - H9	26	28	29	8
M1 and above	28	28	31	8

In addition to the eight public holidays an extra concessionary day will be given to full time staff around the Christmas period. This will usually be the last working day before Christmas or the first working day after Christmas.

Annual leave entitlements will be pro rata for part time staff working 52 weeks per year.

Staff engaged on a term time only basis will not be permitted to take leave at any other time except during school holiday periods unless express consent from the Headteacher has been given.

APPENDIX 2

Career Breaks

It is recognised that during a member of staff's working life there will be times when personal commitments may take priority over work e.g. bringing up children, longer term care for sick or dependent relatives, or pursuing a course of further education. The school may be able to accommodate such personal commitments, where operationally practicable, through career breaks. Staff should also give consideration to flexible working requests depending on their individual needs.

Career breaks enable staff to take an unpaid break from work for personal reasons whilst maintaining continuity of service with the school. The staff member should try to give as much notice as possible to commence a career break (ideally 3 months, one term) but a shorter notice can be accepted at the Headteacher's discretion for example where a dependent needs care at short notice.

With the exception of continuity of service all other terms of the employment contract with the school will be suspended. On return, at an agreed date following the career break, the member of staff will be able to return to the same or similar post within the school without competitive selection.

A career break may be considered appropriate for example:

- To extend a period of maternity/adoption leave
- To care for dependants
- To enter full time education where the learning would be of use to the school

These reasons are not all inclusive and others may be considered, with the exception of taking up other full time paid employment. Staff who are on a career break may in exceptional circumstances take up a part time role for example to support a university course. Permission must be sought from the school before taking this up.

Eligibility

All permanent members of staff with at least two years continuous service with the school regardless of the number of hours worked are eligible to apply for a career break.

Length of career break

The minimum length of break is 3 months, for teaching and classroom based staff the expectation would be for this to equate to a term, and the maximum is 1 year.

Restructuring and/or Reductions in staffing

Consideration of planned organisational change should be taken before a career break is authorised particularly where there is potential for a reduction in posts.

If a member of staff is on a career break when a restructure is being considered, every effort should be made to contact them in order for them to have input into any consultations or feedback processes. Staff may be given the opportunity to return to work early if they wish to if the temporary cover can be ended at no additional cost.

Staff on a career break must be included in selection processes even if the Headteacher is unable to make contact with them.

Extending the career break

If the member of staff wishes to extend their career break, if the break taken was to be less than one year, they must do so in writing normally giving as much notice as possible. The Headteacher will give consideration to the extension along the same lines as the original request and may grant up to 1 year in total.

Cutting short the career break

There will be no automatic right to cut short a career break but the Headteacher will consider such requests from a member of staff if they can be accommodated.

If the member of staff does not return from the career break

If a member of staff does not wish to return from a career break, they should confirm this in writing **at least 4 weeks'** prior to their expected return date, for those employed under School Teachers Pay and Conditions of Service the appropriate notice must be given in accordance with those terms. If, on the school writing to the staff member to confirm the return date, the staff member does not respond, their contract will be terminated on that expected return date.

Conduct during a Career break

Staff should be aware that they remain staff of the school during a career break. Whilst a staff's off duty hours are their personal concern they should not put themselves in a position where their duties and private interests' conflict. The standards of the School's Code of Conduct should be maintained during a career break.

APPENDIX 3

Type of Leave	Legal Requirement	No Legal Requirement	Paid	Unpaid	Paragraph
Annual Leave entitlement for Local Government staff	✓		✓		Appendix 1
Career Breaks		✓		✓	Appendix 2 and 5.5
Disability Leave - Collective Agreement support staff only	✓		✓		5.1
Time off for sick child	✓			✓	5.2
Compassionate, Emergency or Exceptional Leave	✓		✓		5.3
Other personal reasons		✓		✓	5.4
Moving House		✓		✓	5.6
Service with Auxiliary Forces	✓		✓		5.7
Mobilisation	✓		✓		5.8
Religious festivals		✓		✓	5.9
Sporting Events		✓	✓		5.10
Attendance at Court Proceedings		✓	✓		5.11
Public Duties	✓			✓	5.12
Study/ Examination Leave		✓	✓		5.13

GCSE Duties & Activities		✓	✓	✓	5.14
Trade Union Duties	✓		✓		5.15
Bad Weather Conditions		✓		✓	5.16
Time off for appointments (Doctor, Dentist etc.)		✓	✓		5.17
Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, & ante-natal care	✓		✓		6
Interviews within HCC or another Local Authority		✓	✓		7