



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

MATERNITY LEAVE POLICY

Agreed by the Resources Committee
To be reviewed
(*reviewed every 2 years*)

Spring 2025
Autumn 2026

The Professional Associations and/or Trade Unions have been consulted on this policy

To be monitored by the Headteacher and the Human Resources (HR) Manager

1. Scope

This policy sets out the entitlements to staff at Dame Alice Owen's School (the "School") in respect of maternity pay and leave under both the statutory and contractual schemes.

The difference in entitlements between the teaching and support staff scheme are a result of the different conditions of employment, which are illustrated in the guidance note on Maternity Leave Pay Entitlements (available from the HR Manager). This policy has been subject to consultation with Trade Unions. It does not form part of any contract of employment and may be varied.

Entitlement to maternity leave

Irrespective of length of service, staff are entitled to take up to 52 weeks of maternity leave, consisting of 26 weeks' Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML), plus 26 weeks of Additional Maternity Leave (AML), immediately following OML.

Under UK legislation, staff must take at least two weeks' leave immediately after giving birth to their baby (four weeks' if they work in a manual handling environment).

2. Commencing maternity leave

Once the pregnancy has reached the 11th week before the due date, maternity leave can commence at any time. If maternity leave has not already commenced by the time the baby is born, maternity leave will automatically commence on the day after the date the baby is born.

If you are absent due to a pregnancy related illness at any time during the 4 weeks before the 'Expected Week of Childbirth' (EWC), we are legally required to commence maternity leave from the start date of the absence and you cannot continue to work even if you want to.

If you are absent due to pregnancy related illness before the 4th week prior to the EWC,

the absence will be treated as sickness.

3. Ante-natal appointments

You have the right to reasonable paid time-off for antenatal appointments, including GP and hospital appointments, and prescribed pregnancy-related treatments or classes, (usually between 7 and 10). You must notify the Headteacher/HR Manager as far in advance as possible and be prepared to show them a record of your appointments, if required.

Fathers and partners of pregnant women are entitled to unpaid time-off to attend two ante-natal appointments (time-off is capped at six and a half hours for each appointment, including travel).

4. Statutory Maternity Pay

Unlike maternity leave, there are criteria which determine entitlement to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP).

This depends on how long you have worked for the School and whether this is more than 26 weeks at the 15th week before the due date, and if your earnings are above the qualifying level:

- the first 6 weeks of SMP is at the higher rate i.e., 90% of average weekly earnings
- plus, a further 33 weeks of SMP at the lower rate i.e., standard SMP rate or 90% of average weekly earnings - whichever is the lower amount.

All payments are subject to deductions for national insurance, income tax and pension.

Payment of SMP cannot start earlier than the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth.

SMP is not refundable to the School if the return-to-work obligation is not fulfilled.

5. Maternity pay and leave scheme

The following scheme applies to all full-time and part-time staff.

You have a statutory right to continue to benefit from your normal terms and conditions of employment, with the sole exception of pay. For the purposes of simplification, entitlements of teaching and support staff have been separated in the guidance note on 'Maternity Leave Pay Entitlements (available from the HR Manager).

If your baby is born prior to maternity leave commencing, the day after the day of childbirth should be regarded as the first day of maternity leave. During maternity absence you must not work again, other than 'Keeping in Touch Days' (see point 15), until the agreed return to work date. An earlier return will bring maternity leave to an end.

6. Notification of pregnancy

You should inform your HR manager or Headteacher, as soon as possible of your pregnancy and the approximate date you intend to start maternity leave. This notification must be before the 15th week¹ of your Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC). This is in your own interests and ensures that we can take, any necessary steps to look after the health and safety of you and your unborn baby. Early notice also enables us to inform you of your entitlement to maternity leave and pay.

¹ The Burgundy book states not later than 14 weeks .

If you do not notify your line manager or Headteacher prior to the birth, then it may impact your maternity pay.

If you wish to change the date maternity leave starts, you can do so by giving the following periods of notice.

- Teaching staff: this is 21 days' notice to change a date
- Support staff: this is 28 days' notice to change a date

Maternity leave cannot start any earlier than the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth.

7. Application for maternity leave

To provide formal notification of your intention to apply for maternity leave you should complete the 'Notification for Maternity Leave Form' which is available from the HR Manager.

The form requires the following information to be provided:

- the expected week of childbirth (EWC)
- the date intended for maternity leave to start
- the original MATB1 certificate.

This form must be completed and returned to the HR Manager.

8. Expected return date

Unless you inform us otherwise, we will assume that the full entitlement of 52 weeks' will be taken.

Should you wish to return before the end of your maternity leave, you must give us 28 days' notice, in writing, to the Headteacher.

If you cannot return to work at the end of maternity leave because of illness, this will be treated as normal sick leave.

9. Teachers

The payment of Occupational Maternity Pay (i.e., 12 weeks half-pay) (as detailed in the guidance note on 'Maternity Leave Pay Entitlements' is dependent upon you returning to your job after maternity leave for a period of 13 weeks.

The period of 13 weeks is calculated on the basis that it equates to the working arrangement at the point maternity leave commenced. For example, if you worked on a full-time basis at the commencement of maternity leave, and returned on a 0.5FTE basis, you will be required to return to work for a period of 26 weeks. If you do not fulfil this obligation, you are obliged to repay Occupational Maternity Pay.

The notification form allows you to choose to have the 12 weeks half-pay withheld and to be paid as a lump sum on your return to work.

10. Support Staff

The payment of Occupational Maternity Pay (i.e. 12 weeks half-pay) (as detailed in the guidance note of 'Maternity Leave Pay Entitlements) is dependent upon you agreeing to return to work for at least 3 months to the School.

If you do not fulfil this obligation, you are obliged to repay part, or all of your Occupational Maternity Pay.

The notification form allows you to choose to have the 12 weeks half-pay withheld and to be paid as a lump sum on your return to work.

11. Health and safety during pregnancy

We want you to remain safe and healthy at work during your pregnancy. Whilst the site would not typically be considered as dangerous, we want to ensure that anything that could pose a risk to a pregnant person and/or an unborn baby is identified and eliminated.

12. Risk Assessment

Once you have informed the Headteacher that you are pregnant, the HR Manager will be informed and a Pregnancy Risk Assessment will be completed and signed by you and the HR manager as soon as possible, and appropriate action will be taken to reduce any risks.

The risk assessment form should be kept under continuous review as risks may change throughout pregnancy.

You should talk to Headteacher/HR Manager immediately if you have any concerns about your work that could put you or your unborn child at risk. The vast majority of risks are easily minimised or eliminated with the right level of care and consideration.

Sickness absence during pregnancy

Absence on account of illness which occurs before the 4th week period of EWC is treated as an ordinary absence or sick leave.

However, if at any time during the 4 weeks before the EWC, you are medically unfit to carry out your duties and if the illness is associated with pregnancy, maternity leave must begin immediately. This includes illness during a holiday period (see paragraph 3).

Any absence which is not pregnancy related is treated as sickness absence.

13. Premature birth

If a baby is born prematurely before maternity leave has started, the birth will automatically trigger the start of maternity leave on the day after the birth, even if this is more than 11 weeks before the baby was due. You should inform the Headteacher as soon as is practically possible.

14. Miscarriage

A miscarriage can be a very distressing experience. If you suffer a miscarriage before 24 weeks of pregnancy, you will not be legally entitled to maternity leave or maternity pay but will be entitled to sick leave in accordance with the School's Health and Attendance Policy.

The UK Miscarriage Association provides support and information and can be contacted via www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk.

The staff can also contact Westfield Health, our Staff Assistance Programme (EAP), by following this link: westfieldhealth.com/my-westfield

15. Still birth

If a baby is stillborn or does not survive after being born, after the 24th week of pregnancy, you are legally entitled to maternity leave and maternity pay.

We will require the MAT B1 certificate from a GP/Midwife if this has not already been provided.

SANDS (The Stillborn and Neonatal Death Society) are a charity set up to help grieving parents. They can be contacted through www.sands.org.uk.

The staff can also contact Westfield Health, our Staff Assistance Programme (EAP), by following this link: westfieldhealth.com/my-westfield

16. Reasonable contact

Whilst you are on maternity leave, we would like to keep you up to date with what is going on at work and give you the opportunity to get in touch if needed. This is known as 'reasonable contact' and simply formalises good communication practices between you and your respective line managers/Headteacher. You should agree with your HR Manager/Headteacher before starting maternity leave, the level of contact which will be maintained during your maternity leave.

17. Keeping in touch (KIT) days

You may undertake ten 'Keeping in Touch Days' during maternity leave. This allows you to work under your contract of employment for up to ten days and receive payment, as agreed with the Headteacher, without bringing maternity leave to an end. Please note that any part of a day worked will count as one KIT Day.

It is important to note that work is prohibited during compulsory maternity leave (the 2 weeks immediately after the birth of the baby).

The KIT days are not limited to a member of staff's usual job and could be used for training or other events or to ease the return to work.

Any KIT Day must be agreed with the Headteacher. There is no obligation on us to offer you KIT days or, by that token, for you to complete KIT days.

18. Holiday entitlement

Holiday entitlement continues to be accrued at the rate provided under your contract of employment during maternity leave. This entitlement applies to all staff including term time only workers and teachers.

19. Teachers

The 'Conditions of Service for School Teachers' makes no reference to an entitlement to annual leave for teachers. There is however a statutory right to a minimum of 28 days per annum under UK legislation. Periods of school closure count towards this entitlement, consequently it is unlikely that teachers returning to their posts following a period of maternity leave will have acquired a right to additional annual leave. It is possible that teachers who resign their post and do not return could have an outstanding balance of annual leave payable.

20. Pension plan

Contributions to the Local Government and Teachers Pension Scheme will automatically continue to be deducted from actual pay if staff are members of the scheme on paid maternity leave.

21. Local Government Pension Scheme member only.

If you take unpaid maternity leave, you must decide whether to pay pension contributions for this period and upon your return to work. You will be given the opportunity to purchase contributions for any period of unpaid maternity leave.

Contributions will be based on the pay you were receiving the day before unpaid leave started. Should you wish to purchase service for periods of unpaid maternity leave, you should contact the LPP Local Government Pension Scheme Administration team on 0300 323 0260 within 30 days of your return to work.

22. Returning to work from maternity leave

You are entitled to return to work on the same terms and conditions, and the same or equivalent role, as if you had not been on maternity leave.

No notification is necessary if you plan to return at the end of maternity leave; it is assumed you intend to return on that date. If you wish to change the date of return, you must give notice as outlined above.

There is no provision for you to postpone your return to work after maternity leave, unless you have failed to give the required 28 days' notice of a change to your expected return to work date.

If you cannot return at the end of maternity leave because of illness, this will be treated as normal sick leave.

23. Requests for extending maternity leave

At our discretion, you may be granted Extended Maternity Leave, without pay, in excess of the 52-week period. This would not constitute a break in service. Any such request should be submitted at the earliest possible date but no less than 8 weeks before the date indicated as the intended date of return at the start of the maternity leave.

24. Dismissal protection

Where it is not practicable by reason of redundancy for us to permit a return to work to the substantive post, you shall be entitled to be offered a suitable alternative vacancy where one exists, on a first refusal basis, provided that the work to be done in that post is suitable and appropriate to the circumstances. In addition, the capacity and place you are to be employed and the terms and conditions of employment should not be substantially less favourable, than if you were able to return in the job as originally employed.

Suitable alternative employment may also be offered if exceptional circumstances other than redundancy (e.g., a general reorganisation), which would have occurred if you had not been absent, necessitate a change in the job in which you were employed prior to your absence. The work to be done should be suitable and appropriate to the circumstances and the capacity and place you are to be employed and your terms and conditions of employment should not be less favourable to you than if you had been able to return to the job in which you were originally employed.

The protected period will cover pregnancy alongside 18 months from the first day of expected week of childbirth.

Headteachers and the Governing Body should seek further advice from their HR Advisors.

25. Financial Support for Childcare

Childcare voucher scheme

The Childcare Voucher Scheme, which is now closed to new applicants, enables you to exchange part of your salary for Childcare Vouchers which are exempt from Tax and National Insurance. Participation in the Childcare Scheme will not affect maternity pay and will continue during the maternity leave period.

Government Tax-Free Childcare

Tax-Free Childcare allows eligible working families to claim 20% of their childcare costs, up to £2,000 per child per year (or £4,000 for a child with a disability), from the Government. Staff cannot open a Tax-Free Childcare account for a newborn child until 31 days before the return to work. However, staff can have Tax-Free Childcare accounts for any older children while on maternity leave for the newborn. You will be able to retain and pay into those accounts during the maternity leave period.

26. Flexible Working

Prior to, or when you return from maternity leave, if you wish to be considered for part-time hours, you must apply in writing by completing a Flexible Working Request application form which is available from the HR Manager.

27. Shared Parental Leave

Shared parental leave enables you to commit to ending your maternity leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave with your partner, or to return to work early from maternity leave and opt in to shared parental leave and pay at a later date.

28. Pay Review whilst on maternity leave

You are entitled to a pay review whilst on maternity leave in the same way that you would be if you were not on maternity leave.

If following a pay review, you become eligible for a pay rise between the start of the original calculation period and the end of the maternity leave, both the higher and standard rate of SMP and OMP will be recalculated to take account of your pay rise. This means that your SMP and OMP will be recalculated and increased retrospectively. In some cases, you may qualify for SMP or OMP if you did not previously. You will be paid a lump sum to make up any difference between SMP or OMP already paid and the amount payable as a result of the pay rise.

29. No return to work

If you do not return to work on the agreed date, you may be subject to disciplinary action in the same way as any other member of staff who has failed to return to work following a period of absence.

30. Job Opportunities whilst on maternity leave

Whilst on maternity leave you have the same opportunities to access job vacancies, promotion, and development opportunities. All vacancies are advertised on the school website. Before commencing maternity leave, you should discuss with us how you would like to be notified of any internal opportunities that arise.