

## **POLICY ON ATTENDANCE / SICK LEAVE / ABSENCE: ( TEACHING STAFF )**

The Board of Management strives to promote a culture of high achievement and performance and an environment supportive of teachers who are professional and dedicated to delivering a quality educational experience to the pupils. The Board recognises that it has obligations for staff welfare and is conscious of the value of staff health in the delivery of effective instruction. The Board acknowledges the requirements of the Health, Safety & Welfare at Work Act, Educational Welfare Act.

This policy refers to sickness absence. The Department of Education & Skills facilitates leave per the relevant Circular Letters and staff are advised to consult these Circulars for details re Personal leave, In-service, Jury service, **Paternity** Leave, Adoptive Leave, Maternity Leave etc.: The Board of Management must be informed in advance of leave and approval must be sought for all leave. In the event of having to leave school during the school day through sickness or personal reason no member of Staff should leave the school without notifying the Principal / Deputy Principal.

### **Objectives of the policy:**

To set out for staff the structures and procedures to be observed for the management of attendance, ensuring confidentiality and consistent approach for all staff.

To emphasise the necessity of good attendance as a prerequisite for effective teaching and as an example to the pupils.

To maintain the highest quality of delivery of instruction to pupils.

To offer appropriate support to staff.

To counter the deleterious impact on colleagues – reduced morale, increased workload and associated stress - of regular or significant absence.

As employer, the Board appreciates that at some stage in their professional career, staff may encounter personal or health related issues which affect their attendance at work. The Board will endeavour to respond in a supportive manner. This support may be in the positive consideration of requests for leave including access to Career Break and Job Share or support for applications for retirement. The Board reserves the right to refer any of the above to an employee within the context of promoting the employee's welfare and reconciling the needs of the school. It is incumbent upon the individual member of staff to apprise the Board of individual circumstances and to provide any necessary detail. The Board will assure confidentiality regarding personal/medical information.

### **Role of the Board:**

To advise, assist and support the principal in the management of attendance:

To advise and support the principal and staff on welfare matters:

To refer the employee for such occupational health examination as the Board may consider relevant :

a) to establish whether there is an underlying medical condition which may be causing the absence:

b) when a request is received from an employee for retirement on the grounds of ill-health:

c) when the absence appears excessive for the illness stated:

d) when, at any time an employee's behaviour gives cause for concern:

e) when the rate of sickness absence is particularly higher than average:

f) when an employee proposes to return to work without having furnished a Certificate of Fitness to resume work:

**g) to refer an employee for Occupational Health Assessment in accord with Occupational Health Strategy. Staff are referred to CL 0065/2008 & CL 004/2013.**

### **Role of the Principal:**

To provide staff, including new staff, with all information regarding sickness absence procedures, Occupational Health Strategy & Employee Assistance Service.

To keep such record and detail of absence of staff for the attention of the

Board of Management and Department of Education & Skills:

To ensure that staff complete such record of absence in a timely manner:

To see that regular contact is maintained with staff on long term illness:

To inform employee where the frequency of absences is giving cause for concern and of the difficulties caused by the absences:

To facilitate transfer of teaching duties and relevant directions and instructions for replacement teacher.

Role of the Employee:

To report all sickness absence in accordance with procedures and provide relevant information and evidence that may be required:

To maintain contact with the Principal ( or his nominee ) while on absence:

To adhere to such professional/medical advice facilitating a return to work and avoid such activity inconsistent with the illness:

To provide such information to the principal relevant to the absence:

To provide instructions for classes / directions for replacement teacher and Subject

Co-ordinator:

Procedures:

To enable the school management to respond and provide for absences, the Board requires early notification of absence:

Occasional/Unforeseen absence through sickness:

Staff should inform the Principal/Deputy Principal(s) ( Text message is acceptable ) or via answer machine at the earliest opportunity: *Message on answer machine must be confirmed by phone call.*

If you feel that you are unwell and will be absent on the next school day inform the office on the preceding evening ( by phone call, Text message or if after 5.00p.m a message may be left on the answer machine ); *Message on answer machine must be confirmed by phone call. )*

If you are ill and are unable to attend school on the morning, a message should be left with the Principal/Deputy Principal(s) or on the answer machine between 8.15a.m. and 8.45a.m. explaining the absence and indicating the likely return to work: ***text message or message on answer machine must state if leave is CERTIFIED / UNCERTIFIED. Message on answer machine must be confirmed by phone call.\****

Please indicate if you are going to be absent for more than one day and advise by 3.30p.m. ( at latest ) on the day of absence if you will be absent the following day:**\* It is obligatory to state at the outset if the sickness absence is CERTIFIED – i.e. if you are going to the doctor – as this will determine if your absence will be substitutable.**

**\* The onus is on staff to ensure that notice of absence has been received. Staff should not depend solely on the Answer machine and must confirm by follow up call to Clerical Officer.**

Extended absence ( more than 4 days ):

Staff are required to inform the school management of any prolonged absence through sickness and keep the Principal ( or his nominee ) regularly informed:

Medical Certificate must be presented:

The Department of Education & Skills has requirements regarding return to work following sickness. “ If a teacher is resuming duty after a period of long term sick leave and/or unpaid sick leave he/she must furnish to the School Authority, a statement from **his/her own doctor** to certify that he/she is both physically and mentally fit to resume teaching duties. This certification should be forwarded giving ample time to allow referral for occupational health assessment to Medmark and the Department **prior to** the resumption of duty.

In exceptional circumstances a member of staff may present a written request for Unpaid Leave and approval. Application must be approved by BOM six weeks in advance of absence and shall be at the discretion of the Board, having taken into consideration that “ *the welfare*

*and educational needs of the pupils shall take precedence over all other considerations". All staff should familiarise themselves with **Circulars CL 60 /2010 ( Sick Leave ) and the Occupational Health advice on Medical Fitness to Teach; CL 0035/2010 re Unpaid Leave; CL 0036/2012 SELF CERTIFIED PAID SICK LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGISTERED TEACHERS IN RECOGNISED POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS.***

**Monitoring attendance:**

It is a function of the principal to monitor attendance to allow decisions regarding replacement and delivery of the curriculum and for report to Board of Management..

The principal having established a record of absence should refer to the following guidelines:

- a) more than 7 days absence in an academic year:
- b) more than 3 periods of absence in an academic year, where each period is in excess of 3 days:
- c) continuous absence of 4 weeks or more:
- d) an individual member of staff with more than 5% absence in academic year:

The principal may have supplementary information relevant to particular members of staff and it is essential that staff provide timely and relevant information regarding absence. The teacher and school management share a responsibility to maintain contact. This contact should balance the welfare needs of the absent member and the management needs of the school.

Staff must provide the required Certification of Absence to facilitate returns to the Department of Education & Skills and present **Green Form** upon return indicating reason for absence. All staff leave is recorded via the OLCS system.

**Leave to attend Funerals**

Department of Education Circular ( 19/00 ) outlines conditions for approved leave to attend funerals. Where a member of staff wishes to apply for leave to attend a funeral other than of a relative specified in the Circular Letter, written application ( on Form ) seeking Personal Leave\*\* must be submitted for approval with a letter to the Secretary explaining the request.. Where a number of staff seek to attend the same funeral ( of a non-family member ) then the school management will nominate a representative(s) to attend on behalf of the school. ( This may be the Chaplain, HSCLO, Principal, Deputy Principal or specific member(s) of staff. ) It should not be assumed that all applications can be approved and the decision to approve an application will be made on the basis of the circumstances with particular reference to the needs of the school and the delivery of instruction to classes.

\*\*No member of staff should take leave / absence by arranging casual cover by colleagues without notification to and approval of Principal / Deputy Principal.

**Staff are directed to the BOM Policy on Personal Leave.**

**Amended and approved by Board of Management 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

**Staff are also referred to the following Circulars.**

**Circular 0018/2013 ADOPTIVE LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS FOR REGISTERED TEACHERS  
in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools**

**Circular 0004/2013 Occupational health Strategy for registered teachers and SNAs in  
recognised Post-Primary Schools**

**Circular 0036/2012 Self Certified Sick Leave Arrangements**

**Circular 0021/2012 Parental Leave Amendment for Registered Teachers**

