



# CASTLEFIELD SCHOOL

## CARERS POLICY

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**THIS POLICY IS BASED ON  
BUCKS COUNTY COUNCIL CARERS POLICY & PROCEDURE - FOR  
SCHOOLS**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This document sets out the School's policy and procedures for their employees who are also Carers. Its purpose is to establish clear guidelines so that employees are aware of the support and information that is available, especially at a time in their lives that can be challenging.
- 1.2 The health and well-being of our employees is of great importance and we are aware of the associated positive benefits of supporting employees during difficult periods in their working life.
- 1.3 The School also recognises the importance of work-life balance and the aim of this policy is to provide employees with a range of flexible working options, which is their statutory right, provided they meet the relevant criteria.

**2. SCOPE**

- 2.1 The policy and procedure set out in this document applies to all Schools based staff under Teachers Pay and Conditions and those staff under the terms of Bucks Pay Employment Conditions.

**3. DEFINITION OF A CARER**

A Carer is someone who, without payment, provides help and support to any adult or child who could not manage without their help. This could be due to their age, physical or mental illness, addiction, frailty or disability.

The person being cared for may live at the same address as the employee. However, it may be the case the employee will provide care for a relative, friend or neighbour who does not live with them.

**4. PRINCIPLES**

4.1 The policy and procedures contained within this document is founded on the following principles:

- To encourage Headteacher/Line Managers to take positive action in supporting individual well-being, as well as taking a sensitive and supportive approach towards employees who have caring responsibilities
- To provide the Headteacher, Line Managers and employees with clear guidelines on alternative working arrangements for Carers and to maintain consistency across the School
- To assist employees in achieving a balance in their work and home life
- To retain the skills and knowledge within the School
- Not to discriminate against any individual in the application of this policy and procedure on prohibited grounds e.g. on grounds of gender, trans-gender, race, trade union activities, disability, age, sexual orientation, part-time work status or religious belief.

## **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **5.1 Chair of Governors will:**

- Review a request from the Headteacher/Line Manager for any flexible working arrangements
- Review an appeal if the Headteacher/Line Manager has made the decision to decline an application for flexible working

### **5.2 The Headteacher/Line Manager will:**

- Have the authority to approve a request for flexible working arrangements
- Direct their own request to the Chair of Governors
- Be required to have an understanding of the rights a Carer is entitled to via the Carers Information on the Schoolsweb and in Appendix 1 below. This is just one of many points of reference

- Assess the request for an alternative working pattern in a sympathetic, supportive and confidential manner. Refer to the Toolkit for more guidance
- Arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss their application within 28 working days of the initial request
- Be required to be consistent in their approach towards employees whilst taking into account the business needs
- Consider how the potential new working arrangements will fit into the existing working day
- Contact the HR Consultancy Team for any complex queries before making the final decision, where applicable
- Advise the employee about the appeals process, where applicable
- Update the relevant system when Carers Leave is being taken and in accordance with Section 6.2.1. Advise any relevant parties where the change has an impact
- Advise the remaining members of the team accordingly, if appropriate

### **5.3 The Employee will:**

- Be encouraged to advise the Headteacher/Line Manager about their caring responsibilities at the earliest opportunity. This will provide time to consider the different types of flexible working arrangements that are available
- Have a right to be accompanied and/or represented by another employee or a Trade Union Representative, at a meeting with the Head Teacher/Line Manager, to consider the application. It is the employee's responsibility to arrange for representation. There is no obligation for a colleague to act as a representative but they can choose to if they wish
- Be able to gain further knowledge/understanding on Carers rights via the Carers Information on the Schoolsweb and Appendix 1 below
- Look into the types of flexible working options (Section 6) that are available and think about what option suits their circumstances
- Need to meet the criteria before applying for flexible working
- Need to be aware that any long term reduction in hours will alter their terms and conditions and some benefits may be affected (for example, pension, redundancy calculation, leave entitlement)
- Complete the school's Application for Leave of Absence form, for short term requests

- Complete a Flexible Working Application form (refer to Toolkit Appendices) for a long term request

## **6. ALTERNATIVE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

### **6.1 Statutory Rights for Carers**

The main provisions of the Work and Families Act (2006) extends a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements to employees with caring responsibilities for adults. The Act also covers parents of children under the age of 16 and under 18 where the child is disabled.

Any changes in working arrangements can be agreed on a short term and long term basis.

All arrangements will be subject to the business needs of the School and agreed at the discretion of the Headteacher/Line Manager. There is no automatic right to have alternative working arrangements agreed.

### **6.2 Short-Term Arrangements**

Short term requests can be agreed locally and listed below are a few of these options. The list is not exhaustive:

#### **6.2.1 Carers Leave**

Employees with 26 weeks continuous service can request up to 5 working days unpaid leave per annum (pro rated for part-timers). There is a maximum allowance of 13 weeks unpaid leave which will run for the duration of an individual's employment. This request is to be agreed at the discretion of the Headteacher/Line Manager and recorded as Carers Leave accordingly.

#### **6.2.2 Parental Leave**

Employees with 1 year's continuous service are entitled to 13 weeks unpaid parental leave. The purpose of this type of unpaid leave is to care for their child up to the age of 5. Where the child is disabled, the entitlement increases to 18

weeks unpaid leave which may be used until the child's 18 birthday. Refer to the Carers Leave homepage for more information regarding parental leave.

#### **6.2.3 Flexible Working Patterns (up to a maximum of 4 weeks)**

For a short period of time, and in line with business needs, an employee can request to work alternative hours until the arrangements for caring have been resolved. Examples could be to alter an individual's start and finish time or re-arrange rotas/timetabled duties, where this is practicable. In this instance, it is recommended that the Headteacher/Line Manager builds in a fortnightly review period.

#### **6.2.3 Compassionate Leave**

The LEA guidance on staff leave of absence, defines the leave that can be taken and whether it is paid or unpaid. It states:

The Governing Body will normally apply a limit of 5 days discretionary leave with pay per annum, although additional time (either with or without pay) may be granted in exceptional circumstances.

To use this right to time off, the employee must inform their Headteacher/Line Manager at the earliest opportunity.

### **6.3 Long-Term Arrangements**

There are a range of flexible working arrangements that can be looked into to support an employee with caring responsibilities. Employees should have a minimum of 26 weeks continuous service within a School, from the date of the application, before a request can be considered. Listed below are a few examples of long term options, the list is not exhaustive:

- Flexible Working Patterns
- Temporary Reduction in Hours
- Part-Time Hours
- Job Sharing
- Term Time Working (applicable to those employees on a 52 week contract)
- Remote Working, where appropriate

Employees must be advised that any long term changes to their working pattern will alter their existing terms and conditions. It may also affect some of their benefits, eg pension, leave entitlement, redundancy calculation.

Long term requests will be considered by the Headteacher/Line Manager and in accordance with The Work and Families Act (2006). Refusal of such a request will be based on the needs of the School and the business reasons will be put in writing.

#### **6.3.1 Unpaid Leave**

In the case of caring for someone for longer periods of time, eg where a programme of treatment is likely to take 6 months, unpaid leave may be granted at the discretion of the Headteacher/Line Manager.

#### **6.3.2 Annual Leave**

Where applicable, employees may be able to use a combination of unpaid leave and annual leave to help with their caring responsibilities. This arrangement will alleviate the financial burden if long periods of unpaid leave are being requested.

### **7. GUIDANCE FOR LONG TERM FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

- 7.1 For a long-term request, the employee is required to submit a Flexible Working Application (see separate Appendices). The completed application is sent to their Headteacher/Line Manager in advance of the desired effective date.
- 7.2 There is a statutory requirement for the employee to leave a clear 12 months before submitting another Flexible Working Application.
- 7.3 Please refer to the Carers Toolkit for more details and guidance regarding this process.

### **8. DECISION MAKING FOR HEADTEACHERS/ LINE MANAGERS**

Once a request for flexible working arrangements has been received, a discussion will take place between the employee and the Headteacher/Line Manager to establish the full circumstances for the request, usually within 28 working days for a long term request.

Consideration should be given to the length of time an option is sustainable, look at alternative ways of undertaking tasks and responsibilities along with the needs of the School.

The decision will then be communicated to the employee within 14 working days of the initial discussion/meeting. For more details and guidance refer to the Carers Toolkit.

## **9. APPEALS**

If an employee feels that a request for flexible working has been unreasonably declined and a discussion with the Headteacher/Line Manager fails to resolve the issue, the employee may raise a grievance in accordance with School's Grievance Policy.

**Signed (HT):**

**Date agreed: January 2016**

**Signed (Chair of GB):**

**Review date: January 2019**



## HELP AND SUPPORT FOR CARERS

The links for the information below are contained on the Carers homepage

Carers Bucks	Carers Bucks exists entirely to support and promote the wellbeing of family Carers. They support Carers of all ages and in different caring roles, including young Carers, parents of children with a physical or learning disability, older Carers, and those looking after someone with mental health problems, including depression.
Carers Assessment, Guidance and Leaflet	Useful information and supporting documents for employees with caring responsibilities.
Employee Assistance Programme	This is a free, confidential dedicated information and counselling support service for you, your family and those close to you. With more than 25 years of experience, Employee Advisory Resource (EAR) provides information and practical help, as well as financial information, legal and emotional support to help you resolve life's issues before they become problems - this can be in your work or personal life.
Additional Carers Information	This page contains additional links and reference points for additional information.