



BARNFIELDS EXTRA

BARNEY BEARS NURSERY

ABSENCE POLICY

Sickness Absence

Reporting Procedure:

1. An employee who is absent should report the absence as early as possible but in any case contact must be made with manager before 6.30 a.m. on the day of the absence.
2. The absence, unless physically impossible, should be reported in person and not through a third party.
3. Unless it is clear at the outset that the sickness absence will last for a considerable time i.e pregnancy, the reporting procedure should apply to each day of absence.

Certification Procedures:

1. An absence of up to three days requires a self-certificate form and a return to work form to be completed.
2. For an absence of between four and seven calendar days a self-certification form should be completed on return to work.
3. For absence of longer than seven days a medical certificate is required (note: absence over weekends or holiday is included in calculation of continued sickness absence). Part-time workers to include non-working days.
4. Barnfields Extra may, in exceptional circumstances, require a medical certificate for any absence. If this is the case the Company will pay any charges.

This also applies to part-time employees.

Time off for Medical Appointments

1. It is expected that non-urgent appointments for doctors, dentist, etc., should be arranged in an employee's own time or at the beginning or end of the working day.
2. Time off will normally be granted provided adequate notice has been given but this will be unpaid. If there are a large number of appointments over a period of time consideration may need to be given for time to be made up. Appointment cards may be requested.
3. Reasonable time off for antenatal classes will be given; again, an appointment card may be requested.

Return to Work

1. Employees are expected to keep the Company informed about the progress of any sickness absence and should inform the manager prior to return or, in the case of the manager being absent, contact must be made with the deputy manager, of the date of the return.
2. On return to work, the employee will have a meeting with their line manager in order to be kept up to date with developments at work. This meeting is likely to take place on the day of return but could be arranged for another day. A return to work form must be completed and kept on record
3. Any employee who has more than six periods of absence in an academic year may be asked to meet their line manager to discuss the absences.
4. The Company may ask a member of staff to give their consent to access medical reports. Any requirement will be subject to the **Access to Medical Reports Act 1988**.

Procedures for Managing Excessive or Persistent Absence

Each case will be different but the following points, among others, may be considered when determining any appropriate action:

- The need of medical opinion
- The nature of the illness
- The likelihood of recurring or other similar problems arising
- The length of sickness absence or the patterns of absence
- The impact of absence on other staff and effective curriculum delivery
- Any steps already taken to address the issue
- Consistency of approach
- The relevant provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

If there is evidence that the reasons for absence are not genuine then the matter will be fully investigated and, depending on the outcome, dealt with as misconduct under the Company's disciplinary procedure.

Note: Where the employee is the manager, meetings will be conducted by the Chairman of the Board or another designated Board member.

Informal Stage

An employee who has been identified as having a level of, or frequency of, absence which gives cause for concern should be invited to a counselling interview with the Manager (or designated Board member).

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Explain concern at the current absence level
- Explore the reasons for it
- Agree strategies to resolve any problems which might improve attendance and identify areas of support and assistance.

At this stage the interview will be as informal as possible with the emphasis on counselling and support. The employee can, if they wish, be accompanied by a friend or trade union representative. In this instance the manager (or Board member) may also be accompanied.

At the conclusion of the interview the manager or Board member should summarise the main points discussed including:

- Concern about the level of absence
- The action points that have been agreed, including assistance and support
- That the situation will be reviewed within a four week period

A record of the meeting and the agreed outcome will be kept indicating the employee's responses. A copy will be given to the employee.

If a member of staff has had a long period of absence (more than two months) subsequent to the commencement, or during consideration of formal competency, or during procedures the case will go straight to Stage 2 of these procedures.

If during absence owing to illness an employee declines to attend this interview without good reason or participate at any further stage during this process, it may be necessary to proceed straight to Stage 3 of these procedures. This may also apply if, when asked, an employee declines to give permission to access medical records.

First Stage

An employee who has failed to show a reasonable improvement in attendance, or whose attendance has deteriorated following some initial improvement, will be required to attend a formal interview. The manager will seek appropriate advice at this stage if necessary.

Notification of the meeting should be in writing, giving the date, time, place and reason for the meeting. The employee will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend, colleague or a trade union representative. The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Explore why the absence level continues to cause concern and the reasons for it.
- Offer any further help or guidance.
- Establish a review period.
- Seek permission to access medical reports.

If, after medical advice, in consultation with the employee, it is apparent that a medical condition may be chronic and will continue to affect attendance, then consideration may need to be given to move directly to Stage 3. In such instances a supportive approach should be agreed and consideration given to alternative work or any reasonable adjustment in the workplace.

A record of the interview will be kept, including the employee's response and any agreed areas of support and assistance.

The manager will again stress the points made at the previous stage and the need for continuous monitoring. This period will vary according to circumstances and will be agreed at a review meeting. In addition, the manager may issue a warning as part of this procedure that unless there is an ongoing significant improvement in attendance at work the employees' job could be at risk subject to employment protection rights.

A letter confirming the above warning and a record of the meeting will be sent to the employee.

If the employee's record is significantly improved at this stage the Manager will write to the employee to recognise this and to state that the improvements should be maintained.

Second Stage

An employee who has not shown sufficient improvement following the Stage 1 interview or a member of staff who is absent owing to formal competency procedures may be required to attend a formal hearing before the Board.

Notification of the meeting will be sent in writing giving the time, date and place of the meeting, the reason and status of the meeting and a reminder of the employee's rights to representation. At least seven calendar days notice will be provided. The purpose of the hearing will be to:

- Explore why the absence level continues to be of concern.
- Explain continued concern at that level and the impact on the Company.
- Explore other options such as ill health retirement, redeployment (if possible), stepping down, etc.

Dependent on the outcome of the hearing the Board may formally warn the employee that the absence level is unsatisfactory and that a failure to improve may result in termination of employment. An employee may appeal against this warning to a first panel of the Board and should log their intention to do this with the manager within ten calendar days of receipt of the written issue of the warning.

A letter confirming this will be sent to the employee with a record of the hearing. If an employee's attendance improves a letter should be sent to confirm this as in Stage 1 above.

Third Stage

An employee who has not shown sufficient improvement following Stage 2 or who following chronic illness, has moved directly from Stage One, will be required to attend a formal hearing before a panel of three members of the Board.

Prior to this stage being reached, it is expected that other options will have been discussed with the employee and/or their representative to resolve the matter.

The employee will be informed in writing of the date, time and place of the hearing, the reason for the meeting and the right to have representation. At least seven calendar days notice will be provided.

The hearing will consider evidence of the absence level, action previously taken, personal circumstances, medical advice and prognosis and any implication of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and Human Rights Act (1998).

The manager will present the case for the Company and the employee and/or their representative will be able to present their case.

The procedure for the conduct of the hearing will be the same as that for a disciplinary hearing and it is important to stress that.

Should a dismissal result it will be owing to ill health or some other substantial reason not for a disciplinary reason.

If after considering the evidence and all the circumstances surrounding the case the members of the Board determine that termination of employment is in the Company's best interests then the employee will be informed of this (and any rights of notice if appropriate). The employee will also be advised of their right to appeal to a second panel of Board members against this decision. Any such appeal must be logged within ten calendar days of receiving written notice of the outcome of the hearing.

The employee will also receive a written record of the hearing. If the appeal is unsuccessful, or there is no appeal, then the Company Secretary will be asked to issue a letter of termination. An employee will still have the right to take their case to an Employment Tribunal. If the panel decides, after considering the evidence, not to terminate employment at this stage, the situation will continue to be appropriately reviewed over a reasonable time period, not to exceed one month. At the end of this period a panel will be reconvened to reconsider the whole case.

Time Keeping

1. All staff are expected to keep to agreed times of work.
2. Late arrivals or leaving early may be agreed in exceptional circumstances.
3. Should a pattern of late arrivals etc., without authorisation occur, then disciplinary action may be taken.

Annual Leave

Staff may not take annual leave during school term time unless there are exceptional arrangements agreed with the manager and the Board.

Paid time off will normally be given subject to the exigencies of the Company in the following situation:

- Jury service
- Other public duties

The power to determine when paid or unpaid leave of absence for public duties remains with the Board.

Special Leave

The manager, in consultation with the Board, may approve paid special leave in certain circumstances. The following is a list of examples but each case will be judged on its merits. A combination of paid and unpaid leave may be appropriate in some circumstances:

Death of spouse or partner	Up to five days with pay
Death of close family member	Up to five days with pay
Funeral of other family member	Up to one day with pay
Serious/Terminal illness of spouse/parent/child	Paid leave as requested by arrangement and possibly unpaid leave in addition.

A sympathetic approach will be adopted wherever possible or appropriate.