|  |
| --- |
| **Document Control Sheet** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Document Reference** | SCC 170 |
| **Document Title** | Carers Leave Policy |
| **Description** | Policy |
| **Version Number** | V1.0 |
| **Version Date** | July 2024 |
| **Last Review Date** | July 2024 |
| **Next Review** | July 2026 |
| **Reviewed By** | Christina Abbott |
| **Document History**  | V1- July-2024 |

**Carers Leave Policy**

Contents

[1. Introduction 3](#_Toc173416953)

[1.1 Statement of Intent 3](#_Toc173416954)

[1.2 Scope 4](#_Toc173416955)

[1.3 Definition and eligibility 4](#_Toc173416956)

[1.4 Types of support carers need 4](#_Toc173416957)

[2. Entitlements 4](#_Toc173416958)

[2.1 Carers leave 5](#_Toc173416959)

[2.2 Emergency dependent’s leave 6](#_Toc173416960)

[2.3 Compassionate leave 6](#_Toc173416961)

[2.4 Parental leave for parent carers of disabled children 6](#_Toc173416962)

[3. Sources of more information and support 6](#_Toc173416963)

[4. Document control 7](#_Toc173416964)

## Introduction

## Statement of Intent

The school supports carers and caring responsibilities. We seek to be an exemplary employer, supporting the welfare of employees who are carers, and enabling them to find the right work/life balance for them and to be able to have time off work to enable their caring responsibilities.

|  |
| --- |
| **Here are some of the things the school offer that support employees who are carers – please read the policy for more details and eligibility criteria.**  |
| * Unpaid carers leave of up to 1 week every 12 months, which can be taken consecutively, or in individual days or half-days. A week means how many days they usually would work in a week, e.g. 3 working days a week means 3 carers leave days.
* The ability to take longer periods of unpaid leave under exceptional circumstances.
* A reasonable amount of unpaid emergency dependent’s leave for short-term caring needs.
* The school offers up to 10 days of paid compassionate leave, the leave can also apply to period of sickness of a close family member.
* Up to 18 weeks unpaid parental leave for all parents, including parent carers of disabled children, up to the age of 18.
* A range of ways to support welfare, including access to occupational health, self-referral counselling services and financial advice through the employee assistance programme please also see the final section of this policy, which gives links to useful sources of support and information.
 |

The Equality Act 2010 does not specifically protect carers. However, since carers are more likely to be women and older adults, they may be covered by indirect discrimination provisions around age and sex, and/or by discrimination by association with a disabled person. The school have responsibilities to carers as community members under the Care Act 2014.

The school does not tolerate unfair treatment against employees on the grounds of being a carer.

## 1.2 Scope

This policy covers Single Status (Green Book) support staff and Teachers (Burgandy Book) employees.

Please also see the Flexible Working Policy and Leave of Absence Policy for additional guidance.

## 1.3 Definition and eligibility

Many people do not recognise that they are carers. The school seek to help people recognise themselves as carers, and managers to recognise it too.

The school has applied a flexible and inclusive definition of carers, with regards to its staff:

**A carer is someone who, outside of paid employment or volunteering, regularly supports another person, in order for the cared-for person to live their daily life**. This could include support with washing, dressing, cleaning, cooking, shopping, medicine, finances, medical and other appointments, companionship, etc.

**The cared-for person will be either an adult or a disabled child.** Parents of non-disabled children are not carers by nature of that relationship, although we do still seek to support them. Please see our parental leave policies for further guidance.

**The cared-for person will often be a partner or close family member, but caring relationships may extend beyond this**. We will not usually require a person to declare their relationship to a cared-for person if they have not already done so unless the situation is having an operational impact and there are any doubts as to the veracity or eligibility of the employee.

## 1.4 Types of support carers need

Carers may need:

* Time off or flexible working to manage their caring responsibilities.
* A friendly and understanding ear to talk about their worries and concerns.
* Recognition of the impact of caring on their own welfare, and support to meet their own physical and mental health needs.
* Signposting to sources of external support.

**NB:** It is important carers have regular check-in meetings with their line manager throughout the period they have caring responsibilities not just when their caring responsibilities start. This conversation should be included in 1:1s.

## Entitlements

## 2.1 Carers leave

From 6 April 2024, following new legislation, carers will be entitled to up to 1 week of unpaid carers leave in a 12-month period. This can be taken as a whole week, or in individual days or half days or equivalent (but not individual hours). There is no service requirement. A week means how many days the person would usually work in a week, e.g. if a person works 3 days a week, they would be entitled to 3 carer leave days.

We recommend that all carers register themselves as carers with their GPs**.** It helps to ensure that the carer is prioritised for things like vaccination campaigns, as needed.

Employees should give a reasonable amount of notice of leave, wherever possible, the appropriate notice period an employee needs to give to take the leave is; either twice the length of time that needs to be taken in advance of the earliest day of leave or three days, whichever is the greater.

Employer’s cannot refuse a carer’s leave request but can ask the employee to take it at a different time. The employer can only deny carer’s leave if the employee’s absence would cause serious disruption to the school.

If the employee delays carer’s leave, the employer must:

* Agree another date within one month of the requested date for the leave
* Put the reason for the delay and new date in writing to the employee within 7 days of the original request, and before the requested start date of the leave

The leave must be for the purpose of providing care as defined in the definition above, but with the exception of the purpose~~s~~ of companionship alone. The expectation would be that this would take place outside of working hours.

The leave can be taken to help the carer to support appointments for the cared-for person that need to take place during working hours. Carers can also take carers leave to attend a specific appointment to support them as carers.

Carers leave cannot be taken as an alternative to sick leave. If a staff member who is a carer is unwell or needs time out for their own physical or mental health, they must take sick leave. Similarly, sick leave cannot be taken as an alternative to carers leave. If the reason someone needs time off is due to someone else’s health, as opposed to their own being affected, then they cannot take sick leave.

Whilst the entitlement is per employee per year, as with compassionate leave, there is not an expectation that every eligible employee fully uses their entitlement every year. The intention is that staff should take it as and when they have need of it.

Part-time workers have the same ability to take up the entitlements as other staff, this is on a pro rata basis.

## 2.2 Emergency dependent’s leave

Employees who have people depending on them (which includes both parents and carers) have a legal right to unpaid time off to cover short-term caring needs arising unexpectedly.

Please refer to the Leave of Absence Policy for further information.

## 2.3 Compassionate leave

Compassionate leave of up to 10 days can be paid in circumstances where the employee has a close relationship, who has a sudden or serious illness, or if that person dies.

Please see the Leave of Absence Policy for more information.

## 2.4 Parental leave for parent carers of disabled children

Employees who are parents with 1 years’ service are entitled to up to 18 weeks of unpaid leave per child up to the age of 18, of which they can take a maximum of 4 weeks per year per child.

Parental leave must be taken in blocks of whole weeks at a time, and at least 3 weeks’ notice should be given.

For more details, please see the Parental Leave Policy.

## 3. Sources of more information and support

External sources of support

* Contact [Suffolk Family Carers](https://suffolkfamilycarers.org/) to register and access a range of advice and information to support you in your caring role. (Telephone 01473 835477)
* Contact [Customer First](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/how-social-care-can-help/contact-adult-social-care/?msclkid=9ca778b5b10d11ecbcf2553b7a8f8d0c) to request a carers assessment.
* See our Suffolk County Council [Caring for someone](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/caring-for-someone/) web pages for a wealth of information and resources
* Register as a carer with your GP, this will enable you to have free and early access to vaccinations.

## 4. Summary of Changes

|  |
| --- |
| **Document control** |
| **Date** | **Section(s)** | **Update(s)** |
| July 2024 | Whole document | New policy |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |