

SILS STAFF Absence Policy

2025 - 2026



SOUTHWARK INCLUSIVE LEARNING SERVICE
(SILS)

Headteacher	Signature:
Management Committee	Signature:
Last Review Date	February 2026
Next Review Date	February 2027

1. Introduction

This document provides clear guidelines on staff attendance in order that the school can operate at optimum levels and to maintain efficient use of school resources. It should be read in conjunction with Southwark Local Authority Absence Management Procedure (as amended).

2. Conditions of Service

Regular attendance is a requirement for school staff to carry out their professional duties as set out in their contracts of employment, job descriptions and statutory conditions of employment. The two relevant documents outlining the conditions of employment for staff in this school are the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (DCFS) for teachers and the Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services for support staff, clerical staff, caretakers, catering staff and cleaners.

SILS is a Community School and all school staff are employed by the Local Authority. References to staff attendance are contained in relevant sections of Southwark's Employee - Managers Handbook. This Handbook provides a reference manual which incorporates the main policies, procedures and general information governing the employment of staff in Schools.

3. Absence through sickness

A satisfactory level of attendance at work is crucial to the smooth running of the school. High absence rates not only impact on staff left to cover the absence but have major implications for the school budget. Unsatisfactory absence rates ultimately lead to lower standards of work and service, in other words, the children lose out. The Headteacher must therefore, as a part of normal day-to-day supervision, ensure that staff are aware of the standards of attendance required, where improvement is required and how these will be monitored and reviewed over time. The expectation for all staff in the school is that there will be very high levels of attendance. There is acceptance, of course, that people can become sick; however, employees need to know that there is an expectation that absence through sickness should be kept at a minimum and that sickness records are rigorously monitored. Staff also need to know that failure to reach an acceptable level of attendance may result in formal action being taken.

The school recognises that genuine illness occurs and is committed to supporting staff health and wellbeing alongside maintaining high attendance.

4. Annual Leave

With the exception of the School Business Manager and the Site Manager, no annual leave provisions are specified for employees of the school, as duties are mainly undertaken during term-time. Special leave of absence for holidays in term-time is not allowed (as stated in employees' conditions of service).

5. Special Leave (Paid and Unpaid Leave)

In accordance with Southwark LA guidelines, there may be exceptional circumstances when the Headteacher may grant special paid or unpaid leave. The LA special leave criteria specify areas where leave may be granted and the maximum duration. With the exception of compulsory court attendance, maternity/adoption/paternity leave, school governor duties, agreed trade union duties, jury service, graduation of a partner or child, all special leave, whether paid or unpaid, is at the discretion of the Headteacher.

All requests for special leave should be submitted on the special leave application form. All special leave application forms (whether approved or refused) are kept on record. Special leave forms must be submitted at least 7 days in advance of the proposed period of absence. This will give the Headteacher adequate time in which to decide on applications and will give him time to seek HR advice, if necessary. Special leave forms are kept in the school office and staff room. Staff must use special leave forms to request attendance for hospital appointments as records may also indicate a medical problem that may need further action, for example, referral to the Occupational Health. In exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher may consider a request for special leave within 7 days, e.g., if a medical appointment is urgent.

6. GUIDELINES for ABSENCE due to sickness

6.1. Reporting Procedure: A member of staff who is ill should report their absence and give a reason for the absence by telephone, to the appropriate senior person **SILS – Pele Oladitan on 07894229808 or in the case you cannot reach me, the school office at 02075251150 by 7.30am** at the latest on the day of the absence. Other than in exceptional circumstances, the absence should be reported in person and not through a third party.

6.2. If, at this time, it is possible to give an expected date for returning to school, please do so.

6.3. In any event, please phone the school during the day prior to returning to notify your intention to return to work.

6.4. If absence is going to be longer than three days please notify the school as soon as this becomes apparent.

7. Certification Procedures

7.1. A self-certification form (Appendix 1) should be completed for absences of between one and seven working days on the employee's return to work.

7.2. For absences due to illness of longer than seven calendar days, a medical certificate is required (note: absence over weekends or holiday *is* included in calculations of entitlements to benefits such as Statutory Sick Pay but only 'working days' count when HR assesses 'sick leave entitlement'.) If absence continues after the seventh calendar day, the employee must provide a doctor's certificate to the school no later than the eighth calendar day of absence. Subsequent doctors' certificates must be submitted to cover the entire period of absence if it extends beyond the period covered by the initial statement. Upon receipt of medical certificates, the School Business Manager will record the details and return the doctor's certificate. *Please note that this is a statutory requirement and failure to comply could result in a loss of earnings.*

If a member of staff requires a 'Statement of Fitness to Work' following a period of sickness absence shorter than a week, a GP may require payment for a private statement.

7.3. The school may, in exceptional circumstances, require a medical certificate for any absence. If this is the case the school would pay any charges incurred.

8. Time off for Medical Appointments

8.1. It is expected that non-urgent appointments for doctors, dentist etc., should be arranged outside of an employee's directed time.

8.2. Where an appointment absence is unavoidable, in the case of an emergency medical appointment with a hospital consultant for example, paid leave will normally be granted. 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. Please be aware that verification of the appointment might be requested.

8.3. Time off for ante-natal appointments will be given; again, verification of the appointment might be requested.

9. Return to Work

9.1. Staff are expected to keep the school informed as to the progress of any sickness absence and to comply with 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 above.

9.2. On return to work after any sickness absence for any length of time, the member of staff will normally be expected to attend a meeting with the headteacher or line manager. This meeting should normally take place on the day of return to work. The meeting is an important part of a proper and fair sickness absence management framework since they provide the headteacher / line manager with an opportunity to:

- confirm the reason for the absence and the nature of it;
- confirm there are no underlying problems at school or home or patterns of sickness that need to be addressed;
- to identify any assistance and support required;
- to ensure the school meets its duty of care regarding the health and safety of its staff and pupils.
- update the employee sickness record and decide whether there is a need for any further action to be taken.

A return to work meeting is a normal part of the everyday management / supervisory process and as such there is neither requirement nor entitlement for the employee to be represented or accompanied at such meetings. In cases of an extended absence, it may be necessary for the Headteacher to consider referral to Occupational Health Service. Advice may be sought from the School's HR service provider, if there are long term implications for an extended absence. .

10. Time Keeping

- All staff are expected to keep to contracted times of work.
- Late arrivals or leaving early may be agreed in exceptional circumstances. Should a pattern of later arrivals etc., without authorisation occur then disciplinary action may be taken.
- All staff are expected to communicate professionally and courteously regarding any lateness, giving a clear reason for that lateness.

11. Leave of Absence

Unplanned Absence (not due to illness)

Where a non-medical emergency arises which necessitates lateness to or absence from school the member of staff should alert the school as point 6.1 above, or as soon as practically possible, indicating how long the delay or absence may be for and indicating a return time or date. Staff need to be aware that this absence may be unpaid; this will be at the Headteacher's discretion.

Protocol for Requesting Leave of Absence

This section does not relate to absence due to sickness or for medical appointments. It is to clarify the process in relation to requests for leave for a variety of personal reasons. Each request for absence will be considered by the Headteacher. Leave requests cannot be agreed by other senior staff unless the Headteacher has specifically delegated that responsibility in his/her absence. A member of staff requesting leave of absence must make the request in writing to the Headteacher. As far as possible, sufficient notice should be given in advance of the period of requested leave. In return, the Headteacher will respond as soon as possible. As a school, we value the contributions of all staff and acknowledge the need for good-will. It is appreciated that there might occasionally be times when a member of staff needs time off during the school day. We would like to extend a sympathetic but balanced response to such requests but need to ensure that we are conforming to the regulations and considering the guidelines laid down by Southwark Local Authority as well as meeting the operational needs of the school.

12. Special Leave - Paid and Unpaid

The **maximum special leave permitted in any twelve-month period should not exceed five days** paid or unpaid leave (with the exception of entitlement to parental leave). In exceptional circumstances, subject to Management Committee approval, this may be extended.

12.1 Paid Leave: Where the regulations allow, or the Headteacher considers it is appropriate, paid leave may be agreed. Specific occasions when paid leave may be agreed are summarised here as: The following list is not exhaustive but is intended to serve as a guide.

- Public Duties e.g. Jury Service (subject to deductions of allowances)
- Serious illness or death of a close relative at the Headteacher's discretion for up to 3 days (with a max. of 3 additional days at the discretion of the Headteacher in consultation with the MC)
- Maternity Leave
- Paternity leave
- Attendance at interview for employment within local government service
- Examination Board-related meetings (the Headteacher should have, in advance approved the teacher's application to become an examiner/assessor)
- Moving house
- Wedding (own or immediate family member)
- Funeral (immediate family member)
- Participation in certain sport or cultural activity

- Graduation of member of staff, partner or his/her child

NB At the discretion of the Headteacher a maximum of one day's paid leave may be allowed for miscellaneous reasons.

12.2 Unpaid Leave: The decision to grant unpaid leave is normally at the Headteacher's discretion. If this is for an extended period the Headteacher must refer the matter to the Management Committee to ask for their approval. The following list is not exhaustive but is intended to serve as a guide.

- Caring for a dependant (this may be a maximum of one day's paid leave at the discretion of the Headteacher and each case will be considered separately)
- On-going care for or attendance to a terminally ill relative (after paid leave period as above)
- Funeral (non- family member) paid or unpaid at Headteacher's discretion
- Religious observance

13. Unauthorised absence

This occurs when the employee does not attend for work at the place of employment at the required times and does not have prior management approval for their absence.

Unauthorised absence includes late attendance, attending interviews without seeking approval, prolonged breaks, taking annual leave without approval and taking sick leave without following the notification procedure. Individual instances of unauthorised absence will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure defined in Southwark HR Absence Guidance and Schools Capability Policy.

14. Proactive and positive measures

The Management Committee and the headteacher are committed to creating a working environment which encourages and supports the attendance of all staff. Achievement of this aim will require the contribution of all staff. However, the school will introduce the following measures to provide a positive framework for supporting attendance.

- effective use of pre-employment health checks
- encouraging staff to make full and effective use of welfare, counselling and Occupational Health Services
- undertaking to identify and deal with potential causes of stress in the workplace – reviewing working practices/environments with a view to identifying measures which could be taken to support attendance
- conducting exit interviews to identify (amongst other things) potential causes of absence and measures which could be utilised to further support attendance.

15. Expectation of employees when they are absent from work

Generally, all employees are expected to obtain advance management approval for any period of absence. It is inevitable, however, that absence is required to deal with an unforeseen emergency (e.g. the illness of a dependant) and most instances of sickness absence will not be authorised in advance. In these circumstances employees are expected to follow the agreed notification procedure, shown at **GUIDELINES for ABSENCE due to sickness**

The school expects to maintain regular sensitive contact with employees who are absent from work due to illness. This contact will be of a constructive and supportive nature and will normally seek agreement on the date and form of the next contact. Usually it will be the

appropriate line manager's responsibility to maintain this contact although sometimes, with the agreement of the absent employee, this role may be delegated to another member of staff.

The School cannot require, and does not expect, staff to carry out official duties whilst off sick but staff can do so at their own discretion.

16. Record Keeping and Monitoring

The school has rigorous and effective mechanisms to record and monitor staff sickness. Records are kept each day on individual staff attendance and monthly data on absences and punctuality is provided to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will provide the management committee with an overview of effective monitoring staff absence and actions taken to improve attendance.

17. SICKNESS REVIEW PROCESS

Monthly Review

On a monthly basis, the Headteacher will examine the sickness records for all staff. If any of the following occurs, a review process will be set in motion:

- where there are 3 spells of sickness, of any length, in the previous 3 month period.
- where a total of 10 days sickness has been taken in the previous 12 month period (for this purpose, there is no distinction between certificated, self-certificated and un-certificated sickness).
- where there are concerns

Return to work meetings, as a normal part of the everyday management / supervisory process, may have identified the reasons for absence and in some instances that no further action need be taken. However, an interview with the member of staff may need to follow the review process.

18. SICKNESS GUIDANCE INTERVIEW

The Headteacher will conduct an interview, normally within 2 weeks of the end of the period. The purpose of the interview is twofold:

- To ensure the employee is fit to return to work from a management viewpoint (rather than on medical opinion) and to assist the employee to undertake work duties.
- To be confident that there is no underlying problem contributing to the absence, either at home or work.

The interview would be used as a structured method to communicate between the Headteacher and the employee, in order to:-

- outline the areas of concern, explain the effect their absence is having and why their attendance is not acceptable;
- ask for an explanation for the area of concern;
- discuss ways of resolving or overcoming the concern, e.g. guidance or training, and consider if other support and assistance are required;
- confirm the standards of attendance/performance required and/or any targets to be reached; and
- review any arrangements made at a further interview, if necessary.

A detailed written record of the guidance interview and any agreed outcomes will be kept, and at the conclusion of the meeting there will be clarity on:

- action for the future, which may impact upon the achievement of targets, and areas of

responsibility

- a date for the next review meeting

The Headteacher will confirm to the employee in writing the salient points of the meeting and the outcomes to be pursued which may include:

- referral to the occupational health service
- referral to other support functions, e.g. confidential counselling service or specialist assessment temporary adjustment to duties/workload
- job redesign (where appropriate)

A further interview will be arranged within 6 weeks of term time.

6 WEEK REVIEW INTERVIEW (and Subsequent meetings)

The Headteacher will use the meeting to recap whether the defined standards of performance have been achieved and performance / attendance now meets expectations and the formal process should be ended. If attendance has not improved, a further 6 week guidance period or formal capability proceedings may be considered.

19. Disciplinary Action

Sickness is not in itself a disciplinary offence but it may be a contributory factor, particularly in cases concerning capability. The School's capability procedure outlines the courses of action to be taken where such action becomes necessary.

Wilful or consistent failure to follow the Schools procedure and procedures may result in disciplinary action. It is imperative therefore that all employees are fully aware of the sickness absence framework and ensure there are no breaches of School procedure.

If, following investigation, the school has evidence that an employee is abusing the right to time off, disciplinary action shall be taken, in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedure.

20. Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave

Details of Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave can be obtained from the School Business Manager or from the Human Resources department of the Local Authority.

Policy drafted: January 2025

Reviewed: February 2026

Headteacher Signature: Dr Michael Jarrett (sign)

Management committee chair: Sue Millington (sign)



Attending a Course or Knowledge of Absence Form



Please fill in all sections and submit to Headteacher at least ONE week in advance with supporting documents attached.

Name: _____

Date of Course / Absence: _____ Time: _____

Reason for Course / Absence:

Type of Absence: *(To be agreed by Headteacher)*

Other – Paid / Unpaid

CPD Paid

Special Leave Paid

Special Leave Unpaid

Which lessons / duties require cover? *(It is essential this section is filled in before permission is granted)*

Where will the cover work be left?

Once this form has been completed and agreed by Yomi, it is essential it is handed to Djedje (Key Stage 4) / Jon (Key Stage 3) to make any cover arrangements.

Signed by;

Headteacher: _____

Date: _____

Disclaimer: With leave of absence approved, I _____ agree to provide appropriate cover/work for the period I am away to ensure my duties are not hindered by my absence.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Southwark Children's Services
SELF-CERTIFICATION/RETURN TO WORK FORM

Name:

Department:

Payroll no:

All information on this form will be treated in the strictest confidence

This form relates to periods of sickness for 1 - 5 working days (or above) if required. It should be completed on the first day of return to work.

SECTION A To be completed by the employee & Line Manager

1. Dates of absence
First/last day of sickness Date: to Date:
2. Reason for sickness
3. Issues raised/any further action/targets to be met

SECTION B To be completed by the Employee

1. I am of the opinion that my absence was due to any injury sustained at work:

Yes ☐

No ☐
2. Has an accident form been completed?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Signed employee: _____ Date: _____

Signed manager: _____ Date: _____

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO HR ON THE DAY OF YOUR
RETURN TO WORK. FAILURE TO RETURN THIS FORM IMMEDIATELY MAY
RESULT IN LOSS OF PAY.**