

Special Leave of Absence Policy

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Related policies and documents

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Family Friendly Policy (*please refer to this in relation to maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave and parental leave*)
- Flexible Working Policy
- Management of Sickness Absence Policy (*please refer to this in relation to employee sickness absence*)

Definitions

- Where the word 'Trust' or "TEFAT" is used in this document it refers to The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.
- Where the term 'CEO' is used it refers to the Chief Executive Officer
- Where the words 'are' are used they refer to Principal, this includes Executive Principals, and Principals
- Reference to working days refers to normal working days individual employees are contracted to work.
- Where appropriate, local procedures and practices to implement Trust policies will be published by TEFAT head office or the individual academies.

Vision and values

Vision

The Elliot Foundation was created as a safe place for children and teachers where all are nurtured to achieve beyond even their own expectations. Our motto, "Where children believe they can because teachers know they can" reflects our conviction that raising expectations for all children and teachers is at the heart of a successful and inclusive society.

Values

1. Put children first

- a. We trust and value your professionalism
- b. We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children
- c. Our purpose is to improve the lives of children

2. Be safe

- a. Don't assume that someone else will do it
- b. Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children
- c. We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being
- d. Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff

3. Be kind & respect all

- a. People are allowed to be different as are you
- b. Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish
- c. This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others

4. Be open

- a. If you can see a better way, suggest it
- b. If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it
- c. We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children

5. Forgive

- a. We all make mistakes
- b. Admit them, learn from them and move on

6. Make a difference

- a. Making the world a better place starts with you
- b. Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others

1. Policy statement and objectives

- 1.1. The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust (“TEFAT”) is committed to creating a supportive work environment for employees which enables them to successfully balance their professional responsibilities with their personal lives and ensures equality of opportunity in employment.
- 1.2. The policy is designed to provide a framework that enables employees to request reasonable time off work for reasons, including those below, in order to manage their personal commitments:
 - a. Compassionate leave
 - b. Domestic emergency
 - c. Family/dependant emergency
 - d. Carer requirements
 - e. Public duties
 - f. Jury service
 - g. Hospital, doctor, dental and other medical leave
 - h. Religious observance
 - i. Time off to attend Interviews
 - j. Moving house
 - k. Study leave
 - l. Adverse weather conditions and travel disruptions
- 1.3. All other types of leave including annual leave, sick leave, maternity, adoption, paternity and parental leave are out of scope of this policy and instead are dealt with in other policies and procedures (please refer to the Related Policies section above).
- 1.4. The Trust recognises that balancing work and personal commitments can be challenging and that employees will from time to time face exceptional circumstances. The Trust recognises that, whilst the support and flexibility which can be offered to staff will vary subject to the specific job role, staff and managers should work together to identify ways which enable staff to balance their home, work, and personal lives. Some of the ways that this can be achieved are set out in the Related Policies listed above.

2. Scope and principles

- 2.1. This policy applies to all staff who are employed by the Trust. However, specific eligibility criteria may apply in relation to particular types of special leave as set out under the relevant policy criteria.
- 2.2. Requests for special leave will be considered in the context of both the supportive work environment the Trust wishes to provide to employees and the important part all employees play in the education of our children and young people. The Trust is committed to providing a fair and timely procedure

which supports staff in having leave arrangements which assist them in balancing their work responsibilities with their personal commitments. It is understood that on occasion such leave will be unavoidable and the Trust will, where possible, support such requests.

- 2.3. The examples of leave within this policy are non-exhaustive and where circumstances arise which are not identified within this policy the line manager and/or Principal/CEO has the authority to make a decision on whether or not leave is granted and whether this is paid or unpaid.
- 2.4. There may be occasions whereby line managers and/or Principals/CEOs are unable to agree time off or need to discuss deferring it until a later date. Every effort will be made to accommodate a reasonable special leave request or to reschedule a convenient alternative date, as appropriate.
- 2.5. The Trust recognises that it is not possible to cover all circumstances where special leave may be appropriate, for specific and exceptional circumstances that are not covered by this policy, please contact the central HR Team for further advice.
- 2.6. Where working patterns vary, special leave will be considered on a pro-rata basis for part-time staff (based on the number of contractual hours worked).
- 2.7. Approved special leave of absence may be granted on either a paid or unpaid basis, as appropriate. In a case where unpaid leave is granted employees will not receive salary, allowances, or any other payment which forms part of their terms of employment.
- 2.8. The Trust is committed to treating all employees fairly, equitably and consistently. When considering whether to grant discretionary leave and if granted, whether it will be with or without pay, the following factors will be considered:
 - The circumstance surrounding the request
 - The impact of the request on children, teaching and learning or the smooth operation of the school/Trust
 - Any previous requests for leave of absence
 - Staff cover arrangements and the impact on workload of others
 - The viability of the employee being able to make up the time lost

3. Procedure

- 3.1. This policy and procedure is the means by which a request for special leave will be addressed. Save for exceptional circumstances, requests for special leave must be made to the line manager/Principal/CEO and authorised in advance in order that the impact of the absence, including any necessary cover arrangements, can be managed.
- 3.2. Employees should initially discuss their special leave request with their line manager/the Principal/CEO. If the issue is highly sensitive, the employee may wish to access support from a workplace colleague.
- 3.3. Employees must submit special leave requests at the earliest opportunity, using the Special Leave of Absence Form (Appendix A). It is helpful for the employee to share as much detail as they can on the form as a decision will be made on the information submitted.
- 3.4. If an emergency arises and the employee is unable to request the leave of absence in advance, they must follow their absence reporting procedures as a minimum prior to taking special leave. On returning to work, the employee will need to account for the time off in the same way as they would normally have done, including submitting a retrospective leave of absence form.
- 3.5. Special leave is discretionary, therefore it is vital that employees do not assume that their request will be approved or paid. It is particularly important that employees refrain from making any bookings or financial commitments relating to a special leave request prior to approval being given. When considering special leave requests, line managers/Principals/CEO will be mindful of the needs of our pupils, other staff, financial considerations and the services we deliver across TEFAT. This will involve managers making difficult decisions, balancing the needs of the schools and Trust with the needs of the staff member making the request.
- 3.6. If an employee wishes to withdraw their request, they should speak to their line manager/Principal/CEO to withdraw their request.

4. Compassionate leave

- 4.1. The Trust recognises that employees may be faced with difficult personal circumstances at times, including situations involving the serious illness or death of a close relative or individual of significance to them. During these situations, employees may need to take time away from work and any request for special leave will be handled sensitively by line managers and/or Principals/CEO and in recognition that bereavement will impact individuals in different ways and at different times. They should also be mindful that funeral practices will differ amongst religions and cultures.

- 4.2. Employees wishing to take time off work in order to care for someone with a long term care need, are entitled to request Carer's Leave - please refer to paragraph 7. For time off to attend other matters relating to dependants, please refer to paragraph 5 "Family emergency and commitments".
- 4.3. Compassionate leave will be granted to employees who:
- a. need to care for a dependant or close relative who is seriously ill;
 - b. requires compassionate leave due to the death of a dependant, close relative, or individual of significance to them
 - c. Suffers a miscarriage or stillbirth (please see paragraph 4.8 below)
- 4.4. For the purposes of this policy, a close relative is defined as a spouse or partner, child, stepchild, grandchild, parent, step parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, brother or sister, step brother or step sister, or brother or sister-in-law. A "person of significance" will be determined by the individual circumstances of the situation.
- 4.5. Line managers and/or Principals/CEO should seek to provide support to employees and a flexible approach in such circumstances. They should meet with the employee as soon as possible to discuss the individual circumstances, including the relationship that the staff member had with the person, the likely duration of leave required, and consideration of any other additional support which should be provided to the employee. They should also be mindful that long term bereavement may lead to the employee suffering from a condition which constitutes a disability as defined by the Equality Act, such as depression or other mental health conditions. In these circumstances advice should be sought from occupational health advisors which should inform discussions between the employee and their line manager and/or Principal/CEO and any additional support to be provided to the employee.
- 4.6. On an employee's return to work, principals and line managers should continue to be sensitive to the employees physical and emotional wellbeing and offer any appropriate support. They should also ensure they provide details of support networks available to the employee, including the Employee Assistance programme (EAP).
- 4.7. Paid compassionate leave of normally up to 5 working days, may be given to a member of staff. If the employee requires longer or additional periods of leave, the line manager and/or Principal/CEO should discuss this sensitively with the employee. Options to provide continued support to the employee should be considered and discussed with them, including an extension of the special paid leave, annual leave, unpaid leave, TOIL or temporary adjustments to working patterns, hours and/or responsibilities.

- 4.8. In circumstances where an employee's baby is stillborn after the 24th week of pregnancy, or where a baby dies after birth, the employee will still qualify for maternity leave and pay or paternity leave and pay, subject to the normal eligibility criteria. Please refer to the Family Friendly Policy.
- 4.9. In circumstances where an employee's baby's mother or primary adopter dies within 52 weeks of the child's date of birth or date of adoption placement, the employee will qualify for bereaved partner paternity leave, subject to the normal eligibility criteria. Please refer to the Family Friendly Policy for further details.
- 4.10. As individual circumstances may vary, it is recommended that each application for compassionate leave is assessed individually by the line manager and/or Principal/CEO, taking the following into consideration:
- a. the relationship and caring responsibilities between the individual and the employee;
 - b. the nature and extent of any illness or treatment required;
 - c. the impact of the bereavement or illness on the employee;
 - d. any practical arrangements the employee needs to make, including if they are involved in making funeral arrangements;
 - e. whether there may be a requirement to travel or attend a funeral or ceremony; and
 - f. the business needs and demands of the organisation at that time and the capacity to make alternative arrangements to cover duties

5. Parental Bereavement Leave & Pay

- 5.1. The Trust recognises that the devastating loss of a child under any circumstances will be a very difficult time for parents involved and is committed to ensuring a supportive approach, including enabling employees to take time off away from work at an exceptionally difficult time. Principals and line managers will endeavour to be as flexible and supportive as possible in these circumstances.
- 5.2. Parental bereavement leave is available to all parents who lose a child under the age of 18 or who suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks. The parental bereavement leave which is known as 'Jack's Law' entitles parents to a statutory right to 2 weeks off work, in addition to any entitlement to maternity or paternity leave (see 3.8 above).

- 5.3. The following individuals are eligible for statutory bereavement leave, regardless of how long they have been employed by the Trust for:
- a. biological parent
 - b. adoptive parent, if the child was living with them
 - c. person who lived with the child and had responsibility for them, for at least 4 weeks before they died
 - d. 'intended parent' due to become legal parent through surrogacy
 - e. partner of the child's parent, if they live with the child and the child's parent in an enduring family relationship
- 5.4. Parents will be able to take their parental bereavement leave as either a single block of two weeks, or as 2 separate blocks of one week each taken at different times across the first year after their child's death. If more than 1 child dies, the employee is entitled to 2 weeks' parental bereavement leave for each child.
- 5.5. The Trust will pay employees full pay during any period of statutory bereavement leave.
- 5.6. Employees who wish to use their entitlement to statutory parental bereavement leave, will need to notify their Principal (for school based staff) or line manager/CEO (for central based staff). This can be in person, via a phone call or an email. When notice is given employees will need to confirm the following:
- a. when they would like the parental bereavement leave to begin
 - b. the amount of leave they wish to take (1 or 2 weeks)
 - c. the date that their child died.
- 5.7. If parental bereavement leave is taken within the first 56 days (8 weeks) after the child's death, employees are able to take leave straight away without the need to provide any notice, as long as employees have notified the Trust/academy before they are due to start work.
- 5.8. If parental bereavement leave is taken more than 56 days (8 weeks) after the child's death, employees are usually required to give their Principal (for school based staff) or line manager (for central based staff) at least one week's notice of their intention to take parental bereavement leave. However, Principals and line managers are encouraged to be sympathetic to requests made outside of these notice periods in the circumstances.

6. Domestic emergency

- 6.1. The Trust understands that there may be situations in which employees need to take time off work in order to deal with domestic emergencies (please see paragraph 7 below for time off work for family/dependant related emergencies).
- 6.2. A member of staff can take a reasonable period of time off work to deal with a genuine domestic emergency. The purpose of this leave is to enable the employee to deal with the immediate essential arrangements and should be limited to the time necessary to do so. Examples of situations which may be considered an 'emergency' are:
 - a. burglary
 - b. vehicle theft
 - c. road accident or other similar accident involving the employee (excluding time off for illness or injury where absence management policy will apply)
 - d. emergency repairs to home or services arising from or to avoid flooding or fire
 - e. other similar circumstances
- 6.3. An employee may request time off work to attend to the domestic emergency, which if granted, will normally be on an unpaid, annual leave or TOIL basis. However, there will be exceptional circumstances in which paid leave will be appropriate and can be granted at the Principal/CEO's discretion.
- 6.4. The member of staff must contact their line manager and/or Principal/CEO as soon as possible to discuss the reason for their absence and the likely length of any absence requested. Any extension to the initial period of leave should be requested by the employee as soon as they become aware this may be necessary.
- 6.5. Where two or more people from the same household are employed by the Trust, only one employee will be granted time off for instances whereby presence is required at the property concerned, for example flooding due to burst pipes.

7. Family emergency and commitments

- 7.1. The Trust recognises that family and dependant related emergencies can occur and it is important that staff are able to deal with these appropriately. Special leave of absence is available for employees to deal with sudden unforeseen problems related to their dependents and to make longer term arrangements as necessary.

- 7.2. A dependant is defined under this policy as an employee's spouse, civil partner, child (biological, adopted or fostered or for whom the employee has a legitimate responsibility), parent or someone who lives with the employee as part of their family. A dependant may also be someone who does not necessarily live at the same address as the employee but reasonably relies on the employee for assistance or to arrange provision of care. This may be where the employee is the primary carer or the only person who can help in an emergency.
- 7.3. Family emergency leave is available to employees for unexpected emergencies connected with their dependents, and should not be used for events known in advance. Please see 7.6. Situations where special leave for family related emergencies is appropriate include:
- a. to deal with unexpected disruption or breakdown in care arrangements for a dependant, for example, when a childminder is unavailable, the child is sent home from school; or when a nursery or school is unexpectedly closed;
 - b. if a dependant falls ill and requires the employee's care or has been involved in an accident or suffers some form of assault or harm.
 - c. employee experiencing domestic abuse, to assist with having to take time off for any relevant appointments, or seeking counselling, recovery or respite from the perpetrator.
- 7.4. Employees should request special leave for family emergencies by contacting their line manager and/or Principal/CEO in line with the academy/Trust procedures to discuss the situation. Line managers and/or Principals/CEO will discuss the nature of the emergency and likely duration of leave required with the employee and will also consider whether they need to provide any other additional support to the employee in the circumstances.
- 7.5. Special leave for family emergencies will be granted on a case by case basis subject to the individual circumstances and the impact of leave on the organisation. Normally, up to 2 paid working days may be granted in such circumstances in any rolling 12 month period. Depending on the situation, a reasonable amount of extended paid leave, unpaid leave, annual leave or TOIL to deal with the emergency may also be agreed.
- 7.6. There may be other circumstances in which employees require time off work to facilitate important commitments connected to their dependents which do not constitute an emergency. In order to minimise the impact of any absence, the Trust requests that employees make all reasonable efforts to arrange for these commitments to take place outside of working hours.

However, requests for such leave when necessary should be made by the employee and discussed with their line manager and/or Principal/CEO providing as much notice as possible. Line managers and/or Principals/CEO will consider leave requests on a case by case basis and if granted, such leave will normally be on an unpaid, TOIL or annual leave basis.

8. Carer's leave

- 8.1. The Trust recognises that dependant related issues can occur and it is important that staff are able to deal with these appropriately. Carer's leave is available for employees to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need.
- 8.2. For the purpose of the carer's leave, a dependant does not have to be a family member. A 'dependant' is defined as a person who reasonably relies on the employee for assistance or to arrange provision of care and has:
 - a. a physical or mental illness or injury that means they are expected to need care for more than 3 months;
 - b. a disability (as defined in the Equality Act 2010); or
 - c. care needs because of their old age
- 8.3. Employees can take up to one week of unpaid leave every 12 months. A 'week' means the length of time they usually work over 7 days. Employees can either take a whole week off or take individual days or half days throughout the year.
- 8.4. If an employee needs to care for more than one person, they cannot take a week of carer's leave for each dependent. They can only take one week every 12 months. They can use the week of leave to provide or arrange care for more than one dependent.
- 8.5. Employees should request the carer's leave by contacting their line manager and/or Principal/CEO in line with the academy/Trust procedures to discuss the situation. Line managers and/or Principals/CEO will discuss the dates and the duration of leave required with the employee and will also consider whether they need to provide any other additional support to the employee in the circumstances.

- 8.6. Employees must provide notice before they want their leave to start as follows:
- a. If the request is for half a day or a day, the notice period must be at least 3 days.
 - b. If the request is for more than one day, the notice period must be at least twice as long as the requested leave
 - c. The notice period must be in full days, even if the request includes half day amounts
- 8.7. If the employee's absence would cause serious disruption to the academy/ Trust operations, the employee may be asked to take the leave at a different time. If this is the case, the Principal/CEO will write to the employee within 7 days of receiving the request stating the reasons for postponement. They must agree to another date within one month of the requested date for the leave to be taken.

9. Public duties

- 9.1. The Trust is committed to working closely with recognised trade unions and values the role they play in the education sector. Employees who are trade union members are entitled to take reasonable time off work on a paid basis to fulfil trade union duties and training and an unpaid basis to fulfil trade union activities.
- 9.2. In addition, members of staff who hold certain public positions have a right to reasonable unpaid leave during working hours to carry out certain public duties. Members of staff who are members of the following bodies are also eligible for leave:
- a. magistrate or justice of the peace;
 - b. member of a local authority;
 - c. member of any statutory tribunal;
 - d. member of the prison independent monitoring boards (England or Wales) or a member of the prison visiting committees (Scotland);
 - e. member of the managing or governing body of an educational establishment;
 - f. member of a school council or board in Scotland;
 - g. member of a health body e.g NHS Trust;
 - h. member of the Environment Agency or the Scottish Environment Protection agency; and
 - i. member of Scottish Water or a Water Customer Consultation Panel
 - j. member of the Teachers' Pension Scheme Pension Board or Local Government Pension Scheme Pension Board.

- 9.3. The public body may also require the individual to attend training, additional meetings, or committees in order for them to fully perform their function. For the purposes of the leave application, these should be considered to be part of the individual's public duties.
- 9.4. Individuals fulfilling public duties who are not eligible to take time off work to do so are:
- a. agency workers
 - b. member of the police service or armed forces (save for Reserve Forces, please refer to paragraph 7.6)
 - c. civil servants, if their public duties are connected to political activities restricted under their terms of their employment.
- 9.5. Employees should notify their line manager and/or Principal/CEO, on appointment, if they hold membership of any of the organisations referred to in paragraphs 9.1 and 9.2 above, or if they take up membership of such organisations during their employment.
- 9.6. The employee should give their line manager and/or Principal/CEO as much notice as possible, ideally a minimum of one week, of any duties/training for which they wish to take leave. They should also try to schedule any time off work at times to minimise the impact of their absence where at all possible.
- 9.7. The employee will be asked to provide any additional documentation to their line manager and/or Principal/CEO as evidence of their request and/or written confirmation of the dates and times of their attendance.
- 9.8. In considering whether the leave application is reasonable, the line manager will take the following factors into consideration:
- a. how much time off is required for the performance of the particular duty;
 - b. how much time off has already been granted to the employee of the public duties; and
 - c. the impact of their absence on the workplace.
- 9.9. Volunteers in the Reserve Forces are required to inform the Trust of their commitment. Where possible the Trust requires staff members to arrange training during non working time. In situations where this is not possible, the Trust will give consideration to supporting the leave on a paid basis to enable the reservist to attend. Where employees are mobilised to duty as a reservist they are required to provide the Trust with reasonable advance notice of their upcoming absence. This will generally be 'unpaid' special leave.
- 9.10. Employees who serve during Elections as a Presiding Officer or Polling Clerk are granted time off with pay. This provision does not extend to individuals

who assist candidates/ parties at elections, who may take annual leave or unpaid leave at their line manager and/or Principal/CEO's discretion.

10. Jury service

- 10.1. Paid leave of absence will be granted for jury service subject to the arrangements outlined in paragraphs 10.4 and 10.5 below. The employee should contact their line manager as soon they receive the notification that they are required to attend court. This will also ensure that, where necessary, arrangements can be made to cover their absence.
- 10.2. Jury service normally lasts for 10 working days, but may be longer. The employee should provide their line manager with a copy of the jury service letter and any other relevant documentation.
- 10.3. In the event of the employee not being required to serve on a particular day, the employee would normally be expected to report to work. However, the line manager and/or Principal/CEO will consider whether this requirement is appropriate given the location of the court if the employee has travelled to it and the individual circumstances including the nature of any case. Employees should contact their line manager and or Principal/CEO to discuss if attendance at work is required in these circumstances.

11. Time off for medical appointments

- 11.1. The Trust will support employees by providing paid time off work to enable them to access medical attention in the event of a medical emergency relating to their own health.
- 11.2. The Trust fully understands that there are occasions whereby employees need to attend non-emergency medical appointments and it is important that they are able to do so. In order to minimise the impact on children and school operation, the Trust expects employees to try to schedule such appointments outside of their normal working time where at all possible. On occasions that this is not possible, employees should schedule appointments so as to minimise the disruption to the organisation, such as at the beginning or end of the working day wherever possible. Employees must provide their line manager and/or Principal/CEO with as much notice as possible if they require time off work to attend such appointments.
- 11.3. Routine appointments such as dental or optician appointments should ideally be booked during the school holidays, after school, or at weekends to minimise disruption.
- 11.4. Where an employee is unable to schedule a doctor/hospital appointment outside of the working day, then time off with pay will be granted for an appointment made during working hours at the discretion of the

Principal/CEO. The employee would need to provide a copy of the appointment letter.

- 11.5. In circumstances in which an employee suffers from a long term ongoing medical condition which constitutes a disability as defined by the Equality Act, the line manager and/or Principal/CEO should authorise paid special leave of absence to enable the employee to attend relevant medical appointments which are not possible to be made outside of the employee's normal working hours. Line managers/Principal must seek the advice of a member of the central HR Team and discuss the appropriateness of seeking guidance from the Trust's Occupational Health advisors to inform the discussions and agreements made with the employee.
- 11.6. Line managers and/or Principal/CEOs should ensure that the application of this policy does not directly or indirectly discriminate against employees who have a protected characteristic, or who associate with someone who has a protected characteristic, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Further advice must be sought from the central HR Team in relevant situations.
- 11.7. **Infertility treatment.** The Trust will approach requests for time off work to attend medical appointments in relation to infertility treatment in a supportive way. Employees should make every effort to arrange appointments outside of working hours where at all possible. When an employee is unfit to work following a course of treatment, they will be required to submit a doctor's fit note from the 8th calendar day of sickness absence onwards. Pay in these circumstances will be determined by the employee's contractual sick pay entitlement.
- 11.8. **Cosmetic treatment and/or surgery** Where any employee chooses to have surgery or a medical procedure solely for cosmetic purposes, this should be arranged during a school holiday closure period or the employees' annual leave (52 week support staff only). Save for exceptional circumstances, these are not classed as medical procedures for the purposes of this policy.
- 11.9. **Gender reassignment and related treatment.** The Trust recognises that some medical procedures, including surgical interventions, may be undertaken as part of an employee's gender reassignment. Such treatment is not regarded as elective or cosmetic for the purposes of this policy. In line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, gender reassignment is a protected characteristic, and employees undergoing or proposing to undergo a process of reassignment must not be treated less favourably. Reasonable paid time off will be granted for medical appointments, procedures, and recovery periods associated with gender reassignment, subject to appropriate medical evidence. Line managers and/or the Principal/CEO must seek advice from the central HR Team to ensure appropriate support is in place and that decisions are fair, consistent, and compliant with legal obligations.

- 11.10. All non-elective hospitalisation should be treated as sickness absence and medical certificates provided in line with normal sickness absence procedures. If the dental or medical condition requires a longer period of absence from work, the absence will be treated as being due to ill health and normal sickness absence procedures should be followed.

12. Time off for religious observance

- 12.1. Ensuring equality of opportunity, promoting an inclusive culture and valuing diversity are core to the ethos of the Trust. Therefore, the Trust is committed to celebrating and supporting diversity across the workforce. Requests for short term flexible working arrangements or time off to observe religious or cultural tradition will be considered sympathetically and will be accommodated wherever possible.
- 12.2. Requests should be given with as much notice as possible to the employee's line manager and/or Principal/CEO so that full consideration to the individual circumstances can be given.
- 12.3. Where possible, employees actively practicing the relevant religion will be granted paid leave for 1 day within a rolling 12 month period when a significant festival falls during a normal working day.
- 12.4. Where religious observance lasts for more than one day during a normal working week or in a 12 month rolling period, the line manager and/or Principal/CEO will make a decision as to whether additional leave can be accommodated, usually on an unpaid basis. However, additional options for granting additional leave, including the use of TOIL or annual leave, will be considered.
- 12.5. Employees remaining in the workplace during specific religious days and festivals may also wish for a private space for prayer or meditation during this time. Where possible, the Trust will ensure an appropriate space is available to them for this purpose.

13. Time off to attend interviews

- 13.1. The Trust recognises that employees may have a desire to progress their career with another organisation that is not part of the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust, resulting in the need to attend a job interview.
- 13.2. The Trust at the discretion of the line manager and/or Principal/CEO will normally grant employees a reasonable amount of paid leave to attend those interviews that cannot be arranged outside of working time. Staff members must provide as much notice as possible to limit the impact on the organisation.

- 13.3. The line manager and/or Principal/CEO may request to see evidence of the interview. The amount of time off will be agreed locally, taking into account the time of the interview, the length of attendance required at the interview, the location of the interview and the employee's role. There is not an automatic entitlement to a full day off.
- 13.4. If employees intend to visit a school/or work location as part of considering whether to apply for a job or following a job offer being made, they should arrange such visits during their own time where at all possible or in a way that minimises the impact on children and school/Trust operation.
- 13.5. Employees whose posts have been identified as at risk of redundancy may also have a statutory entitlement to reasonable paid leave to attend interviews. Further advice must be sought from the central HR Team.

14. Moving house

- 14.1. Employees are expected by the Trust to arrange events such as moving house during non working time where at all possible.
- 14.2. The Trust recognises that it can be difficult to coordinate a 'completion date' on the purchase or sale of a property on a non working day. In this circumstance the Trust will normally support one day of paid Special Leave of Absence. Additional leave may be granted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Principal/CEO. Employees are requested to alert their line manager and/or Principal/CEO when they become aware of their completion date to ensure that cover can be put in place to limit the impact on the organisation.

15. Study leave

- 15.1. The Trust wishes to provide a working environment in which employees are encouraged and supported to develop professionally. The Trust recognises the value of continuing professional development in relation to employee's job roles and will support employees where possible to complete relevant recognised qualifications.
- 15.2. Line managers and/or Principals/CEO will consider requests for Special Leave of Absence to sit examinations or attend courses on the individual circumstances, including the benefit of the qualification for the individual themselves, the job role the employee holds and the organisation as a whole.
- 15.3. Time off to sit an examination that would enhance the employee's professional development in their job role will be granted with pay.

16. Adverse weather conditions and travel disruptions

- 16.1. The Trust recognises that on occasion exceptionally poor weather conditions or unexpected travel disruptions can make it difficult or unsafe for employees to attend work. Employees should make every effort to get to work where it is safe to do so but if they do not think that this is possible then they should contact their line Manager and/or Principal/CEO as soon as possible to discuss the reasons that travel is impossible or unsafe. In these circumstances, employees will ordinarily be asking to work from home where possible. If this is not possible due to a specific job role, the employee will be requesting special leave and if authorised, special leave will ordinarily be granted on a paid basis.
- 16.2. In exceptional circumstances where the school/office is closed and employees have been informed that they are not required to attend work, they will be paid their normal salary for the duration of the closure. However, where possible, employees should continue to work from home.
- 16.3. When there is exceptionally poor weather conditions, such as snow, if employees are going to be late arriving at their place of work they should report the circumstances to their line manager and/or Principal/CEO in accordance with local procedures. In these circumstances and in situations whereby employees are granted early release from work due to adverse weather conditions, the employee would not ordinarily suffer any loss of pay.
- 16.4. If employees are scheduled to be working offsite, for example attending a training course or external meeting, but are unable to attend due to adverse weather conditions or travel disruptions, they should report this to their line manager and/or Principal/CEO. They should make every effort to report to their usual place of work instead, unless those adverse weather conditions or travel disruptions make this also impossible or unsafe to do so.
- 16.5. Absences caused by the urgent need to care for children, elderly or other close relatives whose normal care arrangements have been closed or broken down due to severe weather conditions or travel disruptions will be considered under “family emergency” (section 7). There is an expectation that colleagues will make reasonable attempts to organise alternative arrangements and/or share the responsibility of care with a partner or other relative if appropriate.

17. Other requests for leave of absence without pay / sabbaticals

- 17.1. The Trust recognises that from time to time employees may benefit from a longer period of absence from work. The Principal/CEO has the discretion to grant unpaid leave of absence in other circumstances which they consider to be appropriate.

- 17.2. All employees with six months' service will be eligible to apply for an unpaid leave / sabbatical.
- 17.3. Employees should put their request in writing to the Principal/CEO, setting out clear reasons for the leave, specify the length of absence, why it would be beneficial to them and what impact and/or benefit there is to the school/Trust.
- 17.4. Each case should be considered on its individual merits, with regard to equalities legislation, fairness and consistency, and with consideration to the needs of the academy and its pupils and/or the Trust as a whole. In making a determination, the Principal/CEO should seek advice from the central HR team.
- 17.5. The terms and conditions of the leave of absence / sabbatical should be discussed and fully documented, including: the reason for absence, expected duration, right of return to the same role, impact on pay and pension, and any other conditions of service.
- 17.6. Where an unpaid leave / sabbatical is approved for six months or less, the employee will return to their previous job as far as is reasonable. Where a leave is approved for more than six months, the employee will return to either the same job or a similar job on the same terms and conditions, either at the same school or a different school within the Trust.
- 17.7. The employee and manager should meet a week before the end of the career break (a month if the break is more than three months) to discuss and confirm arrangements to return to work.
- 17.8. If an employee wants to return to work earlier than agreed, they should give eight weeks' notice and arrange to meet their manager.
- 17.9. Where an employee decides not to return at the end of the sabbatical, they should inform the line manager/Principal/CEO as soon as possible and within their contractual notice obligations.

18. Unauthorised absence

- 18.1. Line managers may wish to meet with staff where excessive requests for time off under this policy is impacting their work and/or service delivery. This discussion will be aimed at considering the needs of the employee, the impact on the children and colleagues and the operation of the school/Trust. Importantly, it will identify ways in which the amount of leave and/or impact can be reduced.
- 18.2. Where an employee fails to adhere to the request requirements set out in this policy and/or takes leave without seeking prior authorisation, or is identified as not utilising the leave for the purpose it was requested, this may be classed as unauthorised absence, unless there is a reasonable explanation.

Where deemed to be unauthorised in these circumstances, the leave will be unpaid and may be treated as a disciplinary matter under the Disciplinary Policy.

- 18.3. If a request for special leave is declined employees are expected to attend work as normal. If the employee chooses to be absent from work regardless, the absence will be treated as unauthorised. Where deemed to be unauthorised in these circumstances, the leave will be unpaid and may be treated as a disciplinary matter under the Disciplinary Policy.

19. Support

- 19.1. The Trust recognises that staff often access the support available through this policy at a time they are trying to balance the needs of their personal lives alongside their commitments to us as their employer and the pupils and colleagues they support.
- 19.2. As a Trust we have an Employee Assistance Programme all staff can access. This service includes free, confidential advice and support for issues at home, financial guidance, legal enquiries and signposting and general help. Employees are encouraged to speak to their line manager, Principal, CEO or HR Lead for further information.

20. Resolution of concerns

- 20.1. The decision of the line manager and/or Principal/CEO is final in relation to the request.
- 20.2. Employees who feel that a request for time off has been unreasonably refused should, in the first instance, seek to resolve the matter informally through discussion with their line manager and/or Principal/CEO.
- 20.3. Where an employee believes that their request has been handled unfairly or inappropriately, they may choose to raise the matter under the Trust's Grievance Policy. Employees are expected to attempt informal resolution before progressing to a formal stage and are encouraged to contact their trade union for advice and support if they are a member of one.