



UTC OXFORDSHIRE

Supporting Staff and Families



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We value our staff and appreciate that everyone needs support in working towards a good work-life balance. Home and family commitments can be challenging, and we are committed to working with all our staff to accommodate needs while still enabling us to fulfil our professional obligations.

We aim to make working at the UTC both professionally rewarding and conducive to continued professional development, as well as sustainable and enjoyable experience.

The guidelines here are designed as a reference for our staff who may be new or expectant parents, adoptive parents, a home-carer or managing the care needs of their own parents or other close family members.

Term time absences are not always to support family needs but sometimes desired for “big” celebrations, such as weddings, christenings, religious celebrations and significant anniversaries. Our staff may also need time off to attend funerals of family or friends.

Culture and Support

At UTC Oxfordshire, we will:

- Communicate with you about your requests and plans;
- Discuss your needs and help evaluate what is essential and desired;
- Offer reassurance that parental leave and career progression are not mutually exclusive;
- Offer informal support to colleagues from experienced colleagues;
- Be challenging of off-hand and casual remarks that may create a negative precedent or culture about working part-time;
- Have an open-door policy for our SLT team to encourage openness in discussing work-life balance;
- Encourage requests for discretionary leave to be made through the correct channels and in a timely fashion to enable us to find ways of saying yes.

Systems and Staffing

We will ensure:

- Our school calendar of essential dates is accessible to all staff, kept up-to date and shared in a timely fashion
- Short-notice meetings are avoided whenever possible, although we recognise that exceptional circumstances arise
- That job advertisements make clear the possibility of part time or flexible working arrangements
- Discuss part time and flexible working openly and honestly in job interviews
- Remind staff at appropriate points in the year when part time and flexible working can be considered. This would normally be, but not exclusively, during the timetabling process.

Pregnancy

We will ensure that timely health and safety reports, adjustments and discussions are completed when appropriate. We will further ensure that a flexible approach is taken with pregnant staff in terms of duties.

Parental Leave

We will:

- Invite a meeting to discuss the provision for parental leave in good time so that we can evaluate the need for parental leave against professional work;
- Make the options for taking parental leave clear from the outset. We are happy to stagger parental leave, which may work better for some parents. For example, the parental leave does not have to be taken over consecutive working days, and can be deferred in whole or part to a later date;
- Facilitate the time for making an informed decision with partners;
- Have open, supportive conversations with parents who are returning to work, for example, using “keeping in touch” days;
- Agree to means and frequency of communication whilst on leave;
- Empower and offer CPD while on parental leave (without having an expectation for participation);
- Use parental leave for staff leadership roles as an opportunity to develop other staff, providing them with experience of a leadership position.

Discretionary absence

We recognise that moments come along where staff would benefit from flexible and discretionary time in order to achieve a good work-life balance. The examples below are not exhaustive but are designed to indicate times when staff may wish to request an absence. In all cases, they should discuss it with their line manager so that we can support these requests wherever possible. Questions we may ask could be about how other family members are also available to support you. A good rule of thumb is that requests are “on occasion” and that professional obligations and team work are not compromised by frequent absence.

- Weddings of close family and friends
- Significant anniversaries
- Significant birthdays
- Hospital appointments
- Arranging care for close members of the family
- Illness of children (we have an expectation that parents share childcare as much as possible, such that one parent’s employer does not provide for all instances of leave)
- Funerals of friends or family

Wherever possible, we expect staff to be proactive in arranging minor medical and dental appointments to be outside of working hours or with minimal disruption to timetabled work.

Bereavement

In the event of losing a partner, child or sibling, we will provide automatic leave of absence for two weeks. We will provide support and reassurance that returning to work is not expected until ready. We will openly discuss arrangements for providing cover and support. Upon return to work, we will evaluate and proactively consider flexible working arrangements in order to fully support the person, whatever their circumstances may be.

The Oxfordshire Maternity Policy can be found in its entirety here:

https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/HR/form_sandpay/APR15MaternitySchemeteachers.pdf