



Supplied by Education HR – September 2017

# Carers Support Policy

Formally Adopted

Autumn 2022



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# 1 Introduction

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The School positively values the contribution of carers within its workforce and seeks to encourage and support employees who have care responsibilities to remain at work by offering choice and flexibility.

The School recognises that around 20% of employees in any workplace will be an unpaid carer and that it can often be difficult to balance work/life commitments. Therefore, the School aims to offer a range of employment policies that are both supportive and flexible to all its employees to enable them to meet their care and work commitments, but at the same time ensuring that the School continues to meet its business needs and high standards of education.

This policy also supports the aims and objectives of the School's Equal Opportunities in Employment policy by aiming to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

## 1.1 Scope

This policy will apply to all School employees and also includes Governors and agency/supply teaching staff, Visitors, Volunteers and Contractor staff.

## 1.2 Equality Statement

This policy applies equally to all School employees regardless of their age, disability, sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership. Care will be taken to ensure that no traditionally excluded groups are adversely impacted in implementing this policy. Monitoring will take place to ensure compliance and fairness.

# 2 Definition of a Carer

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"A carer is someone who is (or is expecting to) care for an adult who is:- their spouse or civil partner; their near relative (this term covers parents, in-laws, adult children, adopted adult children, siblings (including in-laws), uncles, aunts, grandparents or step-relatives); neither of the above but someone who lives at the same address as the employee"

*Department of Trade & Industry*

The School recognises the difficulty in balancing work and care responsibilities, therefore, reasonable consideration will be given to requests for flexible working from employees who have caring responsibilities.

## 2.1 Employment Rights to request Flexible Working

Any employee, regardless of any caring responsibility has the right to request flexible working. This could include a request to change working hours, work location or times required to be at work.

Full details of this right can be found in the School's Flexible Working Policy.

## 2.2 Time off to Care for dependents

An employee may also request to take 'reasonable' time-off (unpaid) in order to deal with unexpected or sudden emergencies relating to a dependent.

## 2.3 Parental Leave

Employees can also request to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave for each child and adopted child, up to their 18th birthday.

The limit on how much parental leave each parent can take in a year is 4 weeks for each child (unless the employer agrees otherwise).

Parental leave must be taken as whole weeks (eg 1 week or 2 weeks) rather than individual days, unless agreed otherwise or if the child is disabled. Parental leave does not have to be taken all at once.

A 'week' equals the length of time an employee normally works over 7 days.

## 2.4 Supportive Employment Policies & Procedures

The School has a number of employment policies in place to give employees support in managing their work/life balance commitments. There could be a number of situations that employees have to deal with in order to meet their care responsibilities whilst combining this with work. This may involve unpredictable or short-term situations such as taking a relative or dependent to a GP or hospital appointment or more long-term situations such as needing to take time away from work to provide care for a dependent who is ill.

The following policies/procedures should provide managers and employees with a number of options in order to help manage work and care responsibilities:-

- Flexible working policy - covers permanent and temporary requests to work part-time, changes in working pattern, job-sharing, term-time only working, compressed hours, annualised hours.
- Leave Arrangements Policy – covers Compassionate Leave, Parental Leave (unpaid), Time off to Care for Dependents (unpaid)

The above policies can be obtained via the school website. Human Resources can be contacted for further advice or guidance.

All employees have access to the above policies, however, certain rights may only apply after the employee has served a period of qualifying service and/or can demonstrate that they meet other criteria before being eligible to make a request. For further information, please refer to the relevant policy.

## 3 Practical Support Measures

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Apart from the above employment policies, there are a number of practical measures that the Headteacher / Line Manager can consider in providing further support to employees with care responsibilities, such as:-

- Allowing a means of the employee being able to take or make private urgent calls ;
- Consideration to allowing time-off at short notice if requested to deal with emergencies;
- Parking nearer to the building (where applicable) should the employee need to leave work urgently;
- Holding regular review meetings to discuss any problems/issues.

Human Resources can provide further advice and support to the Headteacher, Governors, Line Managers and to Employees themselves in respect of any of the above.

## 4 Employee Counselling Service

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The School offers an employee counselling service via Torbay Council, as a means of individual confidential support. The service is free and available to all School based employees and provides them with the opportunity to talk to someone in complete confidence about any problems they may be experiencing, either in or outside of work. Carers in particular may find the service helpful and can ring the help-line to be referred to an independent counsellor on an individual basis. Counsellors can meet with employees during working hours or outside of work time, on or off site, at a mutually convenient time. Employees' partners can also take-up the counselling service with the employee at an additional charge.

Counsellors specialise in a range of different areas:- stress management, trauma, anger, bereavement, marriage, abuse and other relationship problems, work-related problems and can help the individual to come to terms with issues they find difficult or problematic. Counsellors can also refer the individual onto other services if necessary, although these may come at an additional cost which is not funded by the School.

## 5 Carers Information and Advice Service

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Torbay has a specialist telephone service providing information and advice for carers 'Signposts for Carers' on 01803 666620 <https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/carers-service/>. This confidential service is open to anyone who is a carer in Torbay. No referral is needed. The service can deal with a wide range of enquiries covering local support, benefits, equipment and a range of other services that can help carers. Signposts is open Monday – Thursday 9am – 4.30pm and Friday 9am – 1pm. Out of hours a message can be left with a 24hour operator who will arrange a call back on the next working day.

The School recognises that most employees have needs outside of work - whether it's to support dependants, take time off to study, or undertake other pursuits - and is committed to helping employees strike a happy work/life balance. It is also aware of its legal duties in relation to working time and the right employees have to time off, rest periods and limitations on the length of the working week.

Our work/life balance strategy and policies shall help the School achieve its aim to become an 'employer of choice', they also support and implement elements of the School's Equality policies.

# 6 Policy Feedback

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Should you have any comments regarding this policy, please address them to the HR Policy mailbox –

[HRpolicy@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:HRpolicy@torbay.gov.uk)

## 6.1 History of Policy Changes

Date	Page	Details of Change	Agreed by:
August 2014	3	Right to Request Flexible Worked extended to all Employees not just Carers	
	All	Policy reformatted.	
	5	Policy updated on further support offered for Carers.	
Sep 2017	Various	New layout and updated to meet School changes.	

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