

Fostering Friendly Policy

1 Introduction

The school recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. We understand that foster carers who do other work in addition to fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child/children.

We will do this, wherever possible, by creating a fostering friendly organisation that offers flexible working arrangements which respond to the needs of all foster carers or approved kinship carer employees.

2 Scope

This policy sets out the additional paid leave that is available to prospective and existing foster carers and kinship carers (where this is compatible with the demands of the employee's job role).

3 Eligibility

This policy applies to school employees who:

- are applying to become foster carers.
- are approved foster carers and have a child in placement (or have had a child/children in placement for 75% of the previous 12 months i.e. emergency foster carers, respite foster carers or foster carers who have taken short breaks in between children) or are an approved kinship carer.

Being a fostering friendly employer and the leave associated with it, will also apply to employees who are foster carers with an independent fostering agency or another local authority.

4 Time off

Foster carers and approved kinship carers may request paid time off to support them in their role as foster carers. The allocated leave will run over a rolling 12-month period (leave cannot be carried over into the next rolling year); the leave will be pro-rata for part-time employees.

The allocated leave is as follows:

- child review meetings, annual foster carer review meetings, training and other (i.e. settling new children into the home) – up to 5 days.

In addition to the above, paid leave is also available to prospective new foster carers as follows:

- assessment and initial training prior to approval as a foster carer - up to 3 days.
- attendance at panel for approval – 1 day.

The headteacher will approve the leave on a case by case, discretionary basis taking into account individual circumstances of each case and operational requirements of the school.

The paid leave is attached to the foster carer and not the number of children in their care, therefore the above is the maximum amount of leave per employee that may be claimed through this policy.

5 Applying for fostering leave

To request paid time off for fostering leave, employees must complete the fostering friendly leave of absence request form available on the Schools Portal.

In making a request employees must provide details of the dates on which they wish to take fostering leave and provide reasonable notice (what constitutes reasonable notice can be agreed locally by headteachers in line with school requirements).

As part of the request, the employee must declare they are a foster carer (including if you are awaiting approval of becoming a foster carer) and will use the time appropriately for its intended purpose. This declaration is required for each request of paid fostering leave.

6 Considering and recording fostering leave

The headteacher will consider the request taking into account the individual circumstances of each case and the operational requirements of the school. Leave will be approved wherever possible, however in circumstances where this would cause excessive pressure to the school or colleagues, the request may be refused.

For requests that are approved, headteachers must forward completed forms to Pay, Reward and Employment Services and record the leave on the SAIL system.

Where more than the maximum entitlement of fostering friendly paid leave is requested (as outlined above), the headteacher and employee should discuss other support available, if required. This may include flexible working requests (both informal and formal), annual leave (for eligible roles), compassionate leave, unpaid leave and carers leave.

7 Responsibilities

Employees are trusted to use this time for its purpose and any suspected instances of misuse (including any change in circumstances resulting in an employee no longer being a foster carer and still claiming paid time-off) will be investigated in accordance with the school's disciplinary policy.

It is the responsibility of the employee to not request more than the maximum entitlement of fostering friendly paid leave in a 12-month period. For example, if you request 1 day's leave in January (out of the 5 days leave entitlement as a current foster carer), you will have 12 months from then on to request the remaining entitlement.

Headteachers will be expected to monitor the requested leave to ensure the employee does not exceed the maximum entitlement over a 12-month period.

As per the school's Code of Conduct policy, employees are required to declare outside of work commitments that are paid or unpaid work, (including voluntary work), undertaken in addition to your school employment. Declarations are to be made by completing the relevant form and will be authorised by the headteacher.



HR Advice and Support

For advice regarding the application of this policy please contact:

HR Advice and Support

hradvice@durham.gov.uk

Pay, Reward and Employment Services can be contacted by emailing:

Schools

PESSchools@durham.gov.uk

Further support can be accessed by contacting:

Occupational Health

occhealthadmin@durham.gov.uk

Health and Safety

hsteam@durham.gov.uk

Employee Assistance Programme

wisdom.healthassured.org/login

Employer Code MHA042951

Tel 0800 0280199

School policies and guidance documents will be reviewed periodically as required, and in accordance with any changes to legislation and/or best practice.

The school complies with all relevant statutory obligations. The school privacy notice provides more specific information on data collected and how it is handled, a copy of which can be accessed from the school. For more information please contact the school directly.

If you have any concerns about how your data is handled, please contact either the school Data Protection Officer (details available from the school office), or the Information Commissioner's Office

Author	Version	Last review
LC	V1	January 2025