



Schools Maternity Leave Policy (NJC Staff)

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 It is the aim of the School to ensure that as far as possible all employees are able to combine their work and family responsibilities. The School recognises that parenthood brings additional responsibilities and this policy contains information to ensure that all employees are given their full rights when they are pregnant or have recently given birth.
- 1.2 The School values the contributions of all its employees and every effort is made to support employees throughout the maternity period and to encourage the employee to return to work from maternity leave.
- 1.3 The School recognises that arrangements for cover during the period of maternity leave, as well as arrangements for communication during maternity leave, are important for ensuring smooth transitions at every stage.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all School Support Staff.
- 2.2 This policy is recommended for adoption by all schools to be applied to NJC staff.
- 2.3 Where there is reference in this policy to Employee Services but the school does not purchase the Council's Employee Services SLA, please liaise with your own payroll provider for further guidance.

3. Notification

- 3.1 Employees must inform their line manager/headteacher as soon as possible and (at least 28 days) before their expected week of childbirth (EWC):
 - That they are pregnant;
 - The week that the baby is expected to be born;
 - The start date of maternity leave (the date should not be earlier than the beginning of the 11th week before the EWC).
- 3.2 Employees must keep their line manager/headteacher informed at a number of key stages during pregnancy. Employees should complete the Maternity Leave Option Form and hand this to their line manager/headteacher. Employees are required to give all notifications regarding their pregnancy in writing to ensure they receive the correct entitlements.
- 3.3 The line manager/headteacher should inform Employee Services (if applicable) of the employee's pregnancy and forward a copy of the completed Option Form.
- 3.4 Employee Services (if applicable) will write to the employee, within 28 days of being notified of the pregnancy, confirming the employee's entitlement to maternity leave

and pay and the date that the employee is expected to return to work, assuming they take their full entitlement to leave under the appropriate maternity scheme.

- 3.5 If employees wish to change the date that they start their maternity leave, they must give at least 28 days' notice of the revised date, unless this is not reasonably practicable.
- 3.6 The employee's GP or midwife will issue a MATB1 Form (medical certificate) at or around the 21st week of pregnancy (the 20th week before the EWC). It is essential that employees pass this document (original not a photocopy) to Employee Services/Payroll Provider in order to ensure receipt of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) and to ensure copies are placed on the employee's file.
- 3.7 Checklists for both expectant employees and line manager/headteachers are available.

4. Antenatal Care

- 4.1 Employees are entitled to paid time off to attend antenatal care appointments.
- 4.2 This entitlement does not automatically include relaxation or parent craft classes, however, if they are recommended as necessary by a health visitor, midwife or GP, and classes cannot be found outside of normal working hours, then employees may have paid time off.
- 4.3 A pregnant employee's spouse/partner (irrelevant of gender) or father of the child qualifies for the statutory right to attend up to 2 antenatal appointments. This time is unpaid.
- 4.4 Evidence of all appointments should be produced and the necessary arrangements made with the line manager/headteacher.
- 4.5 Where appointments entail travelling and attendance during the lunch break, employees are still entitled to a minimum of 30 minutes lunch break, either within the normal lunch break period or within a reasonable time either side of this.

5. Health, Safety and Welfare

- 5.1 The School has a legal obligation to take account of risks at work to pregnant employees and employees who have recently given birth under Regulation 16(a) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- 5.2 The School will assist in ensuring that employees and their baby remain healthy and safe throughout the pregnancy and after the birth. If you have any concerns about your health and safety at any time, you should let you manager know immediately.

- 5.3 Employees will need to inform their line manager/headteacher, in writing, that they are pregnant as soon as possible so that a risk assessment can be carried out.
- 5.4 It is the responsibility of the line manager/headteacher to carry out the risk assessment.
- 5.5 The assessment will look for specific hazards that may affect employees, including physical, chemical and biological agents, and will review the general working conditions.
- 5.6 Any identified hazards will be eliminated or controlled. If this is not possible, other steps will be taken to safeguard the employee's health. These may include temporarily altering working conditions and/or hours of work.
- 5.7 In the event of these steps being unfeasible, employees have the right to be offered suitable alternative work, where this is available. Any alternative work will be on the same or no less favourable terms and conditions than the current contract of employment. Where suitable alternative work is available, but this is refused, the decision may be taken to put the employee on maternity suspension without pay.
- 5.8 Where there is no available alternative work, maternity suspension on full pay is the final step the School would take to protect the health and safety of an employee and/or their unborn baby.
- 5.9 The risk assessment will be repeated on a regular basis for the duration of the pregnancy as the body changes, and post-natally for six months, or longer if the employee is breast feeding their baby.
- 5.10 If employees have any concerns about their work area whilst pregnant, the risk assessment process will take account of this and may recommend transferring to other suitable employment for the duration of the pregnancy.
- 5.11 The protective measures identified above will apply from the date on which employees inform their line manager/headteacher that they are pregnant and will continue until 6 months after the birth of the child or longer if the employee is breast feeding their baby.

6. Maternity Leave

- 6.1 All expectant employees working for the School, regardless of the number of hours they work, or their length of service are entitled to 52 weeks leave comprising of 26 weeks' Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) and 26 weeks' Additional Maternity Leave (AML).
- 6.2 Legislation dictates that a two week leave period must be taken immediately following the birth of the baby. This is called Compulsory Maternity Leave (CML).

- 6.3 It is assumed that employees will take their full entitlement to maternity leave, unless their line manager/headteacher is informed differently.

7. Maternity Pay

- 7.1 There are three types of maternity pay, namely Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), Maternity Allowance (MA) and Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP).
- 7.2 Where an employee is in receipt of any payment (either SMP, MA, or OMP) this is referred to as the Maternity Pay Period (MPP). SMP and MA are paid regardless of whether an employee is returning to work.
- 7.3 SMP and MA payments are made for a maximum of 39 weeks starting at a date after the 30th week of pregnancy (the 11th week before the EWC).

Statutory Maternity Pay

- 7.4 SMP is a payment made to an employee during pregnancy.
- 7.5 Payment of SMP is dependent upon all the following conditions being met:
- employees are employed into the qualifying week, which is the 26th week of pregnancy (the 15th week before their EWC); and
 - employees have at least 26 weeks' continuous local government service by the qualifying week; and
 - employees' average weekly earnings are not less than the standard earnings limit for the payment of National Insurance contributions (average weekly earnings are calculated over an eight week period immediately prior to the qualifying week); and
 - employees have started their maternity leave, i.e. the MPP has begun.
- 7.6 The current rate of SMP is available from the following website <https://www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave/pay>.
- 7.7 The earliest date that SMP can start is from the 30th week of pregnancy (the 11th week before the EWC) and the latest from the day following the birth.
- 7.8 The date that an employee starts their maternity leave and begins to receive SMP will be determined by one of the following:
- the date that an employee has specified when notifying their employer; or
 - if the baby is born prematurely and this is earlier than the employee had intended to start their maternity leave - the MPP will begin from the day after the employee gives birth (under these circumstances, it is important that employees inform their line manager/headteacher as soon as is practicably possible of the birth date); or
 - if an employee is absent with a pregnancy-related illness at any time from the 37th week of pregnancy (the 4th week before their EWC) and this is earlier than the

employee intended to start their maternity leave - the MPP will begin on the day after the first complete day of absence (under these circumstances, it is important that employees inform their line manager/headteacher that they are absent from work due wholly or partly to a pregnancy-related illness and submit a doctor's note to this effect).

If the illness is not pregnancy-related this will be classed as normal sickness absence and will not affect the chosen start date.

- 7.9 Employees can choose to work late on into their pregnancy, even until the date the baby is due, without losing any SMP. Whenever an employee leaves work, they are still entitled to payment of SMP for the full 39 weeks.
- 7.10 Employees must inform their line manager/headteacher immediately if either of the following situations occur as eligibility to SMP may be affected:
- an employee works after the birth (during the MPP) for any other employer for whom they were not working during the 26th week of pregnancy (the 15th week before their EWC); or
 - an employee is taken into legal custody at any time during the MPP.
- 7.11 If an employee returns to work at any time when they are still receiving SMP, they will lose that whole week's SMP (unless the return is a 'keeping in touch' day).
- 7.12 For salaried employees, maternity pay is converted into a weekly rate. Therefore, SMP is paid in complete weeks.

Maternity Allowance

- 7.13 MA is payable to employees who do not meet the qualifying conditions of SMP but do meet the qualifying conditions on their recent National Insurance record. MA is paid at either the same level of the standard rate of SMP or 90% of weekly earnings if this is less.
- 7.14 Employees must claim MA from either Jobcentre Plus or the Social Security office by completing SMP1 Form. Employee Services/payroll provider will forward a copy of this form to the employee with their MATB1 Form (which employees will need to be able to claim MA).
- 7.15 Employees not eligible to SMP or MA may be entitled to additional financial support through Incapacity Benefit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Tax Credits or a Sure Start Maternity Grant. Further information is available from Jobcentre Plus or the Council's Contact Centre.

Occupational Maternity Pay

- 7.16 OMP is an entitlement under an employee's terms and conditions of employment and is dependent on length of continuous local government service.
- 7.17 To qualify for OMP, employees must have at least 1 year's continuous local government service at the beginning of the 30th week of the pregnancy (the 11th week before their EWC). Employees who qualify for OMP are entitled to:
- 26 weeks OML commencing at any time after the 30th week of pregnancy (the 11th week before the EWC). The entitlement will be made up of:
 - 6 weeks at 90% of average weekly earnings
 - 12 weeks at half pay (OMP) plus the current standard rate of SMP (or 90% of weekly earnings if this is less) up to the level of current average weekly earnings
 - 8 weeks at the current standard rate of SMP (or 90% of weekly earnings if this is less)
 - 26 weeks AML:
 - 13 weeks at the current standard rate of SMP (or 90% of weekly earnings if this is less)
 - 13 weeks without pay
- 7.18 Anyone taking up the option of OMP will be required to return to work for 13 weeks following their return from maternity leave. Anyone on a fixed term contract that is due to expire prior to the end of the 13 weeks may take the option of OMP, however if the contract is not extended then they will be required to pay back this element of the maternity pay.

8. Keeping in Touch

- 8.1 Employees are able to attend work for a maximum of 10 days without their leave or pay being affected. This includes carrying out any work under the contract of employment, training or any activity undertaken for the purpose of keeping in touch with the workplace. Any work carried out on the day or part of a day shall constitute 1 KIT day for these purposes.
- 8.2 Attendance at work must be agreed between an employee and their line manager/headteacher.
- 8.3 The line manager/headteacher will need to consider whether the employee should be paid for their attendance at work, dependent on the nature and duration of the work. Where an employee undertakes work under their contract of employment, they are entitled to be paid for that work. Employees will be paid their normal hourly rate for the hours worked on that KIT day, regardless of whether they are in receipt of SMP. Any payment (inclusive of SMP) should not exceed a normal day's pay.

- 8.4 During the period of leave, the employee and their line manager/headteacher should make reasonable contact to discuss issues, such as the return to work. This would not constitute as 'work' and will not count towards the 10 days.
- 8.5 As well as the return to work, employees should be kept informed of other issues, for example, job vacancies (where requested by the employee), workplace developments and training opportunities.

9. Ending Maternity Leave and Pay to Take up Shared Parental Leave

- 9.1 An employee can elect to curtail (i.e. 'end') their Maternity Leave and pay (at any time after two weeks of maternity leave) to take Shared Parental Leave with their partner, assuming they meet the qualifying criteria for Shared Parental Leave (See the Shared Parental Leave Policy for further details).
- 9.2 For shared parental leave to be taken maternity leave must come to an end and the employee forfeits all benefits from this policy. An employee must issue the employer with the appropriate notice in order to end Maternity Leave and take up Shared Parental Leave (see Shared Parental Leave Policy).
- 9.3 Once the employee gives notice to end maternity leave and it is accompanied by a notice of entitlement to shared parental leave, then this notice is binding. The notice may be withdrawn only if they have not returned to work, the date to end the maternity leave has not passed and one of the following circumstances apply:
- Where it is discovered in the 8 weeks following the notice that neither the employee nor their partner has any entitlement to shared parental leave or pay.
 - In the event of the death of the partner
- 9.4 Further information on Shared Parental Leave can be found in the Shared Parental Leave Policy, which is available on the SLA online system (Schools Services) or from Human Resources.

10. Neonatal Care Leave and Pay

- 10.1 Employees are entitled to neonatal care leave (NCL) if their baby is born after 6 April 2025 and requires neonatal care for at least seven consecutive days within the first 28 days of life. Partners of a child's mother will also be entitled to leave provided they will have the main responsibility, apart from that of the mother, for the upbringing of the child. A person intending to apply for a parental order in the case of a surrogacy arrangement will also be eligible.

Neonatal care is defined as:

1. medical care received in a hospital, or
2. medical care in any other place

- a) if the child had been an inpatient in hospital and the care is received upon the child leaving hospital;
 - b) the care is provided under the direction of a consultant, and
 - c) the care includes on-going monitoring by, and visits to the child from, healthcare professionals arranged by the hospital, or
 - 3. palliative or end of life care.
- 10.2 To qualify, the care must have started within 28 days after the day of the child's birth. See the Neonatal Leave Care and Pay Policy for further information.

11. Returning to Work

- 11.1 Employees have the right to return to the same job, on the same terms and conditions as if they had not been absent unless there is a justified reason for this not being possible (for example, redundancy or reorganisation), in which case employees will be offered a suitable alternative position where one is available. If a reorganisation takes place whilst an employee is on maternity leave they will be fully consulted and their rights explained.
- 11.2 Employees may have the right to request to return to work on a flexible working basis. Further information regarding this process is contained in the School's 'Requests to Work Flexibly' Procedure, which is available from SLA Online.
- 11.3 Employees wishing to apply for flexible working arrangements to commence on return from their leave are advised to submit the request to their line manager/headteacher for consideration as soon as possible in order for the process to be followed and any practical arrangements to be implemented in a timely manner. Employees may wish to discuss the issue with their line manager/headteacher prior to commencing leave.
- 11.4 If employees are not sure whether or not they wish to return to work after maternity leave, they can (and are advised to) reserve the right to do so. This can be discussed further with the line manager/headteacher or Human Resources, in confidence. Therefore, if employees are eligible to OMP (12 weeks half pay) this would be withheld until after the return.
- 11.5 Once a firm decision has been made, the employee should inform their line manager/headteacher of their intentions.
- 11.6 Employees can only be paid maternity pay based on a weekly rate. If employees return to work at any time when they are still receiving SMP, they will lose that whole week's pay (unless this is a 'keeping in touch' day). In order not to lose any pay, employees should ensure that they return to work at the end of their complete week of the Pay Period.

- 11.7 Where an employee is unable to return to work on their expected return date due to illness, they will be covered by the School's normal sickness scheme from the date they should have returned.
- 11.8 Where an employee is unable to return to work on their expected return date because of an interruption to their work, for example, the workplace being closed for repair (and where an alternative working site is not available), they will return when work resumes, or as soon as is reasonably practicable. They will be paid normal pay during this period.
- 11.9 It is assumed that employees will take their full entitlement to maternity leave unless the line manager/headteacher is informed differently. However, if employees decide to return to work before the end of the appropriate period they are required to give notice, in writing, of the date on which they wish to return to work (7 days notice if returning early from OML or 21 days notice if returning early from AML or APL).
- 11.10 Where an employee changes their mind about the date they intend to return to work, where they have already notified the School of an early return date, the required notice is as detailed above at 10.9 (where the return is earlier, the notice will apply from the early return date already specified by the employee, where the return is pushed back, the notice will apply from the original return date).
- 11.11 The School has the right to postpone early return to work where sufficient notice is not given. Any postponement will not take the leave period beyond the end of the maternity leave period. The School will inform employees of the postponement and the reason for it, in writing, before the intended return to work date.
- 11.12 If employees are entitled to OMP and do not return to work within local government service for at least a 13 week period, either on a full time or part time basis, they will be asked to refund the 12 weeks half pay (OMP). Any annual leave, parental leave or sickness absence taken during this period will count towards the service requirement.
- 11.13 An employee wishing to continue breastfeeding their baby on their return to work must give their manager written notification 28 days prior to their return from maternity leave, so that provisions can be made. Managers should consider favourably requests from employees who wish to continue to breastfeed after returning to work.

12. Annual Leave

- 11.1 Employees should consider their position in relation to annual leave where the period of maternity leave runs from one leave year to the next. School employees with an entitlement to take annual leave should take their leave in the current year however, employees can carry any untaken annual leave into the next leave. Leave arrangements should be discussed and agreed with the line manager as early as possible.

- 11.2 Employees are entitled to accrue any Bank Holidays that fall during the whole period of Maternity Leave. A pro-rata entitlement will be added to the employee's annual leave entitlement.

13. Pensions

- 13.1 The 39 week maternity pay and any neonatal pay period is treated as pay for pension purposes and contributions will be deducted from it, meaning that the period counts towards future pension calculations on retirement.
- 13.2 Employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme can choose whether or not to pay pension contributions for the duration of any unpaid leave, for example, additional maternity leave, additional paternity leave or additional adoption leave. Employees will need to indicate on the appropriate Option Form that they wish to continue paying deductions, and the schools payroll provider should be notified. Further information is available from the Human Resources.
- 13.3 The effect of continuing to make payments is that the period of unpaid leave also counts as service for pension purposes and will be taken into account when calculating any benefit under the scheme.
- 13.4 Where employees take a period of unpaid leave, they may wish to consider making voluntary National Insurance Contributions to ensure their state retirement pension is not affected. Employees can ascertain the status of their contributions by contacting the Contributions Agency. The Contributions Agency will be able to advise whether or not backdated payments are necessary.

14. Special Circumstances

Premature Births

- 14.1 If the baby is born prematurely before maternity leave has begun, maternity pay and leave will commence from the day following childbirth. Leave entitlements will remain the same as if the baby had been born during the EWC. Employees must inform their line manager/headteacher as soon as is reasonably practicable of the date the baby was born.
- 14.2 If the baby is born before employees have given their line manager/headteacher their MATB1 Form, they must take all reasonable steps to give notice of the date the baby was born within the following 28 day period. Pay and leave entitlements remain as in the case outlined above.
- 14.3 If the baby is born early but maternity leave has already commenced, then pay and leave entitlements remain the same.

Miscarriage and Stillborn Babies

- 14.4 If in the very sad event the baby dies or is stillborn, after the 24th week of pregnancy, entitlements regarding pay and leave is the same as for a live birth.
- 14.5 If this happens prior to the 24th week of pregnancy, employees will not be entitled to maternity leave and pay, however, absence will be treated sympathetically either under the School's Flexible Working Policy (Authorised Leave) or Managing Attendance Policy.

IVF Treatment

- 14.6 Although there is no statutory right for employees to take time off work for IVF treatment, a manager should try to be flexible with working arrangements (see the Authorised Leave Policy).
- 14.7 Following implantation a pregnancy may or may not occur, but the employee is regarded as being pregnant from the point of implantation and is protected under the Equality Act 2010 pregnancy legislation. Employees should notify their manager/headteacher once they have reached this stage.
- 14.8 If the treatment is successful and the employee remains pregnant they will continue to be protected until the end of their maternity leave.
- 14.9 If the treatment is unsuccessful, the protection will end two weeks after the end of the pregnancy. A pregnancy test is taken 2 weeks after implantation and if the test is negative the protection period extends for a further 2 weeks.