



4.08 Staff absence

Policy Statement

At Cringleford Crackerjacks, we recognise that employees may occasionally need time away from work due to illness, family commitments or other unforeseen circumstances. We are committed to supporting staff wellbeing while ensuring that the setting remains safe, well-managed and able to meet the statutory staff-to-child ratios required within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

This policy outlines the procedures for reporting and requesting all types of absence. All employees are expected to follow these procedures to enable appropriate staffing arrangements to be made and to minimise disruption to the children, families and colleagues.

Staffing Ratios and Operational Requirements

As an early years setting, we are legally required to maintain appropriate staff-to-child ratios at all times. Staff absences can significantly affect our ability to operate safely and provide high-quality care and education.

Employees are therefore expected to:

- Notify the Executive Manager as early as possible if they are unable to attend work.
- Follow the absence reporting procedures outlined in this policy.
- Keep the setting updated if the expected duration of an absence changes.
- Avoid requesting discretionary leave during particularly busy periods where possible.

Requests for leave will always be balanced against the operational needs of the setting. Approval will be declined where granting leave would compromise statutory staffing ratios, children's safety or the effective running of the provision.

Sickness Absence

Reporting sickness absence

If you are unable to attend work due to illness or injury, you must:

- Telephone the Executive Manager between **7:00am and 7.30am**, or at least one hour before starting an afternoon session.
- Speak directly to the Executive Manager wherever possible. Messages sent via colleagues, text message or email are not acceptable. Asking someone else to report your absence on your behalf must only happen in exceptional circumstances where you are genuinely unable to make contact yourself.
- If the Executive Manager is unable to take your call, you must call either the Preschool Manager or the Nursery Manager, as appropriate.
- If none of the Managers are able to take your call, leave a voicemail and a manager will call you back
- If you need to report an absence during school holidays, you must call the Nursery Manager rather than the Executive Manager
- Explain the reason for your absence and provide an indication of how long you expect to be absent.

During your absence, you must keep the Manager updated on your progress. Unless otherwise agreed, employees must make contact each day of their absence before their normal start time until a likely return date has been confirmed or a Fit Note has been provided.

Employees are responsible for providing a Fit Note from their GP for absences exceeding seven calendar days.

A Return-to-Work Meeting will be completed following every sickness absence with the Executive Manager, the Preschool Manager or the Nursery Manager.

Infectious illness

Protecting children, families and colleagues from infectious illnesses is essential.

Employees must not attend work if they have an illness that could place others at risk.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Influenza
- COVID-19 where symptoms affect fitness for work
- Chickenpox
- Measles
- Scarlet fever
- Whooping cough

- Conjunctivitis where symptoms are significant
- Any other contagious illness

Employees who have experienced vomiting or diarrhoea must remain away from work until they have been symptom-free for **48 hours**.

The setting follows current UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) guidance regarding recommended exclusion periods for infectious diseases.

Where necessary, employees will be asked not to attend work or will be sent home if they are displaying symptoms of an infectious illness.

Attendance monitoring

Cringleford Crackerjacks monitors attendance fairly and consistently to identify any patterns that may indicate additional support is required.

Following every sickness absence, a Return-to-Work Meeting will be held to:

- Confirm fitness to return.
- Discuss the reason for absence.
- Identify any workplace support or reasonable adjustments.
- Review attendance where appropriate.

Repeated short-term absences, frequent Monday or Friday absences, or other concerning attendance patterns will result in an attendance review meeting.

The purpose of attendance monitoring is to support employees while ensuring reliable staffing levels for the children in our care.

Bradford factor

Cringleford Crackerjacks may use the Bradford Factor as one of several tools to monitor attendance patterns.

The Bradford Factor gives greater weighting to frequent short-term absences rather than occasional longer periods of illness.

Bradford Factor scores may be reviewed using the following guidance:

Bradford Factor Score	Action
Every sickness absence	Return to Work Meeting
100+	Informal attendance discussion

200+	Formal attendance review meeting
400+	Attendance may be managed under the Capability or Disciplinary Procedure where appropriate

The Bradford Factor is only one part of attendance management and will never be used in isolation.

Before any action is taken, the setting will consider:

- Medical evidence.
- Any underlying health conditions.
- Disabilities and reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
- Pregnancy-related absence.
- Individual circumstances.
- Occupational health advice where available.

The aim is to support attendance wherever possible rather than penalise genuine illness.

Family Emergencies and Leave for Dependants

The setting recognises that employees may occasionally experience unexpected family emergencies that require them to be absent from work. We will consider each situation compassionately while balancing the need to maintain safe staffing levels and statutory staff-to-child ratios.

Employees must notify the Executive Manager as soon as reasonably practicable, explaining:

- The reason for the absence.
- The likely duration of the absence (if known).
- Any updates if the situation changes.

Family emergencies

Examples of family emergencies include:

- A serious illness or injury affecting a close family member.
- An unexpected domestic emergency requiring your immediate attention.
- A bereavement or other unforeseen family crisis.

Depending on the circumstances, time off will be authorised as paid or unpaid leave, in accordance with your contract of employment and the needs of the setting.

Leave for dependants

Employees are entitled to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with an unexpected emergency involving a dependant.

A dependant may include:

- A spouse, civil partner or partner.
- A child.
- A parent.
- Someone who lives in the same household as the employee (other than a tenant, lodger or employee).
- Anyone who reasonably relies on the employee for care or assistance.

Examples of situations where leave for dependants may be appropriate include:

- A dependant becoming ill or injured.
- Unexpected disruption or breakdown of childcare arrangements.
- An incident involving a child at school or their childcare provider.
- Making emergency care arrangements for a dependant.

Cringleford Crackerjacks understands that emergencies are often outside an employee's control and will consider each request fairly and sensitively while ensuring the continued safe operation of the setting.

Time Off for Children's Special Events

Cringleford Crackerjacks recognises the importance of employees being able to attend significant events in their own children's lives, such as:

- Sports days.
- Nativity or school performances.
- Class assemblies or class cafés.
- Graduation or leavers' events.
- Other significant school or nursery events.

Employees can request unpaid time off to attend these events.

Requests must be submitted to the Executive Manager as soon as the date is known, giving as much notice as possible to allow sufficient time to organise staffing cover and maintain statutory staff-to-child ratios.

While every effort will be made to accommodate requests, approval cannot be guaranteed and will be subject to:

- Operational requirements.
- Staffing levels.
- The availability of suitable cover.
- The setting's ability to maintain statutory staff-to-child ratios.

Approved time off will be **unpaid** and the hours not worked will be deducted from the employee's pay.

Employees must not make firm commitments to attend an event until approval has been confirmed by the Manager.

Bereavement and Funeral Leave

Cringleford Crackerjacks recognises that bereavement affects everyone differently and aims to provide compassionate support.

Employees must notify the Executive Manager as soon as possible if they require leave following the death of a family member or to attend a funeral.

The amount of leave granted will depend on:

- The employee's relationship to the deceased.
- Individual circumstances.
- Operational requirements.

Where additional time is required, employees may request unpaid leave.

Medical, Dental and Other Appointments

Where possible, non-emergency and routine appointments must be arranged:

- Outside working hours.
- During school holidays or annual leave (depending on the employee's contract).

Where this is not possible:

- Employees must notify the Executive Manager as soon as the appointment is confirmed.
- Wherever possible, at least two weeks' notice must be given.
- Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

Pregnancy-related antenatal appointments will be accommodated in accordance with statutory rights.

Wellbeing Days

Cringleford Crackerjacks recognises the importance of maintaining good mental health and wellbeing and understands that taking proactive steps to support wellbeing can benefit both employees and the setting.

With the exception of bank staff, employees are entitled to one paid wellbeing day per academic year, subject to the conditions set out below. Wellbeing days are intended as a planned opportunity to support an employee's mental health and overall wellbeing and are not a substitute for sickness absence where an employee is medically unfit to work.

The following conditions apply:

- Employees must have successfully completed their probationary period before becoming eligible to take a wellbeing day.
- Requests must be submitted before the May half-term of the relevant academic year.
- Requests must be made with a minimum of two weeks' notice.
- Approval is subject to suitable staffing cover being available, operational requirements, and the setting's ability to maintain statutory staff-to-child ratios.
- Only one member of staff will normally be granted planned discretionary leave, including a wellbeing day, at any one time.
- A sickness absence cannot be retrospectively converted into a wellbeing day.
- An unused wellbeing day cannot be carried forward into the next academic year and has no cash value.

Employees must discuss their request with the Executive Manager as early as possible. Wellbeing days are intended to be planned in advance and must be approved before any arrangements are made.

Cringleford Crackerjacks reserves the right to decline a request where it is not operationally possible to approve the leave. Approval of a wellbeing day does not create an entitlement to additional leave beyond the one day provided each academic year, and all requests will be considered fairly and consistently.

Annual Leave

Annual leave arrangements are determined by the terms of your contract of employment.

To ensure the setting can maintain safe staffing levels and statutory staff-to-child ratios, no more than one member of staff will normally be granted planned annual leave or other pre-booked discretionary leave at any one time.

Employees on term-time only contracts

Employees employed on term-time only contracts are not permitted to take annual leave during school term time, as set out in their contract of employment.

Holiday entitlement is incorporated into the school holiday periods and must be taken during those periods. Requests for annual leave during term time will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by the Executive Manager.

Employees who work through the school holidays

Employees whose contracts require them to work through the school holidays (i.e., all-year-round) may request annual leave during term time.

To request annual leave, employees must:

- Submit their request at least four weeks in advance, wherever possible.
- Wait for approval before making any personal arrangements or bookings.

Approval of annual leave is not automatic and will be based on:

- Operational requirements.
- Maintaining statutory staff-to-child ratios.
- Existing approved leave.
- The needs of the children and the setting.

Unauthorised Absence

Failure to follow the procedures within this policy, including:

- Failing to notify the setting appropriately.
- Taking leave without approval.
- Providing false or misleading information regarding absence.

will be treated as misconduct and managed in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.

Employee Wellbeing

Cringleford Crackerjacks encourages employees to seek support if personal circumstances are affecting their attendance or wellbeing.

This may include:

- Mental health concerns.
- Work-related stress.
- Caring responsibilities.
- Financial or personal difficulties.

Employees are encouraged to speak with the Executive Manager as early as possible so that appropriate support or reasonable adjustments can be considered.

Confidentiality

All information relating to employee absences will be handled sensitively and confidentially in accordance with UK data protection legislation.

Medical information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

This policy was adopted at a meeting:	
Held on	Date
Date to be reviewed	Date
Signed on behalf of the Committee	
Name of signatory	