



**West Norfolk
Academies Trust**

Adoption Policy and Procedure

Reviewed by: Trustees

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1. About this Policy

- 1.1. This policy sets out the arrangements for adoption leave and pay for employees who are adopting a child through a UK adoption agency. If you are adopting through an overseas adoption agency see paragraph 8 below.
- 1.2. If you have a child placed with you under a local authority "fostering for adoption" or "concurrent planning" arrangement, or you are entering into a surrogacy arrangement under which you will be applying for a parental order, you may also be entitled to adoption leave and pay. Please speak to your line manager for further information.
- 1.3. Arrangements for time off to attend adoption appointments are set out at paragraph 11 below.
- 1.4. In some cases you and your partner may be eligible to opt into the Shared Parental Leave (SPL) scheme which gives you more flexibility to share the leave and pay available in the first year after the child is placed with you. However, one of you must take at least two weeks' adoption leave first. Details of SPL are set out in the Shared Parental Leave (Adoption) Policy.
- 1.5. This policy only applies to employees. It does not apply to agency workers or self-employed contractors. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time, in consultation with the relevant bodies.

2. Definitions

Adopter: A child's adopter is either the person who has been matched with the child for adoption or, where two people have been matched jointly, the person who has elected (at the time they are notified that they have been matched) to be the child's adopter for statutory adoption leave and pay purposes.

Prospective adopter: A prospective adopter is someone who has been approved as suitable to adopt a child and has been notified of that decision.

Partner: spouse, civil partner or someone living with another person in an enduring family relationship, but not a sibling, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

Child: A child is a person who is under the age of 18 when they are placed with the adopter for adoption.

Adoption agency: An adoption agency in England and Wales is defined by reference to section 2 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (ACA 2002) (either a local authority or registered adoption society in England and Wales)

Matched for adoption: A person is matched with a child for adoption when:

- An adoption agency decides that they would be a suitable adoptive parent for the child either individually or jointly with another person; or
- A decision has been made to place the child with a local authority foster parent who is also an approved prospective adopter and an adoption agency has identified them as the person with whom the child is to be placed.

Notification of being matched for adoption: A person is notified of having been matched with a child:

- When an adoption agency decides that they would be a suitable adoptive parent, on the date on which they receive notification of the adoption agency's decision.
- When a local authority foster parent is identified as an adoptive parent, on the date on which they receive notification of the adoption agency's decision.

Notification of being placed for adoption: A person is notified of a child being placed for adoption where either the child is:

- Placed for adoption under the ACA 2002; or
- Placed in accordance with section 22C of the Children Act 1989 with a local authority foster parent who is also a prospective adopter.

3. Entitlement to adoption leave

3.1. You are entitled to adoption leave if you meet all the following conditions:

- a) you are adopting a child through a UK or overseas adoption agency.
- b) the adoption agency has given you written notice that it has matched you with a child for adoption and tells you the date the child is expected to be placed into your care with a view to adoption (Expected Placement Date).
- c) you have notified the agency that you agree to the child being placed with you on the Expected Placement Date.
- d) your partner will not be taking adoption leave with their employer (although they may be entitled to take paternity leave).
- e) The maximum adoption leave entitlement is 52 weeks, consisting of 26 weeks' Ordinary Adoption Leave (OAL) and 26 weeks' Additional Adoption Leave (AAL).

4. If you are adopting a child with another person

4.1. Where you and your partner are adopting a child, you must decide between you who will be treated as the primary adopter and who will be treated as the secondary adopter for the purposes of time off. You must tell us your decision the first time you request time off for an adoption appointment. This will affect how much time you can take off and whether it is paid.

4.2. You would usually choose to be the primary adopter if you intend to take adoption leave when the child is placed with you. You would not be able to take paternity leave if you have elected to be the primary adopter.

- 4.3. You would usually choose to be the secondary adopter if you intend to take paternity leave when the child is placed with you, although you may be able to take adoption leave if your partner is not taking it. Please refer to West Norfolk Academies Trust's Paternity Policy (Adoption) which is available on West Norfolk Academies Trust's website.

5. If you are adopting a child alone

- 5.1. If you are adopting a child alone, you are treated as the primary adopter.

6. If you are adopting more than one child

- 6.1. If the adoption agency is placing more than one child with you as part of the same arrangement, this is treated as one adoption and will not increase the amount of adoption leave or time off you can take.

7. Notification requirements

- 7.1. Not more than seven days after the adoption agency notifies you in writing that it has matched you with a child (or where that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as reasonably practicable), you must give us notice in writing of the Expected Placement Date, and your intended start date for adoption leave (Intended Start Date).
- 7.2. We will then write to you within 28 days to inform you of your Expected Return Date assuming you take your full entitlement to adoption leave.
- 7.3. Once you receive the matching certificate issued by the adoption agency, you must provide us with a copy.

8. Overseas adoptions

If you are adopting a child from overseas, the following will apply, in addition to the rest of this policy:

- 8.1. You must have received notification that the adoption has been approved by the relevant UK authority (Official Notification).
- 8.2. You must give us notice in writing of:
 - a) your intention to take adoption leave;
 - b) the date you received Official Notification; and
 - c) the date the child is expected to arrive in Great Britain.
- 8.3. This notice should be given as early as possible but in any case within 28 days of receiving Official Notification (or, if you have less than 26 weeks' employment with us at the date of Official Notification, within 30 weeks of starting employment).
- 8.4. You must also give us at least 28 days' notice in writing of your Intended Start Date. This can be the date the child arrives in Great Britain or a predetermined date no more than 28 days after the child's arrival in Great Britain.

- 8.5. You must also notify us of the date the child arrives in Great Britain within 28 days of that date.
- 8.6. We may also ask for a copy of the Official Notification and evidence of the date the child arrived in Great Britain.

9. Starting adoption leave

- 9.1. OAL may start on a predetermined date no more than 14 days before the Expected Placement Date, or on the date of placement itself, but no later.
- 9.2. If you want to change your Intended Start Date please tell us in writing. You should give us as much notice as you can, but wherever possible you must tell us at least 28 days before the original Intended Start Date (or the new start date if you are bringing the date forward). We will then write to you within 28 days to tell you your new Expected Return Date.
- 9.3. A minimum of two weeks adoption leave must be taken immediately following the placement of the child as compulsory adoption leave.
- 9.4. Shortly before your adoption leave starts we will discuss with you the arrangements for covering your work and the opportunities for you to remain in contact, should you wish to do so, during your leave. For example, we will explain to you that you have the opportunity to participate in optional Keeping in Touch (KIT) days.

10. Adoption pay

- 10.1. Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) is payable for up to 39 weeks. It stops being payable if you return to work sooner or if the placement is disrupted (see paragraph 17). You are entitled to SAP if:
 - a) you have been continuously employed for at least 26 weeks ending with the week in which the adoption agency notified you that you had been matched with the child (Qualifying Week) and are still employed by us during that week;
 - b) your average weekly earnings during the eight weeks ending with the Qualifying Week (Relevant Period) are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government; and
 - c) you have given us the relevant notifications under paragraph 7.
- 10.2. SAP is calculated as follows:
 - a) First six weeks: SAP is paid at the Earnings-related Rate of 90% of your average earnings over the Relevant Period.
 - b) Remaining 33 weeks: SAP is paid at the Prescribed Rate which is set by the government for the relevant tax year, or the Earnings-related Rate if this is lower.
- 10.3. SAP accrues with each complete week of absence and payments are made on the next normal payroll date. Income tax, National Insurance and pension contributions are deducted as appropriate.

- 10.4. If you leave your employment with us for any reason (for example, if you resign or are made redundant) you are still eligible for SAP if you have already been notified by an adoption agency that you have been matched with a child. In such cases, SAP starts:
- a) 14 days before the Expected Placement Date; or
 - b) the day after your employment ends, whichever is the later.
- 10.5. If, at the end of the Qualifying Week, you have been continuously employed for at least 12 months then your pay will be as follows:
- For Support Staff:** 6 weeks pay at 90% of average earnings, followed by 12 weeks half pay and Prescribed Rate (or Earnings related Rate if this is lower) followed by 21 weeks (at Prescribed Rate (or Earnings related Rate if this is lower)). The remaining period of AAL is unpaid.
- For Teachers:** 4 weeks full pay (average earnings), 2 weeks pay at 90% of average earnings, followed by 12 weeks half pay and Prescribed Rate (or Earnings related Rate if this is lower) followed by 21 weeks (at Prescribed Rate (or Earnings related Rate if this is lower)). The remaining period of AAL is unpaid.
- 10.6. Payment of adoption pay at paragraph 10.4 is conditional upon you returning to your job for at least 13 weeks (including periods of school closure).
- 10.7. Where we agree, a full-time employee may return to work on a part-time basis for a period, which equates to 13 weeks full time service.

11. Time off for an adoption appointment

- 11.1. An adoption appointment is an appointment arranged by an adoption agency (or at the agency's request) for you to have contact with a child who is to be placed with you for adoption, or for any other purpose related to the adoption.
- 11.2. You may take time off to attend an adoption appointment once the adoption agency has notified you that a child is to be placed with you for adoption but before the child is actually placed with you.

12. Amount of time off

- 12.1. If you are adopting on your own or have elected to be the primary adopter, you may take paid time off to attend an adoption appointment on up to five occasions in relation to any particular adoption.
- 12.2. An adopter who has taken paid time off work to attend up to five adoption appointments is disqualified from taking paternity leave and pay. Where you and your partner are jointly adopting a child and both adopters are potentially eligible for adoption leave and pay, the adopter that intends to take a longer period of time off work would normally be the person who takes paid time off work to attend adoption appointments. Please refer to the Paternity Policy (Adoption) which is available on the West Norfolk Academies Trust website.

- 12.3. If you are the secondary adopter so intend to take paternity leave and pay, you may take unpaid time off to attend an adoption appointment on up to two occasions only.
- 12.4. You must not take more than six and a half hours off for each appointment, including travel and waiting time.

13. How to book time off

- 13.1. Please give us as much notice of the appointment as possible. You must provide your line manager with a signed statement or an email confirming:
 - a) the date and time of the appointment.
 - b) that the appointment has been arranged or requested by the adoption agency.
 - c) whether you are adopting a child alone or jointly with another person.
 - d) if you are adopting with another person, whether you are electing to take paid or unpaid time off.
- 13.2. If you are an agency worker you may have to notify your agency as well. You should check with the agency.
- 13.3. We may sometimes ask you to try and rearrange an appointment where it is reasonable to do so. In exceptional circumstances we reserve the right to refuse a request for a particular appointment but we will not do so without good reason.
- 13.4. Any time off under this policy must be taken before the first child is placed with you.

14. Terms and conditions during adoption leave

- 14.1. All the terms and conditions of your employment remain in force during OAL and AAL, except for the terms relating to pay. In particular:
 - a) annual leave entitlement under your contract shall continue to accrue (see paragraph 15);
 - b) and pension benefits shall continue (see paragraph 16).

15. Annual leave

- 15.1. Annual leave will accrue at the rate provided under your contract.
- 15.2. Our holiday year runs from April to April. In many cases a period of adoption leave will last beyond the end of the holiday year. Any holiday entitlement for the year that is not taken, or cannot reasonably be taken before starting your adoption leave can be carried over to the next holiday year and must be taken immediately before returning to work, or within three months of returning to work unless agreed otherwise. You should try to limit carry over to one week's holiday or less. Carry-over of more than one week is at our discretion.

- 15.3. You should discuss your holiday plans with your line manager in good time before starting your adoption leave. All holiday dates are subject to approval by us.

16. Pensions

- 16.1. Members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) and Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) will pay contributions based on the actual adoption pay received during the first 39 weeks of the maternity pay period.
- 16.2. During unpaid AAL we shall not make any payments into the pension scheme and you will no longer continue paying contributions.

If you are employed as a teacher, and are a member of the TPS, you are advised to contact Teachers Pensions to seek advice on the effect that a period of unpaid adoption leave will have as well as any options available to enhance your pension. Further details are available on www.teacherspensions.co.uk.

If you are employed as a member of support staff, and are a member of the LGPS, you may wish to pay contributions in respect of the period of unpaid adoption leave and you should contact the Pensions Scheme Administrators who will provide further details on request.

17. Disrupted adoption

- 17.1. Adoption leave is disrupted if it has started but:
- a) you are notified that the placement will not take place;
 - b) the child is returned to the adoption agency after placement; or
 - c) the child dies after placement.
- 17.2. In case of disruption your entitlement to adoption leave and pay (if applicable) will continue for a further eight weeks from the end of the week in which disruption occurred, unless your entitlement to leave or pay would have ended earlier in the normal course of events.

18. Keeping in touch

- 18.1. We may make reasonable contact with you from time to time during your adoption leave.
- 18.2. You may work (including attending training) on up to ten days (Keeping in Touch Days) during adoption leave without bringing your adoption leave to an end. This is not compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with us.
- 18.3. You will be paid at your contractual basic rate of pay for time spent working on a Keeping in Touch Day and this will be inclusive of any adoption pay entitlement.
- 18.4. Shortly before you are due to return to work, we may invite you to have a discussion (whether in person or by telephone) about the arrangements for your return. This may cover:

- a) updating you on any changes that have occurred during your absence;
- b) any training needs you might have; and
- c) any changes to working arrangements

19. Returning to work

- 19.1. Once you have notified us of your Intended Start Date, we shall send you a letter within 28 days to inform you of your Expected Return Date. We will expect you back at work on your Expected Return Date unless you tell us otherwise. It will help us if, during your adoption leave, you are able to confirm that you will be returning to work as expected.
- 19.2. If you wish to return to work earlier than the Expected Return Date, you must give us at least 21 days' notice in writing. If you do not give enough notice, we may postpone your return date until 21 days after you gave notice, or to the Expected Return Date if sooner.
- 19.3. If you wish to return later than the Expected Return Date, you should either:
 - a) request unpaid parental leave in accordance with statutory parental leave entitlement, giving us as much notice as possible but not less than 21 days;
 - or
 - b) request paid annual leave in accordance with your contract, which will be at our discretion.
- 19.4. If you are unable to return to work due to sickness or injury, this will be treated as sickness absence and our Sickness Absence Policy will apply.
- 19.5. In any other case, late return will be treated as unauthorised absence.
- 19.6. You are normally entitled to return to work in the same position as you held before commencing leave. Your terms of employment shall be the same as they would have been if you had not been absent. However, if you have taken any period of AAL or more than four weeks' parental leave, and it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return to the same position, we may give you another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable.

20. Deciding not to return

- 20.1. If you do not intend to return to work, or are unsure, it is helpful if you discuss this with us as early as possible. For support staff, if you decide not to return you must work the required notice of resignation as stated in your contract of employment. For teachers, if you do not decide to return to work the required notice of resignation is 21 days.
- 20.2. Once you have given notice that you will not be returning to work, you cannot change your mind without our agreement.
- 20.3. This does not affect your right to receive SAP.