



St. Ultan's School
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Policy on Brief Absences of Staff - (Teachers and Special Needs Assistants)

Introductory statement:

This policy has been formulated by the Principal, the staff of St. Ultan's and the Board of Management in 2019, and reviewed in September 2025.

In developing this policy, the Board of Management of St. Ultan's School is required by the Dept of Education and Skills to ensure that **'the welfare and educational needs of the pupils in the school take precedence over all other considerations'** which also reflects the school ethos in caring for those who are most marginalised in society.

However, when dealing with the school staff, the Board is also mindful of the school's Mission Statement and will use this as a framework in balancing decisions regarding staff brief absences with the educational needs and welfare of the pupils.

Definition:

The term **'Brief Absence'** describes short-term, occasional absences sanctioned for staff during the school year. These are permitted on compassionate grounds and are allowed for special family occasions. In consultation with staff and with due regard to the issues outlined in the following documents:

- Primary Circular 0058/2023, 0092/2024, and 32/2007, for Teachers
- Primary Circular 0052/2024, 0093/2024 and 0032/2010 for Special Needs Assistants
- Management Board Members' Handbook CPSMA 2023.

This policy outlines procedures for the following:

- Making an application for leave.
- Notifying the school of unexpected absences.
- Notifying about sick leave
- Leave where substitution is not paid for by the Department of Education and Skills.

- EPV days, exam leave, teacher's own wedding, graduation of teacher (Section 3, Primary Circular 0032/2007}.
- Attendance of representatives of staff at funeral.
- Leave for Special Needs Assistants.
- Sick leave, Certified and Uncertified.
- Parental/Parent Leave and Unpaid Leave

The Department of Education and Skills stipulates the following:

- The prior approval of the Chairperson of the Board of Management must be granted for all absences.
- **Absence for part of a school day constitutes an absence for a full day. Staff must be available for work at 8.50am until 2.30pm**
- Teachers are not allowed to be absent from school to transact private or personal business such as consultation with a solicitor or bank manager, sign of contracts, attending for interviews etc.
- Any absence without reasonable cause and the approval of the Board of Management will involve a loss of salary.

Making an application for leave

- Application form/letter to be filled in by a staff member and given to the Principal to be forwarded to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- If a decision needs to be made before the BoM meeting is due to be held, the Chairperson has the authority of the Board to grant or withhold approval on its behalf.
- In making a decision, the BoM or the Chairperson on its behalf will take into account the number of teachers applying for leave at any one time and the likely impact of such absences on pupils' learning.
- In the case of EPV days for teachers, specific procedures are outlined in this policy.

In the event of an unexpected absence:

- Staff member to text the Principal at the earliest possible opportunity **using the school mobile number. This must be recorded at a reasonable hour, between 7.30am and 8.30am or the night before if applicable.**
- A substitute teacher may only be employed on the second day of a teacher's absence, unless there are two teachers absent on the same day. In this case, a substitute teacher, if one is available, will be employed on behalf of one of the absent teachers.
- All class teachers are required to have **appropriate work available in advance** of such an absence, in a folder kept in their room.
- If a substitute teacher is not available or may not be employed on behalf of a class teacher, the class in question will be split among all other classes.
- If the absent teacher is on lunchtime supervision duty, the substitute teacher will cover or the ISM team.
- **A medical certificate must be submitted on the fourth day of the sick leave and must cover the full absence.**

Leave not covered by substitute payment on behalf of the DES:

EPV (Course Days)

- Teachers must check in advance with the Principal if they wish to avail of EPV day.
- On any given day, only one teacher from Jnr classes (class 1- class 6) and one from Snr classes (Senior 1 – Senior 6) may take a course day (EPV).
- Should there be more applications for course days than this, they will be sanctioned on a 'first-come, first-served' basis.
- Teachers working in support positions are not included in this number since they do not need to have a class supervised for the day.
- Course days should be taken before the end of May. **Course days will not be permitted in June;** allowance will be made only under exceptional circumstances.

Parental/Parent Leave and Unpaid Leave

- Parental/Parent Leave and Unpaid leave must be applied for in writing to the principal 6 weeks in advance. This leave is at the discretion of the Board of Management. Under department guidelines, the Board may choose to defer leave to a more suitable time (up to 6 months from the date given).

Exam Leave:

- An application may be made a month in advance of the required dates to the Board of Management.
- If the number of days required exceeds two, the teacher will be expected to apply to the DES to take unpaid leave of absence, so that a temporary teacher may be employed, or engage a substitute teacher to cover the remaining days of the absence.
- The teacher is required in either case to prepare work for the class to proceed with while he/she is absent.

Graduation ceremony of teacher:

- In the case of a mainstream class teacher, the class will be divided among teaching colleagues for the day.
- Should more than two teachers be graduating on the same day, support teachers may be asked to help with supervision of the classes for part of the day.

Teacher's wedding:

If a teacher's wedding takes place during term time, the five days' absence of the teacher will be covered as follows in the case of a mainstream class teacher:

- The class will be divided among other classes for three days.
- Teachers working in Learning Support/Resource positions will substitute in the class for two days.
- The teacher will be permitted by the Board of Management to avail of **3 EPV days** to extend the five days leave permitted by the Department of Education and Skills at this time.

Staff attendance at funerals (Teachers and Special Needs Assistants):

- In the case of the death of an immediate family member: Husband, Wife, Mother, Father, Brother, Sister, Son, Daughter, of a staff member, two representatives from the staff will be sanctioned by the Board of Management to attend the funeral Mass.
- These will be the Principal and the Deputy Principal.
- Should the management team be unavailable to attend, a close friend of the staff member will be chosen by management to attend the funeral and represent the staff.
- Should this be a mainstream class teacher or SNA, other members of staff will facilitate their absence if required on a day when the school is open.
- Should other staff members wish to apply for a course day / unpaid day to attend the funeral, the BoM will consider the applications, taking into account the disruption that any further absence may cause to the pupils or remaining staff members.
- **It is not the principal's responsibility to inform staff members of deaths; this will only happen if there are grave circumstances that are of a critical incident nature, or for correspondence complications.**

Leave for non-teaching staff

- In the case of ancillary staff i.e. Secretary, Caretaker, leave will be sanctioned by the Board of Management concerning their written contracts.

Sick Leave Certified and Uncertified for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants:

- A medical certificate must be submitted on the **fourth day of the sick leave** and must cover the full absence, for certified leave.
- A letter noting the absent days should be submitted to the principal for uncertified leave.
- In some cases, the employee may be asked to attend 'Medmark' and or 'Medwise' a specialist Occupational Health Medical Practice.
- Medwise OH Medical provide specialist, independent and decisive advice on medical issues that will support both the employer and employee in the recovery to full medical fitness for work.

Roles and Responsibilities:

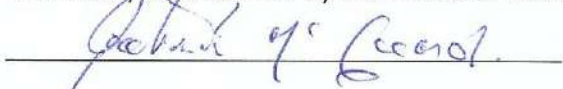
All stakeholders in the education of the pupils will take responsibility for implementing the policy.

Review:

The Policy will be evaluated on an ongoing basis by representatives from the relevant sections of the school community and will be reviewed every three years.

Ratification and Communication:

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: 22/09/25



Signed: _____

Chairperson

