



'Christ at the centre, children at the heart'

Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic MAT

Company No: 08444133

Registered Office: Fordham Road, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 7AA

Approved by the Trust Board:	July 2025
Signed by Trust CEO:	
Review Date:	July 2028

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Introduction

The Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Multi Academy (the Trust) is committed to ensuring all staff are treated, and treat others, with dignity and respect free from discrimination.

This policy outlines the statutory rights and responsibilities of eligible employees who wish to take parental leave. Parental leave is available to both parents, whether of birth children or of adopted children.

The Trust applies this policy to employees of the Trust only (who will be referred to as “you” in this policy) and therefore does not apply to agency workers, casual workers or the self-employed.

This policy applies to eligible employees wishing to take parental leave on or after 6 April 2026.

This policy is provided for guidance only and does not form part of any individual’s contract of employment with the Trust and is not intended to have contractual effect.

Subject to minimum statutory requirements from time to time in force, we reserve the right to vary and amend this policy and any procedure under it at any time and will notify all employees of the details of the change as soon as is reasonably practicable.

What is Parental Leave?

Parental leave is a form of statutory **unpaid** leave available to some working parents in addition to statutory maternity, paternity, adoption leave and shared parental leave.

If eligible, you are entitled to 18 weeks (see below) unpaid parental leave in respect of each child for whom you are responsible. This entitlement is per parent per child and so, for example, where parental leave is requested in respect of twins, each parent has an entitlement to 36 weeks in total. Parental leave must be taken before the child’s 18th birthday.

Eligibility for Parental Leave

If you are an employee, you will be eligible for parental leave if you:

- are an employee of the Trust;
- for any period of parental leave taken before 6 April 2026: have completed a minimum of one year's continuous employment with the school at the time you want to take your leave;
- for leave beginning on or after the 6 April 2026: the qualifying service requirement is removed you have the right to take ordinary parental regardless of your length of service;
- have, or expect to have, parental responsibility for a child under the age of 18 (as detailed above); and
- will be taking the leave to care for the child.

As your current employer, we are entitled to ask for reasonable evidence of such entitlement and, subject to any contractual agreement to the contrary, may decline to grant a request for parental leave until such evidence has been provided.

1. Parental Responsibility

You will be considered to have parental responsibility for a child for these purposes if you:

- are the child's biological mother or father (this is the case whether the child lives with you) and you have parental responsibility for the child;
- are the father of the child registered on their birth certificate;
- are the child's adoptive parent; or
- have legal parental responsibility for the child, for example, if you are the child's guardian or a step-parent who has a parental responsibility agreement or parental responsibility order.

We may ask you to provide a self-certificate as evidence of eligibility which includes a declaration by you that you meet the conditions set out above.

The Purpose of Parental Leave

Parental leave can only be used for the strict purposes of caring for a child you have parental responsibility for. For example, this leave can be used to:

- spend more time with a young child;
- accompany a child during a stay in hospital;
- check out new schools;
- help a child settle into new childcare arrangements; and/or
- enable a family to spend more time together.

If you use or attempt to use parental leave for purposes other than caring for a child you have parental responsibility for, we may take disciplinary action under our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Parental leave is not intended for cases of dealing with an emergency involving your dependents. In this instance, please refer to your statutory right to take unpaid emergency time off as outlined in our Leave of Absence Policy.

Duration of Parental Leave

You can only take a maximum of four weeks' parental leave each year in respect of any individual child.

You are only permitted to take parental leave in blocks of one complete week or more, rather than individual days, unless we agree otherwise or you are a parent with responsibility for a disabled child in which case you may take parental leave one day at a time. A "week" is equivalent to your normal working week. You don't have to take all four weeks of leave at once.

For this purpose, a disabled child means a child who is entitled to a disability living allowance, armed forces independence allowance or personal independence payment.

For these purposes:

- **a year** is deemed to begin on the date upon which you become eligible for parental leave in respect of the child in question.
- **a week** means your normal working week. So, for example, if you normally work 3 days a week, a week shall mean 3 days, if you 5 days a week, a week shall mean 5 days.

Your right to take parental leave is a personal right. You cannot transfer your entitlement to the other parent.

Where you have already taken part of your entitlement to parental leave for a particular child from previous employment, you will need to notify us of this and we will need to contact your previous employer to confirm details of the entitlement you have previously used in order to ensure the correct administration of any current or outstanding parental leave.

Notification Requirements for Parental Leave

You must inform the Headteacher of your intention to take parental leave in accordance with the timescales below. Your notification should be made using the Parental Leave Request Form, which is available from the school office and must set out the dates on which the period of leave you are requesting will start and end.

- if you wish to take parental leave commencing immediately on the birth of a child, you must give notice of this intention at least 21 days before the start of the expected week of childbirth (EWC). The notice must specify the EWC and the duration of the period of leave required.
- if you wish to take parental leave commencing immediately on the adoption of a child, you should give notice of this intention at least 21 days before the start of the expected week of placement (EWP). If this is not possible, you must give as much notice as you can. The notice must specify the EWP and the duration of the period of leave required.

- in all other circumstances, you must give notice of your intention to take parental leave at least 21 days before you intend the leave to start. The notice must specify the dates on which the period of leave is to begin and end.
- if you wish to take a period of parental leave immediately after a period of paternity leave, it would be helpful if you could give the Headteacher notice of that intention at least 21 days before the start of the expected week of childbirth or placement. If this is not possible, you should give as much notice as is reasonably possible. If you do not give at least 7 working days' notice before your period of paternity leave starts, we might not be able to allow you to take the period of parental leave requested. However, we shall consider each case on its merits.

Employees who will be eligible for parental leave on 6 April 2026 due to the removal of the requirement for continuous service, can provide notification of entitlement and leave together from 18 February 2026 onwards.

We may ask you to provide us with a copy of your child's birth certificate, adoption papers, or other evidence of your responsibility or expected responsibility for the child in respect of whom you are requesting leave. If you fail to provide the relevant documentation requested, we may refuse your request to take parental leave.

The Trust's right to postpone parental leave

Parental leave may be postponed for up to 6 months if we consider that the leave request would cause unacceptable disruption to the academic, administrative and pastoral needs and requirements of the Trust] at the proposed time.

If you requested to take parental leave immediately after the birth or adoption of a child and have complied with the notification requirements set out above, we will not postpone that leave.

We will not postpone your parental leave if a postponement of your requested leave would result in the leave being taken after the child's 18th birthday.

If we postpone your request for parental leave, we will liaise with you about suitable alternative dates. We will send you written notice, no more than 7 working days after receipt of your request for leave, explaining the reasons for the postponement, together with the new start and end dates for the postponed leave.

Terms and Conditions of Employment during Parental Leave

Parental leave is unpaid, and the terms and conditions set out in your contract of employment relating to pay and benefits will not apply during any period of parental leave.

During any period of parental leave, you will:

- remain bound by the terms and conditions of your contract of employment including your duty of good faith to us, your duty not to disclose confidential information, your contractual

notice provisions and any terms or conditions relating to the acceptance of gifts or other benefits, or participation by you in any other business; and

- continue to be entitled to the benefit of the Trust's implied obligation to preserve mutual trust and confidence and any terms and conditions of employment relating to notice of termination of the employment by the Trust, redundancy payments in the event of redundancies and to the Trust's disciplinary and grievance procedures.

For the avoidance of doubt, except as provided for in this policy, all other terms and conditions of employment will cease to apply during any period of parental leave.

Annual Leave

During any period of parental leave, annual leave will continue to accrue at the rate provided under your contract.

Pension

During unpaid parental leave, we will not make any payments into the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) or the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and the time shall not count as pensionable service. However, following your return to work, you may elect to pay additional contributions for additional pensionable service in the scheme (to make up for any pension lost during the period of unpaid leave). Further details can be found as follows:

- [TPS](#)
- [LGPS](#)

If you wish to pay additional contributions to make up any shortfall, then please contact your Headteacher in the first instance.

Combining Parental Leave and Paternity Leave

Your right to take unpaid parental leave is not affected by your right to paternity leave. If you satisfy the conditions for each right, then you may take a combination of parental leave and paternity leave.

However, the length of parental leave you take may affect the job you can return to, so please contact the Headteacher if you wish to combine different types of leave. Please also see our Paternity Leave and Pay Policy for further details.

Returning to Work

If your parental leave is for a period of 4 weeks or less and was not part of a longer overall period of continuous leave, you are entitled to return to work in the same position as you held before commencing leave. Your terms and conditions of employment will be no less favourable than they would have been if you had not been absent on parental leave.

This also applies where you add on up to 4 weeks' parental leave immediately after another period of leave, consisting of one or more continuous periods of other types of statutory family leave (which may have been taken in relation to the same child or in relation to a different child or different children), without returning to work in between, provided that the overall period of continuous leave does not include any:

- earlier period of parental leave of more than 4 weeks; or
- period of statutory family leave taken in relation to a particular child which, when added to any other periods of statutory family leave (excluding any periods of parental leave) taken in relation to the same child means that the total amount of statutory family leave taken in relation to that child is more than 26 weeks.

If your parental leave is for a longer period than 4 weeks, or it immediately follows another type of leave and the conditions set out above are not satisfied, you will be entitled to return to work in the same position unless that is not reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable, you will be entitled instead to return to another suitable and appropriate job, on terms and conditions that are no less favourable.

Sickness

If you are unable to return to work at the end of your parental leave due to sickness or injury, this will be treated as sickness absence and our Sickness Absence Policy will apply including its notification requirements.

Flexible Working

We will deal with any requests by employees to change their working patterns (such as working part-time) after parental leave on a case-by-case basis. However, you should note that there is no absolute right to insist on working part-time, only a statutory right to request flexible working where you are eligible.

You should refer to our Flexible Working Policy for further information and practical guidance about making an application to work flexibly.

Bereaved Partners Paternity Leave

If your baby is born on or after 6 April 2026, where the child's primary carer dies (e.g., the mother or adopter), eligible employees may be entitled to extended Bereaved Partner Paternity Leave.

Please refer to our Bereaved Partner Paternity Leave for further details.

