

ABSENCE POLICY



Stepping Stones | Absence Policy

1. Introduction

At Stepping Stones, we understand that absences will happen from time to time. This policy is designed to ensure absences are managed fairly while protecting the continuity of lessons, the wider team, and the experience for swimmers and families.

All absences are monitored, including planned leave and sickness absence. While future planned absences are easier for the company to accommodate and organise cover for, short notice absences can have a significant operational impact and are therefore subject to greater scrutiny and reporting requirements.

2. Types of Absence

Planned / Future Absence

For planned leave, staff should provide as much notice as possible to allow time for cover arrangements to be made.

Where possible, planned leave should be kept outside of term time and staff should consider the impact on the wider programme before submitting requests.

Planned Absence Requirements

- A text message or email is acceptable
- The absence must still be logged through the Stepping Stones Absence Tracker
- A phone call is not required
- A return to work call is not required

Although future absences are still monitored, they are generally treated with less concern as the company is able to plan staffing and cover arrangements in advance.

Short Notice Absence / Sickness

A short notice absence is generally considered to be any absence reported within 24 hours of a scheduled shift.

Because short notice absences can disrupt lessons, create staffing pressures, and impact swimmers and families, it is essential that these absences are reported correctly and as early as possible.

Sickness Reporting Requirements

- Staff must phone the office before their shift on: 07758 695072
- Staff must speak directly with a manager
- App submissions, emails, or text messages alone do not count as reporting sickness
- If no answer is received, staff must continue trying until contact has been made
- The absence must still be logged via the Stepping Stones Absence Tracker
- A return to work call must be completed before returning to delivery

Failure to follow this reporting process may result in the absence being treated as unauthorised and may affect pay.

3. Return to Work Process

Stepping Stones may arrange a return to work discussion where absence levels become a concern, particularly where:

- repeated short notice absences occur
- patterns begin to emerge
- absence levels are impacting the programme or staffing continuity

The purpose of the return to work process is to:

- review absence levels
- identify any underlying issues
- discuss support where appropriate
- ensure staff are fit to return to delivery

This is not automatically a disciplinary process, however absence levels will continue to be monitored.

Return to work discussions may be carried out:

- over Zoom
- by phone
- or in person where appropriate

The return to work process must normally be completed before returning to scheduled delivery.

4. Absence Monitoring

All absences are recorded and monitored by management.

While planned absences are generally easier to accommodate, repeated absences, high absence levels, or ongoing short notice disruption may lead to further review.

The company reserves the right to review staffing commitments, shift allocations, and suitability for delivery where attendance concerns continue.

5. Record Keeping

Absence records and return to work notes may be retained on file for monitoring and operational purposes.

These records help the company:

- monitor attendance patterns
- support employee wellbeing
- maintain operational continuity
- ensure fairness and consistency across the team

6. Fair Implementation

Stepping Stones aims to apply this policy consistently and fairly across all employees.

We encourage open communication and ask staff to raise any ongoing concerns or issues early so that support can be considered where appropriate.

Summary

Strong attendance and reliable communication are essential to maintaining high standards across the programme.

Future planned absences are significantly easier for the company to support than short notice absences, as they allow time for cover arrangements and reduce disruption to swimmers, families, and the wider team.

All staff are expected to follow the correct reporting procedures and communicate absences responsibly and professionally.