PATH4 INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

STATUTORY SICK PAY (SSP) POLICY

Policy Owner: Headteacher / Proprietor
Applies to: All eligible employees of Path4 Independent School
Effective Date: September 2026
Review Date: September 2027
Policy Status: Statutory Employment Policy

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1. Policy Statement

Path4 Independent School recognises that employees may occasionally be unable to attend work because of illness or injury.

The School is committed to supporting employees during periods of sickness while maintaining appropriate staffing levels and continuity of education and support for students.

Path4 will comply with all statutory requirements relating to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), sickness absence, equality, disability and employment rights.

This policy sets out:

- when employees may qualify for SSP;
- how SSP is calculated;
- how sickness absence must be reported;
- requirements for self-certification and fit notes;
- the School's approach to prolonged sickness absence;
- return-to-work arrangements;
- sickness absence reviews;
- occupational health referrals;
- confidentiality and medical information.

This policy should be read alongside the School's Staff Absence Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Health and Safety Policy and Disciplinary Policy.

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2. Statutory Sick Pay

Statutory Sick Pay is the minimum level of sick pay that an eligible employer must provide to an eligible employee when they are unable to work because of sickness.

From **6 April 2026**, the SSP rules changed significantly.

For sickness absences beginning on or after 6 April 2026:

- there is no Lower Earnings Limit for SSP;
- SSP is available regardless of the employee's earnings, provided the other statutory requirements are met;
- the previous waiting days have been removed;
- SSP is payable from the **first full day of sickness absence**;
- SSP is payable for up to **28 weeks**.

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3. SSP Rate for 2026–2027

For the 2026–2027 tax year, SSP is:

£123.25 per week OR 80% of the employee's average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

SSP is subject to the normal deductions applicable to employment income, including Income Tax and National Insurance where applicable.

SSP will normally be paid through Path4's normal payroll system on the employee's usual payday.

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4. Who is Eligible for SSP?

From 6 April 2026, the previous earnings threshold for SSP no longer applies.

An employee may qualify for SSP where they:

- are employed by Path4;
- are absent from work because they are sick or injured;
- are absent for at least one full working day;
- satisfy the other statutory SSP requirements.

The employee does not need to earn a minimum amount to qualify for SSP under the new rules.

The School will assess entitlement in accordance with the statutory rules applicable to the relevant sickness absence.

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5. First Day of SSP

For sickness absences beginning on or after **6 April 2026**, SSP is payable from the employee's first full qualifying day of sickness absence.

A qualifying day is normally a day on which the employee would normally have worked.

For example, if an employee normally works Monday to Friday and is absent because of sickness from Monday:

- Monday may be the first qualifying sick day;

- SSP may be payable from Monday;
- there is no requirement to wait until the fourth day.

The School will calculate SSP according to the employee's qualifying days and statutory rules.

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6. Sickness Absence Reporting

Employees must notify Path4 as soon as reasonably practicable when they are unable to attend work because of sickness.

Unless exceptional circumstances apply, employees should contact their line manager or the Headteacher **before their normal start time**.

The employee should provide:

- their name;
- the reason for their absence, in general terms;
- the expected duration of the absence;
- whether they expect to return the following working day;
- any immediate information required to manage their work safely.

For teaching and student-facing staff, employees should provide sufficient information to allow Path4 to arrange appropriate cover.

Employees should not routinely ask another employee to report their sickness on their behalf unless they are genuinely unable to do so.

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7. Failure to Report Sickness

Failure to follow the School's sickness reporting procedure without a reasonable explanation may result in:

- the absence being treated as unauthorised;
- delay in processing the appropriate sick pay;
- a formal absence-management discussion;
- disciplinary action where appropriate.

Path4 will consider the individual circumstances before taking any formal action.

An employee who is genuinely unable to make contact because of the nature or severity of their illness will not be unfairly penalised.

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8. Self-Certification

For short periods of sickness absence, an employee may be required to provide a self-certification of their illness.

The employee may be asked to confirm:

- the dates they were absent;
- that the absence was due to illness or injury;
- the general reason for the absence;
- the date they returned to work.

Path4 may use an appropriate self-certification form or electronic absence system.

Self-certification does not replace the requirement to obtain a fit note where one is required.

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9. Fit Notes

Where an employee is absent for more than **7 calendar days**, they should normally provide a fit note from an appropriate healthcare professional.

The fit note may state that the employee:

- is not fit for work; or
- may be fit for work subject to appropriate adjustments.

Where a fit note recommends adjustments, Path4 will discuss these with the employee and consider whether they can reasonably be implemented.

Possible adjustments may include:

- amended duties;
- reduced hours;
- altered start or finish times;
- temporary changes to responsibilities;
- additional breaks;
- phased return to work;
- temporary restrictions on particular duties.

The School will consider the employee's individual circumstances and operational requirements.

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10. Medical Evidence

Path4 may request appropriate medical information where this is necessary to understand an employee's health-related absence and manage their employment fairly.

Where appropriate, the School may request:

- an updated fit note;
- an Occupational Health assessment;
- medical advice with the employee's consent;
- other appropriate professional information.

Medical information will be handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable data protection requirements.

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11. SSP and Annual Leave

Employees continue to accrue statutory annual leave while absent from work because of sickness.

An employee may take annual leave during a period of sickness where appropriate.

Path4 will not require an employee to use annual leave instead of sickness absence where the employee is eligible for sick leave and SSP.

Where an employee is unable to take statutory annual leave because of sickness, the School will deal with carry-over in accordance with statutory requirements.

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12. Sickness During School Holidays

Where a Path4 employee is contracted to work during a period that coincides with a School holiday, the normal sickness reporting and SSP arrangements continue to apply.

Where an employee is not contracted to work on a particular day, that day will not normally be treated as a qualifying sick day.

Employees must continue to comply with the School's reporting requirements during periods when they are contractually required to work.

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13. Teachers and Student-Facing Staff

Path4 recognises that sickness absence can have a significant impact on:

- student learning;
- EHCP provision;
- 1:1 support;
- safeguarding;
- supervision;
- curriculum delivery;
- examinations;

- vocational provision;
- alternative provision arrangements.

Employees must therefore report sickness as early as possible to allow appropriate arrangements to be made.

However, the operational importance of an employee's role does not remove their statutory entitlement to SSP.

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14. Long-Term Sickness Absence

Long-term sickness absence will normally be managed separately from short-term sickness absence.

Path4 will maintain reasonable contact with an employee during long-term sickness absence.

The purpose of contact may include:

- checking on the employee's wellbeing;
- discussing their expected return;
- reviewing medical information;
- discussing adjustments;
- discussing Occupational Health referrals;
- considering a phased return;
- discussing any potential workplace barriers.

The School will agree reasonable communication arrangements with the employee.

Contact will not normally be used to pressure an employee into returning before they are medically able to do so.

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15. Occupational Health

Where appropriate, Path4 may refer an employee to an Occupational Health professional.

The purpose of an Occupational Health referral may be to understand:

- whether the employee is medically fit to work;
- likely timescales for return;
- whether workplace adjustments may assist;
- whether the employee has a disability for employment purposes;
- whether a phased return may be appropriate;
- whether there are restrictions on particular duties.

An Occupational Health assessment does not automatically determine whether an employee will receive SSP. SSP entitlement is determined under the statutory rules.

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16. Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

Where an employee has a disability or develops a condition that may amount to a disability under the Equality Act 2010, Path4 will consider its legal obligations.

Reasonable adjustments may include, where appropriate:

- amended working hours;
- changes to duties;
- changes to the workplace;
- additional support;
- phased return;
- adjustments to absence-management procedures.

The School will consider each case individually.

Sickness absence connected to a disability will be considered carefully and sensitively.

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17. Pregnancy-Related Sickness

Where sickness absence is related to pregnancy, Path4 will consider the circumstances sensitively and in accordance with the law.

Pregnancy-related sickness should not automatically be treated in the same way as ordinary sickness for employment decisions.

Where pregnancy-related sickness occurs during the four weeks before the expected week of childbirth, statutory maternity leave may automatically begin under the relevant maternity rules.

The School's Maternity Leave and Pay Policy should be consulted where applicable.

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18. Mental Health and Stress-Related Absence

Path4 recognises that employees may experience sickness absence related to mental health.

Employees should feel able to report sickness absence without fear of unfair treatment.

Where appropriate, Path4 may consider:

- Occupational Health support;
- reasonable adjustments;
- phased return;

- temporary changes to duties;
- workload considerations;
- regular welfare meetings;
- signposting to appropriate support services.

Medical information will be treated confidentially.

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19. Return-to-Work Meeting

Following sickness absence, Path4 may hold a return-to-work meeting.

The meeting may be used to:

- confirm the employee has returned;
- discuss the reason and duration of absence;
- confirm whether the employee is fit to resume normal duties;
- identify any support required;
- discuss adjustments;
- identify any work-related issues;
- update the employee on significant developments during their absence.

A return-to-work meeting is intended to be supportive and is not automatically a disciplinary meeting.

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20. Phased Return

Where medically appropriate, Path4 may agree a phased return to work.

A phased return may involve:

- reduced hours;
- reduced workload;
- gradual increases in working hours;
- temporary changes to duties;
- additional supervision or support.

A phased return will normally be agreed for a specified period and reviewed regularly.

Where a phased return is recommended by Occupational Health or a medical professional, Path4 will consider the recommendation alongside operational requirements.

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21. Statutory Sick Pay and Contractual Sick Pay

This policy relates specifically to Statutory Sick Pay.

Path4 may choose to provide contractual or occupational sick pay in addition to SSP.

Unless an employee's contract specifically provides otherwise, Path4 will provide no more than the statutory entitlement.

Where contractual sick pay applies, the employee's contract of employment will determine the applicable entitlement.

Contractual sick pay may include SSP within the total amount paid rather than being paid in addition to SSP.

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22. SSP When Employment Ends

SSP normally stops when an employee:

- returns to work;
- reaches the maximum period of SSP entitlement;
- ceases to meet the statutory conditions;
- leaves employment, subject to the statutory rules applying at the time.

Path4 will ensure that the employee receives appropriate information where SSP is ending.

Where an employee reaches the end of their SSP entitlement, the School may provide information about other benefits or support that may be available, but employees should obtain independent advice about their eligibility.

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23. Maximum SSP Period

SSP can generally be paid for up to **28 weeks**.

The School will monitor long-term sickness absence and SSP entitlement to ensure that payments are made correctly.

Where SSP entitlement is approaching its statutory maximum, Path4 will inform the employee as appropriate.

SSP entitlement may be affected by linked periods of sickness absence under the statutory rules.

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24. Sickness Absence and Capability

Where an employee has significant or persistent sickness absence, Path4 may need to consider whether the employee is able to continue performing their contractual duties.

Any capability process will be handled fairly, sensitively and in accordance with employment law.

Before making decisions about an employee's employment, Path4 will consider:

- medical evidence;
- Occupational Health advice where appropriate;
- reasonable adjustments;
- the employee's individual circumstances;
- the likely duration of absence;
- the impact on the School and students;
- whether alternative duties or arrangements may be possible.

Dismissal will not be an automatic consequence of reaching the end of SSP.

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25. Sickness During Probation

Employees who become ill during their probationary period must follow the same sickness reporting procedure.

Path4 will consider sickness absence when reviewing an employee's performance and suitability for the role, taking account of applicable employment and equality law.

Where appropriate, the School may extend a probationary period to allow sufficient time to assess an employee's performance.

Any decision will be made fairly and on an individual basis.

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26. Sickness and Safeguarding

Where sickness affects an employee who has safeguarding responsibilities, Path4 will ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements remain in place.

Employees should not attend work where they are medically unfit to do so, particularly where their condition could compromise the safety or welfare of students.

Where an employee has been absent for an extended period, Path4 will ensure that any necessary safeguarding updates are provided before the employee resumes relevant responsibilities.

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27. Infectious Illness

Employees should inform Path4 where they have an infectious illness that could present a risk to students or colleagues.

The School may request appropriate medical advice where necessary.

Path4 will follow relevant public health guidance and its Health and Safety Policy when managing infectious illnesses.

Employees should not attend work where doing so would create an unacceptable health and safety risk.

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28. Confidentiality

Information relating to an employee's health is confidential personal information.

Path4 will:

- restrict access to medical information;
- only share information where there is a legitimate reason;
- keep medical information securely;
- comply with applicable data protection legislation;
- avoid unnecessary disclosure to colleagues.

Managers should not discuss an employee's medical condition with other staff without an appropriate reason.

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29. False or Misleading Sickness Information

Path4 expects employees to be honest when reporting sickness absence.

Providing deliberately false information about sickness absence or deliberately abusing SSP may constitute misconduct and may be dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Policy.

Before taking disciplinary action, Path4 will investigate the circumstances fairly and allow the employee an opportunity to respond.

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30. Working Elsewhere During Sickness Absence

An employee receiving SSP because they are unable to undertake their Path4 duties should not undertake other work during the period of sickness absence where that work is inconsistent with the reason for their absence or their employment obligations.

Any concerns will be investigated fairly and in accordance with the School's Disciplinary Policy where appropriate.

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31. Contact During Sickness Absence

The School may contact employees during sickness absence for legitimate reasons.

This may include:

- welfare checks;
- discussing expected return dates;

- arranging Occupational Health appointments;
- discussing adjustments;
- arranging cover;
- discussing employment matters that require the employee's involvement.

Contact will be proportionate to the circumstances.

Employees should inform Path4 if their contact details change during a prolonged absence.

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32. Payroll and SSP Calculations

Path4 will calculate SSP in accordance with HMRC requirements.

For a full week of sickness, the applicable weekly rate will be used.

Where an employee is absent for only part of a week, SSP will be calculated according to the employee's qualifying days.

For example, where an employee has five qualifying days and the weekly SSP rate of £123.25 applies:

£123.25 ÷ 5 = £24.65 per qualifying day.

The statutory calculation rules will take precedence where the employee's working pattern requires a different calculation.

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33. Absences Beginning Before 6 April 2026

Sickness absences that began **before 6 April 2026** may be subject to the previous SSP rules and transitional arrangements.

Absences beginning on or after 6 April 2026 are generally subject to the new SSP rules.

Path4 will apply the appropriate rules based on the date the sickness absence began and any applicable transitional provisions.

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34. Employee Responsibilities

Employees are expected to:

1. Notify Path4 of sickness absence as soon as reasonably practicable.
2. Follow the School's sickness reporting procedure.
3. Provide accurate information about their absence.
4. Complete self-certification where required.
5. Provide a fit note where required.

6. Maintain reasonable contact during prolonged absence.
7. Attend Occupational Health appointments where appropriately arranged.
8. Inform Path4 of any change in their expected return date.
9. Participate in reasonable return-to-work discussions.
10. Inform Path4 where they require reasonable adjustments.

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35. Headteacher / Proprietor Responsibilities

The Headteacher / Proprietor is responsible for:

- implementing this policy;
- ensuring SSP is administered correctly;
- ensuring sickness absence is recorded accurately;
- maintaining confidentiality;
- supporting employees during sickness;
- ensuring appropriate cover arrangements;
- considering reasonable adjustments;
- arranging Occupational Health referrals where appropriate;
- ensuring employment decisions comply with applicable law.

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36. Line Manager Responsibilities

Line managers should:

- respond appropriately when an employee reports sickness;
- ensure the absence is recorded;
- maintain appropriate contact;
- avoid pressuring employees to return prematurely;
- support return-to-work arrangements;
- identify potential workplace adjustments;
- refer concerns to the Headteacher / Proprietor where appropriate;
- maintain confidentiality.

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37. Grievances and Concerns

An employee who believes that their SSP has been incorrectly calculated or that they have been treated unfairly because of sickness absence should initially raise the matter with the Headteacher / Proprietor.

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the employee may use Path4's Grievance Procedure.

Employees may also seek independent advice from ACAS or other appropriate employment advice services.

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38. Legal Framework

This policy has been prepared with reference to applicable UK legislation and official guidance, including:

- Employment Rights Act 1996;
- Employment Rights Act 2025;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Statutory Sick Pay legislation;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- applicable data protection legislation;
- HM Revenue & Customs guidance;
- GOV.UK guidance;
- ACAS guidance.

From **6 April 2026**, the Employment Rights Act 2025 introduced the removal of the SSP Lower Earnings Limit and the waiting period.

Where legislation changes, the statutory legal requirements will take precedence over this policy.

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39. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where there are significant changes to employment law.

The SSP rate will be updated whenever the Government changes the statutory rate.

For the **2026–2027 tax year**, the statutory rate is:

£123.25 per week or 80% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

POLICY APPROVAL

Policy: Statutory Sick Pay Policy
School: Path4 Independent School
Approved by: Headteacher
Effective From: September 2026
Review Date: September 2027

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____