

## **SECTION 9**

### **Leave of Absence**

#### **Introduction**

Apart from annual leave regulations, leave of absence should be based on the principle that teachers do not make personal arrangements which conflict with the condition that they be on duty at all the times required by the terms of their conditions of service. The need to ensure continuity of education for their pupils must always be the overriding consideration.

However, there are certain exceptions to this principle. To deal with such situations regulations should be issued to cover:

- (a) maternity leave;
- (b) study leave;
- (c) special leave;
- (d) compassionate leave

It is important that teachers are fully aware of the terms covering such leave of absence and how application must be made. Applications for the first three should be made well in advance of the dates involved. Compassionate leave must be handled locally as and when the situation arises.

#### **Checklist:**

- (1) Have regulations been issued which specify in detail the different forms of 'leave of absence' and how application must be made?
- (2) Do these indicate whether the leave is with or without salary?
- (3) Do any of the types of leave of absence constitute a break in service with consequences for pension rights?
- (4) Are Headteachers fully aware of the types of leave they have the authority to grant without reference to the Regional/District Education Officer?
- (5) Have these powers been included in the Scheme of Delegation?
- (6) Are copies of the regulations on leave of absence available to all teachers?
- (7) Do the Leave of Absence Regulations indicate how the leave granted is to be recorded?

#### **Policy Suggestions**

A section of the Scheme of Delegation for Regional/District Education Officers and Headteachers should contain guidance on leave of absence. This would specify in detail the forms of leave, with thresholds, which may be granted by the Headteacher. Apart from study leave for long periods of time, which can have policy implications and considerable costs, all other leave of absence should be able to be granted or refused by the Regional/District Education Officer.

Where a teacher believes that leave has been refused by his/her Headteacher and that extenuating circumstances have not been fully recognised, the matter should be able to be referred to the Regional/District Education Officer. To prevent all refusals being appealed, the decision of the Regional/District Education Officer should be final.

### **Procedures for Consideration**

For ease of administration and the development of effective personnel policies various forms of leave of absence should be able to be granted by the Headteacher. These could be compassionate leave (which includes the death of a close relative, a serious family illness etc), leave to attend a district council meeting or to attend a court. A threshold should be included which limits the duration of the leave of absence and the number of days which could be paid and the number unpaid.

Other applications for leave of absence, which would include requests for periods longer than those delegated to the Headteacher, should be referred to the Regional/District Education Officer. Such applications might well include leave of absence:

- for house removal;
- for marriage during term time (which would only be considered in exceptional circumstances);
- to campaign as a parliamentary candidate;
- for attendance at a conference of a professional association or trade union meeting.

Applications for maternity leave would normally be dealt with by the Regional/District Education Officer. Likewise, any leave which requires the employment of a replacement teacher should be handled at district or regional level.

Study leave covering periods of up to one term might be granted in the same way but courses covering longer periods, because of their cost and possible policy implications, should be handled by the Ministry of Education.

It is highly probable that the Ministry of Education would wish to handle all applications which require a teacher to leave the country during term time.

### **References:**

#### **Turning the Tables on Teacher Management**

*Chapters 7, page 32*

*12, page 54*

#### **Teacher Morale and Motivation in Sub-Saharan Africa: Making Practical Improvements**

*pages 6-7*