



Schools' HR Bulletin

Spring Term 2026

For All Staff

Welcome to the Schools' HR Bulletin for spring 2026 (pre-Easter edition).

The HR Bulletin is aimed at providing relevant information to all staff on a half-termly basis.

Any documents referenced in the bulletin can be accessed on West Sussex Services for Education by your school's Headteacher, Bursar or School Business Manager.

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Section One: HR Policy Matters

HR Policy Changes

Paternity Leave and Unpaid Parental Leave

From 6th April 2026, the qualifying period for taking paternity leave and unpaid parental leave will be removed under the Employment Rights Act 2025. This means that individuals who would be eligible for paternity or unpaid parental leave will not need to have 26 weeks continuous service to be eligible to take such leave. Restrictions on taking paternity leave after shared parental leave will also be removed.

It is important to note that, although there will be entitlement to take paternity leave from day one, the eligibility criteria to receive Statutory Paternity Pay will remain the same and continue to be based on length of service and earning levels.

Employees who will qualify for paternity or parental leave because of the changes which come into effect in April 2026 can give notice from 18th February 2026 if they wish to take leave for a child expected to be born or placed for adoption between 6th April and 25th July 2026. The current arrangements for giving notice still apply.

There were also additional changes on 29th December 2025 which means that bereaved partners may take paternity leave from the first day of employment following the death of a child's mother or adopter. The current eligibility criteria for qualifying for Statutory Paternity Pay still apply.

Policies and forms are being updated and will be published in readiness for April 2026.

Policy on Supporting Staff Experiencing Domestic Abuse

Some minor amendments have been made to the policy to clarify when a referral to the Adults Safeguarding Hub may be necessary, to clarify the process for referrals regarding children and young people via the Integrated Front Door, and the requirement to consult WORTH Services and HR to consider safety matters.

Menopause Policy

A new Menopause Policy has been launched to replace the Menopause Guidance document. The policy has been created to raise awareness of menopause and perimenopause and to encourage open and compassionate conversations to help colleagues experiencing menopause feel supported and understood.

Menopause can bring challenges that impact day to day wellbeing and, with the right support in place, employees are more likely to feel able to perform at their best.

The new policy provides helpful tools for headteachers/managers and employees, including a Menopause Individual Support Plan template that may help to explore needs and record agreed support. Occupational Health and the Employee Assistance Programme remain important routes for advice and support.

Dignity and Respect Policies

West Sussex County Council is committed to providing a workplace culture of dignity and respect by creating an environment that is free from unacceptable behaviour such as discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

All members of staff in schools deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of who they are interacting with, which is why we are introducing two new important HR policies for schools:

- **Dignity and Respect at Work Policy** - for interactions between staff members.
- **Policy on the Prevention and Management of Unacceptable Customer Behaviour** - for interactions with parents and/or members of the public.

Everyone has a role in promoting professional and respectful behaviour and these policies explain what is expected and what to do when experiencing or witnessing unacceptable behaviour. The policies also reinforce our responsibility to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment and the upcoming requirement (from October 2026) to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment at work, including by third parties.

One page guidance documents are also available to help staff feel confident when speaking up or reporting concerns.

Section Two: Employee Benefits

At West Sussex County Council, we recognise the importance of supporting your health & wellbeing to help you feel valued and engaged. We provide a range of resources to promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, enabling you to maintain good health and enhance your quality of life.



Employee Assistance Programme

Sometimes it can be a struggle to balance the demands of work and home. Our [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP), delivered by Health Assured, is designed to assist with achieving the right balance, whether through practical self-help information, counselling or advice provided by fully qualified professionals.

The service is free and confidential, and support is available through a 24/7 telephone service, an online portal, or through the [Wisdom App](#).

**Free 24-hour confidential helpline:
0800 028 0199
Employer/Organisation code:
MHA000088**



Gym Membership Discounts

If you are looking to get fitter and healthier, you can access discounted membership rates at over 4000 national gyms, leisure centres, health clubs, bootcamps and more, with savings of up to 40%. WSCC pays the full cost of your annual membership up front and reclaims this from you over 12 months via net salary deductions. Just click on the **Gym Membership** tile in [West Sussex Choices](#) for further information.

We also link with several **local leisure centres** in West Sussex to offer discounted rates – further details can be found by going to the **Lifestyle Savings** tile in [West Sussex Choices](#) and clicking on **Local Benefits**.



Health Cash Plans

Our Health Cash Plan with [BHSF](#) is a voluntary scheme that helps pay for the cost of everyday healthcare and can cover both yourself and your family members. For a fixed monthly cost deducted directly from your salary, you can claim cashback for your day-to-day health care costs (e.g. dentist, optician, physio), and access 24/7 virtual GP appointments.



Cycle to Work Scheme

Thinking about getting back on your bike? Our Cycle to Work salary sacrifice scheme enables to you make savings of up to 42% on the latest bikes, high-vis clothing and safety accessories.

Visit [West Sussex Choices](#) and click on **Cycle to Work** to get started.

Section Three: Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Latest *Your Health* Newsletters

The latest *Your Health* newsletters published by our Occupational Health service provider Health Partners are now available.

- The **February 2026** edition explores two essential aspects of a fulfilling life: building deeper connections and taking care of your heart.
- The **March 2026** edition takes a closer look at the evolution of women's health. It also provides a guide to rest and rejuvenation.

The newsletters can be viewed online by clicking on the images below and PDF versions are available on [West Sussex Services for Education](#):



END OF HR BULLETIN 04/03/2026.
PREPARED BY KMG HR POLICY TEAM.