

A handbook for
growing families

Maternity, Paternity & Shared Parental Leave

From your news to your return:
a friendly guide for everyone in
the Charter family.



Charter.



A letter to you...

Dear parent-to-be,

Congratulations. Whether this is your first baby or your fourth, whether you are expecting, adopting, or becoming a parent through surrogacy, this is a big and happy moment, and I am really pleased for you.

I have written this handbook because I remember how much there is to take in at this stage, and how easily the practical questions can crowd out the part that matters most, which is the time you are about to spend with your child. My hope is that this guide answers the practical questions clearly, so that you can give your attention to your family and feel properly looked after by your school and the Trust the whole way through.

It takes you through the whole journey, step by step: telling us your news, planning your leave, understanding what happens to your pay, staying in touch while you are away, and coming back to work. It covers maternity leave, paternity leave and Shared Parental Leave, so wherever you are in this, there is something here for you. It sits alongside the Trust's Maternity Leave and Pay Policy and Shared Parental Leave and Pay Policy, which remain the formal source of your entitlements if you ever need the detail.

One thing I want you to know from the outset is that you are not doing this on your own. Every Charter school has a trained Life Leader, qualified through the Maternity and Paternity Project, whose job is to support you before, during and after your leave. They are a friendly, knowledgeable first point of contact for anything in this handbook, so do ask your Trust HR Business Partner or School Business Lead who yours is and lean on them.

If anything here is unclear, please speak to your Trust HR Business Partner or your line manager, and for anything about your pay, contact payroll directly at payroll@tcset.org.uk. We would much rather you asked than worried.

I hope this is the start of a wonderful chapter for you and your family. We will be right behind you.

With very best wishes,

Cassie Buchanan

Chief Executive, The Charter Schools Educational Trust

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Keeping you safe and healthy

Here is the path from your news to your return. The rest of the handbook takes each step in turn.

1

Tell us your news.

Let your Headteacher know in writing by the end of the 15th week before your baby is due, and send your MAT B1 to payroll.

2

We make things safe.

We carry out a risk assessment and agree any adjustments. You take paid time off for ante-natal care.

3

Plan your leave.

Decide when to start, how long to take, and how your annual leave fits around it.

4

Understand your pay.

We confirm your maternity pay in writing so there are no surprises.

5

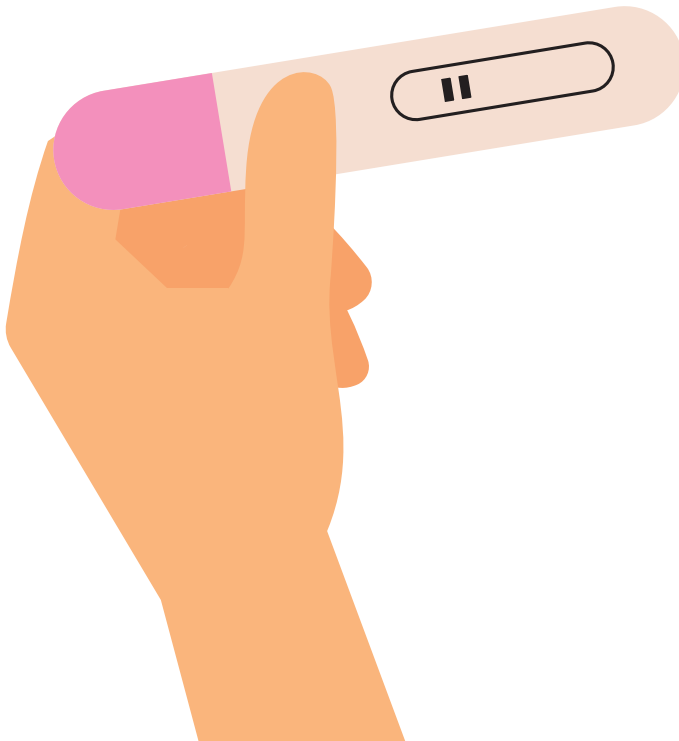
Stay in touch (if you want to).

Agree how we keep you in the loop, and use up to 10 paid Keeping in Touch days if you wish.

6

Come back to work.

Return to your job with support from your Life Leader, with flexible working an option.



Telling us your news

When to tell us

Please tell your Headteacher in writing that you are pregnant no later than the end of the 15th week before your Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC), which is around the 25th week of your pregnancy. This is sometimes called the qualifying week. Once you have told your Headteacher, please also let payroll know. Telling us early helps too: it means we can keep you safe at work and plan to cover your role while you are away.

What happens next

- We will ask you to complete a Maternity Leave Application Form (see the appendices).
- We will send you an acknowledgement letter setting out your entitlement based on that form.
- Around the 20th week, your midwife will give you a MAT B1 certificate confirming when your baby is due. Please email a copy to payroll@tcset.org.uk.



Important: Our payroll provider cannot calculate or pay your maternity pay until they have your MAT B1. Without it, your maternity payments cannot be processed.

If you are becoming a parent through surrogacy, you still need to provide a MAT B1. It is a legal document and is required for payroll and entitlement processing.

Keeping you safe, and your appointments

Health and safety

Once you have told us you are pregnant, we carry out a risk assessment of your role and agree any adjustments needed to protect you and your baby. If you ever have a concern about your health and safety at work, this will usually be done with your



Ante-natal care

Whatever your length of service, you are entitled to reasonable paid time off for ante-natal care. This includes medical appointments and, where your midwife or GP recommends them, relaxation and parentcraft classes. Please give your line manager as much notice as you can, and try to arrange appointments near the start or end of your working day. We may ask to see an appointment card after your first appointment.

Partners can take unpaid time off to go to up to two ante-natal appointments with you, of up to 6 hours and 30 minutes each. See For partners later in this handbook.

Planning your leave

How much annual leave you can take

Every pregnant employee can take up to 52 weeks of Statutory Maternity Leave, regardless of length of service, pay or hours. It is made up of 26 weeks Ordinary Maternity Leave followed immediately by 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave. You do not have to take the full year, but you must take a minimum of two weeks off after the birth. This is a legal requirement.

When to start

Deciding when to start your leave can feel difficult. The earliest you can start is the 11th week before your baby is due. You can keep working right up to your due date if you would like to and you are well enough. Put your chosen start date in writing, and give 28 days' notice if you later want to change it.

- If your baby is born early, your leave starts automatically the day after the birth.
- If you are off with a pregnancy-related illness in the four weeks before your due date, your leave will usually start then.

Annual leave

You continue to accrue your annual leave and bank holiday entitlement while you are on maternity leave but you cannot take annual leave during the maternity leave itself. How much leave you are entitled to will depend on whether you are on teaching or support staff terms and conditions. Teaching staff are entitled to 5.6 weeks per year statutorily. For support staff, this will be based on your contractual entitlement.

How much leave you are entitled to will vary, depending on whether you are a member of the teaching or support staff and what terms and conditions you are employed on.

Understanding your pay

This is the part most people want to be clear about, so here it is in plain terms. What you receive depends on your length of service. We will always confirm your personal figures in writing.

Enhanced Maternity Pay (TCSET)

From 1 September 2025 the Trust offers Enhanced Maternity Pay to all eligible staff. If you have one year's continuous service with the Trust by the start of the 15th week before your EWC, your 52 weeks break down like this:

Period	What you receive	Roughly how much
Weeks 1-11	Full pay (including any SMP)	100% of your normal salary
Weeks 12-28	Half pay plus standard-rate SMP, never more than full pay	50% salary + SMP
Weeks 29-39	Standard-rate SMP only	Statutory rate
Weeks 40-52	Unpaid (if you take the full year)	Nil

The standard SMP rate is set by the Government and reviewed every April. Check the current figure at gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave. Tax, National Insurance and pension contributions are deducted from maternity pay in the usual way.

Please note - Maternity pay in Loughborough Primary or Streatham Wells may be slightly different to that in the table. It will dependent on their length of service and if their contracts are Lambeth contracts. Also for some employees, based on the same criteria as previous note the it is 11th week, not 15th week

Pensions

You keep paying pension contributions while on paid maternity leave, and the Trust keeps paying its share too, into either Teachers' Pensions or the Local Government Pension Scheme depending on your scheme. If you have a period of unpaid leave, please check your scheme rules with your HR Lead.

If you do not qualify for Enhanced pay

If you have 26 weeks' continuous service by the end of the 15th week before your EWC, you will usually receive Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP): six weeks at 90% of your average weekly earnings, followed by 33 weeks at the standard rate. If you do not qualify for SMP, you may be able to claim Maternity Allowance (MA) from Jobcentre Plus.

If the Trust cannot pay you SMP, you will need to obtain and SMP1 form from the HR team in order to apply for MA.

You can print the MA application form from the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maternity-allowance-claim-form> or ask the HR team if you need help.

	SMP	Maternity Allowance
Who pays it	Your employer	The Government
Who it is for	Employees who meet the service and earnings rules	Those who do not qualify for SMP
Is it taxed?	Yes	No
How long	Up to 39 weeks	Up to 39 weeks
How to claim	Through the Trust	MA1 form via Jobcentre Plus

The three-month rule:

If you receive the enhanced Trust maternity pay, the enhanced element of your pay is offered on the basis that you intend to return to work for at least three months afterwards. If you decide not to return, you may be asked to repay the enhanced pay you received above SMP or MA. If your plans change, talk to your line manager. Your statutory pay is never affected by this.

If things do not go to plan

Most pregnancies and births go smoothly, but not all do. If you are facing something difficult, please know that we will do everything we can to support you, and that you can use the Trust's free, confidential 24-hour employee assistance service at any time.

Sickness before your leave starts

If you are off with a non-pregnancy illness (say, a broken arm), normal sick pay applies up to the birth or your agreed finish date. If you are off with a pregnancy-related illness in the four weeks before your due date, your maternity leave will usually start automatically. You are not entitled to sick pay during maternity leave itself.

Premature birth and neonatal care

A premature birth is one before the 37th week. If your baby is admitted to neonatal care within 28 days of birth and stays for at least seven full days, you will be entitled to Neonatal Care Leave on top of your maternity or paternity leave. Please tell your Headteacher in writing of the birth as soon as you reasonably can, so we can protect your entitlements.

Miscarriage, stillbirth and bereavement

Losing a baby is heartbreaking, and we will offer you our deepest care and whatever practical support you need. What you are entitled to depends on timing.

- Before the end of the 24th week: there is no statutory maternity leave or pay, but you are entitled to compassionate leave under the Time Off Policy, and to sick pay if you are signed off, as this can be treated as pregnancy-related.
- From the 24th week onwards, or if your baby is born alive and later dies: your full maternity leave and pay entitlements apply, and Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay of up to two weeks may also be available.

Please tell your Headteacher in writing as soon as you are able. Lean on your line manager, your Life Leader and the employee assistance service. You may also find [Maternity Action](#) helpful, and you can request a baby loss certificate at gov.uk. Please also see the Trust's Parental Bereavement Policy [here](#):



While you are on leave

Keeping in touch

Before you go, agree with your line manager how you would like to stay in touch, and how often. This is informal and entirely up to you: some people want to hear about developments and social events, others prefer space. The aim is simply that you do not miss anything important or feel out of the loop, while your right to a proper break is fully respected.

Keeping in Touch (KIT) days

By agreement with your Headteacher, you can do up to 10 days of paid work during your leave, known as KIT days, for example a training course or a team meeting. You are paid in full for these. Any work on a day uses up one KIT day, and KIT days do not bring your leave to an end or reduce your SMP. Many people choose to use them during the unpaid part of their leave. You can decline KIT days without any consequence.



Coming back to work

Your right to return

You have the right to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions. If you return after Additional Maternity Leave and that is not reasonably practicable, you will be offered a suitable alternative role on terms that are no less favourable. You will also benefit from any pay rises or improvements you would have had while you were away.

Your return date and notice

If you take your full leave, you simply return on the expected date. If you want to come back early, you must give written notice to your Headteacher. Depending on your role, this may be up to 8 weeks notice in advance of the new date. For support staff, accrued annual leave is usually added to the end of your leave.

Flexible working

If you would like to change your hours or work flexibly when you return, you can make a flexible working request. Your request must be in writing. The more notice that you provide of your request, the more likely it is that the Headteacher may be able to agree to it. Please speak to your line manager or Trust HR Business Partner for assistance with this. See the Trust's Flexible Working Policy.

Feeding your baby at work

We are legally required to provide somewhere suitable for breastfeeding mothers to rest, and we will work with you on what you need. A warm, clean, lockable room for expressing milk, and somewhere to store it, is ideal. Toilets are not a suitable space. Please talk to your Life Leader well before you return so arrangements are ready, and bring any advice from your GP or health visitor that helps explain what you need.

Your Life Leader, and coming back well

Returning after time away can feel daunting, and you do not have to navigate it alone. Your school's Life Leader, trained through the Maternity and Paternity Project, is there to help you plan a smooth return, think through practical arrangements, and connect you with other parents across the Trust. Do reach out to them, ideally before your first day back.

For partners: paternity leave

We know that partners want time with a new baby too. If you are the father or partner of the birthing or adopting parent, you can take paternity leave, usually one or two consecutive weeks, to be taken within 52 weeks of the birth or adoption. From 6 April 2026, you can give notice to take paternity leave and unpaid parental leave from your first day of employment.

Tell your Headteacher in writing and complete an Application for Paternity Leave form, which your line manager authorises before a copy goes to payroll@tcset.org.uk. You can now take paternity leave and pay after Shared Parental Leave, which was not previously possible. You can also take unpaid time off for up to two ante-natal appointments with your partner.



Shared Parental Leave

Shared Parental Leave (SPL) lets eligible parents share the care of their child in the first year. The parent entitled to maternity or adoption leave can end it early and convert what is left into leave and pay that the two of you share, however suits your family.

What you can share

- ✓ Up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay between you (after the mother's compulsory two weeks).
- ✓ Taken together, or staggered, in up to three separate blocks each, with work in between if you wish.
- ✓ All within the first year after your child is born or placed with you.

Eligibility

To take SPL you must have 26 weeks' service by the qualifying week (the 15th week before the EWC) and still be employed when the leave starts. Your partner must have worked for 26 of the 66 weeks before the EWC and earned on average at least £390 in any 13 of them. There are equivalent rules for adoption and surrogacy.

How to apply

Give your Headteacher at least eight weeks' notice. You will need to give a curtailment notice ending your maternity leave or pay, a notice of entitlement, and a period of leave notice for each block. The forms are in the appendices and on the staff intranet. The table below shows which forms apply.

How to apply

Give your Headteacher at least eight weeks' notice. You will need to give a curtailment notice ending your maternity leave or pay, a notice of entitlement, and a period of leave notice for each block. The forms are in the appendices and on the staff intranet. The table below shows which forms apply.

Form	Both parents take SPL	Only birth parent	Only partner
Form 1 (curtailment)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Form 2 (birth parent intends)	Yes	Yes	No
Form 3 (partner only)	No	No	Yes
Form 4 (partner intends)	Yes	No	Yes

Use the calculator at gov.uk/pay-leave-for-parents to model your options, and keep a copy of everything you submit. Your Trust HR Business Partner, School Business Lead or Life Leader can help you complete the forms.

Quick reference

For help with	Speak to
Anything in this handbook, support before and after leave	Your School Life Leader
Notifying leave, forms, flexible working	Payroll, your Trust HR Business Partner or line manager
or line manager	Standard-rate SMP only
Pay, MAT B1, payslips	payroll@tcset.org.uk

The forms and appendices

The Maternity Leave Application Form, a sample MAT B1, and the Shared Parental Leave forms (Forms 1 to 4) are provided as separate appendices and are available from Payroll, your Trust HR Business Partner and the staff intranet.. Worked examples of a completed teacher SPL application are included to guide you.

Glossary

Term	What it means
EWC	Expected Week of Childbirth
MAT B1	Maternity certificate from your doctor or midwife confirming your due date
SML / OML / AML	Statutory / Ordinary / Additional Maternity Leave
SMP	Statutory Maternity Pay
EMP	Enhanced Maternity Pay (the Trust's enhanced scheme)
MA	Maternity Allowance, paid by the Government if you do not qualify for SMP
KIT day	Keeping in Touch day, paid work during leave (up to 10)
SPL / ShPP	Shared Parental Leave / Statutory Shared Parental Pay
SPP	Statutory Paternity Pay
Pay, MAT B1, payslips	payroll@tcset.org.uk

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