

Education Welfare Service – Guidance for Schools on Term Time Holidays

Regular attendance at School is at the heart of the Every Child Matters agenda and the drive to raise attainment. By taking 10 days holiday (20 sessions or 50 hours) in HT1, a pupil will automatically be classified as 'persistently absent' by October half term and can only achieve 94.7% attendance in that year. **"A holiday is an absence."**

This document aims to be a reference for schools in addressing holiday requests.

Best Practice reflects that:

- Attendance Policies should be reviewed regularly with a cross section of the school community. They should include a specific reference to term time holidays
- Ideally, a common pyramid agreement is reached so that there is consistency in approach whatever the key stage. Agreeing the same dates for TEDs across the pyramid will support parents with child care arrangements, for example
- Following an application for a term time holiday, schools should initiate a discussion with parents/carers in order to accurately assess the request and outline the wider implications. This should be completed by a member of the SMT and can also include the schools named governor for attendance.
- A regular sharing of pupil level data on attendance and specifically at discussion before potential absence can inform decisions and outcomes. The need to reinforce the link between attendance and attainment is paramount for all stakeholders
- A simple leaflet distributed to all Parents/Carers indicating implications of term time holiday and outlining term dates and other significant events in the school calendar can assist in keeping the attendance agenda high. Newsletters/notice boards/websites are other forums that can be used to give regular updates
- Circle Time, group work sessions or tutor time can be used for pupils to explore potential difficulties of returning to school both academically and emotionally following an absence. A quote from a pupil who has experienced difficulty to renew friendships or catch up with work on returning to school can be very powerful
- Use of SEAL (Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning) approaches are helpful to engage learners and parents alike and to strengthen the climate for learning

What the Law says

Regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday. The regulations do state that Head teachers may, in certain exceptional circumstances, grant up to 10 school days leave in a school year for the purposes of an annual family holiday but parents should not expect such leave to be granted as a right. Indeed, it is likely that in most cases Head teachers will refuse to authorise absence. The Government's own guidance on the issue of term-time holidays states: *'Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday in term'*. A copy of this guidance can be found: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=13904>

If a holiday is taken without the school's permission or if a child fails to return by the agreed date, this should be recorded as unauthorised absence and noted on the child's records. If a child has not returned within 10 days of the

Education Welfare Service – Guidance for Schools on Term Time Holidays

expected date of return, then the school may take the child off roll, after consultation with your named Education Welfare Officer.

If a pupil's attendance continues to be an issue, having taken term time holiday, schools can consider a variety of initiatives, one of which may be a Penalty Notice. The Penalty Notice fine is £50 if paid within 28 days or £100 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days. If a Penalty Notice is not paid, there may be a prosecution in Court.

It may be timely to indicate that there are 190 statutory school days a year; so there are 175 other days (weekends and school holidays) available for holidays which would not have a negative effect on a child's education. In allowing "blanket" permission for term time holiday, some schools may unwittingly be giving unspoken messages undermining the value of education.

Coding

Schools are required to submit data reflecting pupil level absence codes.

For the purposes of holidays, register regulations state they should be coded as follows:

F- Agreed Extended Family Holiday

G- Unauthorised Holiday

H- Holiday

Further DfE guidance regarding holiday coding, as well as additional information and examples can be found at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/attendance/pupilregis/> or on Edulink.

Accurate coding enables schools to evidence and evaluate absence trends for term time holidays and target interventions, particularly with regard to pupils who become Persistently Absent following a family holiday early in the academic year. The latest Ofsted guide for evaluations on attendance can be found on page 25 of the following link <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Evaluation-schedule-of-judgements-for-schools-inspected-under-section-five-of-the-Education-Act-2005-from-September-2009> or on Edulink.

What schools can do

When deciding whether to authorise a term time holiday, the school will need to consider if there are **special, individual or exceptional** circumstances for the request. There are some obvious considerations:

- Close to or during examinations
- When valuable group work with other pupils is taking place that cannot be repeated
- If a child needs help in certain subjects to access all the education support that is offered
- During the induction period when a child transfers from one school to another and needs to familiarise themselves with the new school environment
- During the first year in a new school when pupils may experience problems settling in
- Previous similar requests
- Overall attendance pattern

This list is by no means exhaustive-please see Appendix A for Schools Proforma and further clarification.

"Every day, half-day and lesson matters."

WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITY Exemplar Notice to Parents

Application for leave of absence for the purposes of an annual family holiday or an extended trip overseas during term time

School

The School’s Policy

The school considers that all absences from school will disrupt a child’s continuity of learning. As a consequence it believes that absences should be kept to a minimum in order to maximise your child's potential.

What the Law says

Regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday. Holidays during term time should be seen as an exception to the norm. So, what are 'exceptional circumstances'?

It is the decision of the Head teacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term-time absence will be considered on an individual basis. A Head teacher will not accept as an exceptional circumstance the fact that a holiday is cheaper during term-time.

An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off, unique situation such as a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday; or there may have been a significant trauma in the family recently and the Head teacher might consider that an immediate holiday might enable the child concerned to better deal with the situation; or the holiday might be a unique, one-off never-to-be-repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested.

The Head teacher will also look very carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have concerns, for example, should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the Head teacher will agree to authorise any further absence.

Other factors will include the likely impact on the child’s education, particularly in terms of continuity of learning; **there is a strong link between the amount of absence in a school and the qualifications that its pupils achieve**; whether the holiday falls during a year in which the child is due to take a public examination or be involved in Government tests (e.g. SATs).

Applying for Leave of Absence for Holidays during Term Time

Applications should be made using the reverse side of this form at least 4 weeks in advance of the proposed holiday dates. (Parents are advised to apply for leave of absence before they confirm their holiday arrangements.)

Parents will be informed, in writing, of the outcome of their application for leave of absence.

Education Welfare Service – Guidance for Schools on Term Time Holidays

APPENDIX B

Application for leave of absence for the purposes of an annual family holiday or an extended trip overseas during term time

Part 1- School to complete this section before sending home		
Child(ren)'s name		Class/Form
Level of attendance during last academic year, current academic year Child(ren) will /will not * be sitting examinations/SATs * during this year. (* delete as appropriate). Other relevant information e.g. out of school learning planned/ presentation day		
Part 2- Parent/Carer to complete		
To: The Head teacher/Chair of Governors of School		
Dates for which leave of absence is requested		
From:	To:	Number of School Days:
(first day of absence)	(last day of absence)	
Holiday destination:		
Please give the reasons which prevent this holiday being taken during a school holiday period. (You may wish to attach a separate letter to support your request)		
Date: Signed (Parent/Carer)		
Part 3 – To be complete by Head teacher (or nominated person)		
Please make an appointment to discuss this with.....		
Leave of absence authorised/ not authorised (delete as appropriate)		
Date: Signed		