

Holidays in Term time – what to consider before making a request to your child's school

Information for Parents (rev. September 2013)

Introduction

A significant amount of school time is lost each year as a result of parents taking their children out of school in order to go on family holidays. Schools are understandably keen to reduce the amount of time lost in this way and have developed school policies and procedures to enable them to achieve this. This leaflet is intended to inform parents of the issues they need to consider when thinking about arranging a family holiday during term time.

What the law says

As a parent you do not have any legal right or entitlement to take your child out of school in order to go on a family holiday during term-time and you should not as a rule expect any leave requested to be granted.

The relevant regulations were recently amended to remove the discretion headteachers previously had to grant leave for term-time holidays in special circumstances. The regulations now state that headteachers may only grant any leave of absence during term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

If you request leave you must be able to demonstrate that the circumstances are exceptional. Schools will not as a rule consider the following to be exceptional circumstances:

- the availability of cheap holidays;
- the availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced during school holiday periods;
- an overlap with the beginning/end of term;
- you have not previously requested term-time leave.

If you take your child out of school for a family holiday without the school's prior authorisation the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and noted in your child's school records. Similarly, if your child goes on a family holiday which has been authorised by the school yet fails to return by the agreed date any extra time absent from school will be counted as unauthorised. If your child fails to return within 10 days of the expected date of return, then the school may remove your child from the school role and notify the council accordingly.

If your child is absent from school on a family holiday without authorisation the school may ask the council to serve a Penalty Notice. This Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 which, if not paid within 21 days, rises to £120. If you are issued

with a Penalty Notice and you fail to pay it within 28 days you will be prosecuted in court.

How schools respond to requests for family holidays during term time

Most schools will as a rule refuse to authorise leave for family holidays during term time. Each school will have its own policy on family holidays during term time.

If you do make a request for leave to go on a family holiday during term time in responding to your request your child's school will mainly consider the nature of any exceptional circumstances you mention. The school will also consider

- your child's previous attendance record;
- the time of year when the holiday is to be taken;
- how long the holiday is for;
- the likely disruption the holiday might cause to your child's education;
- whether similar requests have been made in the past.

What parents can do

You should avoid if at all possible making a request for a family holiday during term time. You should especially avoid requesting leave:

- close to or during exams/tests;
- when important work/activity which cannot be repeated is taking place;
- during the first week of term or when your child is transferring from one phase to another;
- during the first year in a new school.

If this proves to be absolutely unavoidable you should make your request as early as possible before the time of the holiday, but you should not expect the school to grant your request for leave unless the circumstances are exceptional. If the school does agree to your request you should discuss how you will help your child to catch up with any work which he/she will miss.

It is important to remember that by taking your child out of school during term time you may be giving him/her an unspoken message that school is not important. You should also bear in mind that some children may find it difficult to renew friendships with other children when they return to school after a period of absence. But you should remember most of all that every lesson counts!

Contact

Should you need further information please contact the Access and Inclusion Service on 0300 300 4953.

Access & Inclusion, Central Bedfordshire Council, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, LU6 1LF