



## Absence During Term Time – Policy and Guidance for Parents

Children's absence from school disrupts learning and undermines educational attainment and achievement. In response to national concerns that children are being taken out of school to go on family holidays in term time, new regulations came into force from 2013.

Our policy for managing leave of absence has been approved by the Governing Body and is in line with current Government regulations and the Local Authority's policy statement.

### The amended regulations are explicit that:

- Headteachers **cannot authorise any leave of absence during term** time unless they are satisfied that there are **exceptional circumstances**.
- **Parents must make an application in advance**. Schools **cannot** grant retrospective approval for **any** leave of absence.
- There is **no entitlement** for parents to take their child on holiday during term-time.

### Headteachers must always:

- be satisfied that each child's individual circumstances warrant being granted leave;
- take into account the frequency of any such requests, the pupil's attainment, overall attendance and ability to catch up on missed lessons; and then
- determine the number of days, if any, a child can be away from school.

Requests for absence in the period leading up to, or the week of, any formal tests (SATs) will **almost always be refused**. Any absence in Year 6 would also, in most circumstances, be routinely refused.

**Approval for leave of absence in term time will be a rare, irregular occurrence, only allowed in exceptional circumstances.**

### Examples of exceptional circumstances which may justify approval include:

- members of the armed forces who are returning home from active duties.
- the death of an immediate family member (**parent, sibling or grandparent**).
- a child receiving medical treatment abroad – additional guidelines apply plus supporting evidence from a senior medical consultant.

**Clear evidence will need to be provided in all these situations.**

In the case of all intended travel abroad, booking confirmation stating names and dates of both outward and inward flights will be required.

## Procedures for Parents Requesting Leave of Absence During Term-time

**Note:** This procedure is required for **all absence requests**.

- A letter of application must be submitted to the Headteacher in advance of the requested absence, allowing sufficient time to consider the request and respond appropriately (usually a minimum of two weeks).
- The letter should detail the request and state why the absence should be considered as 'exceptional', providing dates of the first and last day of intended leave.
- The Headteacher may request a meeting with parents to further clarify the request and discuss the granting or otherwise of the application.

### If an application is granted...

- Parents will be notified in writing of the decision confirming the agreed dates of absence and the date by which the child/children will be expected to return to school. This letter will also inform parents of the actions which may be taken if they fail to return on time e.g. the issuing of a penalty notice for unauthorised absence or the child's/children's names being removed from the school roll.
- In those rare circumstances where leave of absence is granted for 10 days or more, parents will also be required to complete and return a Local Authority **Application for Discretionary Leave of Absence** form confirming the request for absence in accordance with the dates authorised by the Headteacher.

This application form will then be forwarded to the Local Authority to enter into their **E-Tracker System**. This system will generate text messages to parents on the first 'approved' day of absence confirming their agreed date to be back in school. The Headteacher will receive email copies of all correspondence. The e-tracking system also creates a daily report of when all those children granted extended leave are due back in school on each day and sends this in an e-mail to the Local Authority's Pupil Tracking and Licensing Officer, who will then contact the child's/children's school to check if the child/children have returned.

### Failure to return by the agreed date...

- In the case of a child/children **granted** leave of absence but the child/children then fail to return to school **within 5 school days** of the agreed return date, a request to issue a penalty notice to the parents will normally be made by the Headteacher to the Local Authority Learning Access Manager.
- Penalty notices will be issued unless the school is satisfied that the child/children are unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause e.g. flight delays. In all circumstances, evidence will need to be provided to substantiate the reasons given. It is the responsibility of parents to inform school of any changes to return dates in advance of/on the date agreed to prevent the commencement of procedures by school to issue a penalty notice.
- Where children fail to return to school by the agreed date, every attempt will be made to contact the family to establish the circumstances before steps will be taken to remove the child's name from the school roll.

### If an application is not granted...

- If permission for discretionary leave is **not granted**, the Headteacher will write to the parents explaining the reason why the request has been refused and warning them of the potential consequences for failing to ensure their child's attendance at school, e.g. the issuing of penalty notices and/or the removal of their child/children from the school roll.

- Where leave of absence is either not requested by parents in advance or requested with insufficient notice for a warning letter to be sent, the school reserves the right to request penalty notices without a warning letter having been issued.
- If a parent removes a child/children from school **without seeking prior approval** from the Headteacher **or disregards the Headteachers decision** to refuse an application, school expects that parents remain in contact, and keep the school updated of an expected return date. If they do not, they risk the child's name being removed from school roll with no guarantee of re-admission.

## Penalty Notices – circumstances of use

The circumstances in which a penalty notice for non-attendance may be issued include:

- Parentally condoned absence
- **Unauthorised holidays in term time**
- **Unwarranted delayed return from discretionary leave (without school agreement)**
- Persistent late arrival after the register has closed

'Parentally condoned absence' also refers to 'ad hoc' absences, not necessarily consecutive days, which are deemed to be **unauthorised**.

Penalty notices may be issued in these circumstances for a **minimum of 10 unauthorised school sessions (5 days)** by any child in any **one term** and/or a **minimum of 14 unauthorised school sessions (7 days) over two consecutive terms**.

Persistent late arrival after the register has closed will be monitored by the school's Inclusion Officer and Penalty Notices issued accordingly.

*(Note: these procedures comply with BwD, Blackpool & Lancashire County Local Authorities' Joint Procedures for Issuing Education-related Penalty Notices July 2015 – policy available upon request.)*

## Penalty Notices - costs

By law, individual Education Penalty Notices are required to be issued to each liable parent/carer per child, i.e. in the case of a family with both parents and two children who are taken out of school without the Headteacher's permission, 4 x separate Penalty Notices will be issued.

Further amendments to the Education Regulations have reduced the time limits by which a Penalty Notice amount must be paid:

**Payment of penalty within 21 days - £60 per parent, per child; and where not paid**

**Payment of penalty within 28 days - £120 per parent, per child**

Non-payment of the penalty within 28 days will normally trigger prosecution in the Magistrates' Court. The Local Authority will retain any revenue from the income generated by the issuing of penalty notices to help cover administration and enforcement costs.

*Note: this document is based on the Local Authority Policy Statement: Considering Applications for Discretionary Leave of Absence during Term-Time (July 2013) and the amended Joint Procedures for Issuing Education-Related Penalty Notices (July 2015)*

**Policy Revised: October 2019**

**To be reviewed: Autumn 2022 or as necessary due to local/national legislation requirements**