



St Gabriel's CE Primary School

Absence During Term Time Policy

Our Vision Statement:

Our aim is to nurture children with the confidence and self-belief to achieve their best;
to have the courage to think for themselves;
to be resilient in their learning and ambitious in their hopes and dreams;
to live in harmony, respecting others;
to search and question throughout life's journey;
to find personal faith;
and to learn about the Gospel of hope and love found in Jesus Christ.

Seeking to nurture:

Self-belief CourAge ResIlience AmbiTion HArmony

“Stand firm... be courageous” 1 Corinthians 16:13

Policy Reviewed: Autumn 2023

Next Review: Autumn 2026

Aims

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2... have higher rates of attendance... compared to those with the lowest attainment.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance, DfE September 2022

As a school, we will consistently promote the benefits of good attendance, set high expectations for every pupil and communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to parents. Good attendance is seen as a learned behaviour.

DfE 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.

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be '**exceptional circumstances**'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, **at least 2 weeks before the absence**, using school's **Application for Discretionary Leave form**, accessible via the school's website or the school office. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where Eid celebrations fall in term time (1 day only per event)
- Immediate family bereavement or marriage for a brief absence (eg 1-2 days)
- Child receiving medical treatment abroad
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes

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 certainly be refused**. Any absence in Year 6 would also, in most circumstances, be routinely refused. In the case of all intended travel abroad, booking confirmation stating names and dates of both outward and inward flights will be required.

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

Procedures for Parents Requesting Leave of Absence During Term-time

The connection between educational progress and absence is complex at an individual pupil level; any negative impact might be cushioned by a number of positive factors – parental engagement, the child's knowledge and skill levels and the ability of the school to provide an appropriate level of support.

*However, if children are taken out of school for a two week holiday every year and also miss the average number of days off for sickness and medical/dental appointments, then by the time they leave compulsory education at age sixteen **they will have missed the equivalent of a year off school.***

BwD Policy Statement 2018

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

- A **Local Authority Application for Discretionary Leave of Absence Form** 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).

A) 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.

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 school.
- 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.

B) If an application is not granted...

- If permission for discretionary leave is **not granted**, parents will be notified by letter, 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.
- 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 for absence, then the procedures for issuing a penalty notice **will** commence with failure to return to school within 5 days.

Use of Penalty Notices including for 'ad hoc' absence & persistent lateness

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 and determined by the school's Inclusion Officer and Penalty Notices issued accordingly.

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 in Exceptional Circumstances (Aug 2018)