

**Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time**

1. Parents who want the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully, **complete the attached form and send it to the head teacher**. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered **well before** the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision regarding their request. Head teachers cannot authorise any leave of absence unless the request is received before the period of absence begins.
2. The Department for Education makes it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Head teachers now also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
3. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.
4. Staffordshire County Council understands the challenges that some parents face when booking holidays particularly during school holidays. However, we believe that, in order to ensure children receive the best education and prospects, that they should be in school during term time.
5. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. In considering a request, the school will take account of: -
  - the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
  - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
  - the overall attendance pattern of the child
  - frequency of similar requests
  - whether the parent made the request in advance
  - students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.
6. Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The head teacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. However head teachers may choose to liaise with each other as part of their decision-making process.
7. Should the school decide to grant leave of absence, but the child **does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
8. Should the school decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**, which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 **per parent\* per child**. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.
9. The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school absences during term time and support head teachers in challenging parents who ignore the law.

\* Generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.

\*Staffordshire Education Welfare Workers met with Headteachers during the Autumn Term 2015, and agreed the following criteria which may constitute 'exceptional circumstances'. They also agreed that Headteachers should be allowed to 'their discretion' where it is seen to be appropriate.

What would you accept as an exceptional circumstance for missing school? Agreed by Education Welfare service and Newcastle Headteachers 2015.

- Immediate family treatment period (Possibly use a “C” code for this in the register)
- Respite care (This would be a “C” code)
- Funerals
- Graduation
- Passing out parades
- Occasional days/holidays (H or G codes could be used)
- Travelling families (The “T” code would be used if the family were out of school to work with the travelling community)
- Weddings (Only the day of the wedding was agreed as exceptional, the other days would be unauthorised) and therefore may be subject to a penalty
- Bereavement
- One-offs, eg: serious illness (M or I code)
- Specific health conditions eg: Autism (This could also be a M, or a C code depending on the circumstance.)
- One off opportunities eg: sport activity with a club. ( This would be the “P” code)