

Unauthorised holidays

New guidance has been issued to schools regarding absences from school, in particular holidays in term time. Since September 2013 Headteachers have not been able to authorise term time absence except in exceptional circumstances, which would not normally be for holidays. From September 2015, I am further required to inform all parents that a fixed penalty notice may be issued if unauthorised absence is taken, and indeed parents should be aware that they would be committing a criminal offence. There are particular circumstances in which this may happen:

- If there have been 5 consecutive days or more of unauthorised absence over one academic year
AND
- If the student's attendance is below 95%
- If the holiday is in September, or was taken during exams
- Is the second leave taken in any academic year
- The pupil is in year 6 or 11

I know that all parents try not to take their children out of school during term time; as you know, such absences are detrimental to their learning. I am also aware that there are sometimes mitigating circumstances. If you wish to request a leave of absence, please complete the appropriate form (on the website or available from the school office), and return to school together with a letter which explains the exceptional circumstances and why the leave of absence is required (for example where parents' seasonal work prevents them from taking time off in school holidays).

Please do not hesitate to contact me at school if you have any questions.

Dear Parent/Guardian

Unauthorised holidays

Thank you for your letter regarding your intention to take David and Mary out of school on 2-3rd November. I understand it is sometimes difficult to organise family holidays outside of term time and thank you for your attempt to plan within school holidays.

However, new guidance has been issued to schools regarding absences from school, in particular holidays in term time. I know this is a contentious issue, but I am required to inform all parents that a fixed penalty notice may be issued by the local authority if unauthorised absence is taken without permission, and indeed parents should be aware that they would be committing a criminal offence.

While this absence will have to be recorded as unauthorised, please be reassured that you will not be issued with a penalty notice as David and Mary's attendance is generally excellent and I am confident that they will catch up work missed.

Regulations have been tightened in order to support schools' attempts to help students do as well as they can – I know you understand that absence from school is a major factor in affecting exam results, especially in KS4.

Please do contact me at school if you have any questions or comments about any of this.

Yours sincerely

Judith etc