

CHRISTOPHER REEVES LOWER SCHOOL



Leave of absence during term time: A guide for parents and carers

It is important to carefully consider the implications of taking your child out of school during term time. There are 190 statutory school days a year; so there are 175 other days (weekends and school holidays) available which would not have a negative effect on your child's education.

By taking your child out of school for a leave of absence you may be giving them an unspoken message that school does not matter. Some children may find it difficult to renew friendships with other pupils when they return to school. If the school does grant leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances, please discuss with the Head teacher how you will help your child to catch up with the missing hours of education lost (50 hours for 10 days leave of absence).

Frequently asked questions

Am I entitled to take my child out of school for a family holiday?

No. Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school or the alternative provision on a regular basis.

- The Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a parent to "fail to secure their child's regular attendance at the school"
- The amendments to the 2006 Regulations remove any reference to family holidays, extended leave and the statutory threshold of ten school days.
- The amendments make clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances
- The amendments give parents no entitlement to take their child out of school in term time
- The Head Teacher and Governing Body will determine what the exceptional circumstances are.

What are exceptional circumstances?

There are very few circumstances that are considered to be “exceptional”. Leave of absence requests for the following reasons are not considered to be exceptional circumstances:

- availability of cheap holidays,
- availability of the desired accommodation,
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods,
- periods that overlap with beginning or end of term.

If we decide to take a holiday during term time what should we do?

- The parent/carer with whom the child resides must apply in writing to the school.
- The letter/application must explain the exceptional circumstance surrounding the request for the leave of absence.
- You should request time off for your child as soon as possible and always 4 weeks before the leave of absence.

What will the school do then?

- The Head Teacher will determine whether the exceptional circumstance ruling applies, if not the application will be declined
- Only the Headteacher (or Senior Teacher) has the power to approve leave of absence applications. When making the decision the protocols and criteria laid down in the school's attendance policy must be followed.
- You will receive a written response from the Headteacher letting you know if your application has been approved.
- If the holiday goes ahead after the application has been declined the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

What will happen if the absence is unauthorised?

- The school will decide if a Fixed Penalty Notice should be issued.
- If the school decide that a Fixed Penalty Notice is to be issued you will receive a letter from the school advising that it has referred the matter to the Local Authority and that a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued;
- The school will inform the Local Authority that a Fixed Penalty Notice needs to be issued
- A Fixed Penalty Notice will be sent to you, accompanied by an explanatory letter; the Notice gives you the opportunity to pay a penalty fine instead of being prosecuted in the criminal courts The Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If you do not pay a Penalty Notice you will be prosecuted in court.
- Each school has a designated Education Welfare Officer who can be contacted through school or directly through Bedford Borough Council

NB The expression “parent”, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for him/her, or who has care of the child.