



TERM TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY FOR PUPILS

Adopted by Governing Body: 09.12.14

Reviewed by Governing Body: 15.09.2020

Cycle of review: 3 years

Statutory Policy: No

In September 2013 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 made it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Local Authority believes holiday leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. Taking children out of school for avoidable reasons is disruptive to the learning of the individual child and also disruptive to other children in the class, the organisation of the class and groups within it, group activities and teacher planning.

Having taken advice from the Local Authority the Governing Body of Pitcheroak School has agreed that holidays during term-time will not be authorised except in the following exceptional circumstances:

- If the child or young person has a degenerative condition or life-limiting condition.
- If the child's parents/carers are Service Personnel or other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time. (A letter from the employer must be handed in with a completed 'Request for Leave of Absence During Term-Time' form.)
- Acute crisis within the family, where the family needs to be together such as the death of a close relative, extreme mental health issues that result in unprecedented situations (A brief letter of explanation must be handed in with the school Leave of Absence Request form.)
- Court order/formal agreement where parents have separated (A copy of the court order must be handed in with the school Leave of Absence Request form.)

It is a parent's responsibility to justify why their request is of exceptional circumstances.

All requests for a leave of absence during term time should be made by the parent/carer on an official form.

The school will look at all requests for leave of absence in term time individually and not as part of a blanket approach.

School holiday leave of absence records will be kept to enable the school to monitor the frequency of requests and length of absences from school. This will enable the school to be well informed to deal with individual requests and ensure a consistent approach to such requests. These records will be passed onto a pupil's new school if they transfer.

The school will review general attendance performance and progress when considering each leave of absence request.

On receiving a request for a leave of absence during term-time the school will respond by a letter issued within 5 school days advising that the holiday request is authorised/ unauthorised and the reason for this decision.

If the leave of absence request is refused, the parent/ carer will be notified in a letter that if the holiday is taken this may result in a Penalty Notice fine by the LA (£60 to be paid within 21 days; if not paid Penalty Notice will increase to £120 to be paid within 28 days). Non-payment of a Penalty notice may result in prosecution under the provisions of Sec 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

If the leave of absence is taken without authorisation, the register will be marked as 'unauthorised' and the school is required to notify the Local Authority.

If no leave of absence request is made and information is received that a child is absent due to a holiday all efforts will be made to establish (through home visits during the absence period) why the child is absent and recorded. On the child's return to school a letter will be issued within 5 school days notifying the parent/carer that the absence has been recorded as unauthorised absence and that the school is required to notify the Local Authority.

When a child returns to school following an unauthorised leave of absence during term-time, the school will decide whether to make a referral to the Education Welfare Service.

The school will not authorise retrospective approval for leave of absence requests. If the parent/carer does not apply for the leave of absence in advance the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

The Local Authority guidance states that penalty notices will apply when there has been the deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without or against school permission and where this has created a period of unauthorised absence in the current term of at least 10 sessions (5 school days).

Pitcheroak School and the Local Authority are continuing to work together to reduce the amount of leave taken in term time by issuing Penalty Notices under the Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 (amended regulations 2013) Parents need to be aware that as of Monday 25 April 2016, WCC changed their code of conduct which meant Penalty Notice could be issued for 6 days of absence (12 sessions). This was placed on hold while the Isle of Wight case was heard. As the outcome is not known, WCC are implementing the Code of Conduct with immediate effect.

There is clear evidence that any absence can and will have an impact on attainment. It is therefore important that the schools maintain good attendance levels and that parents support this by ensuring their children attend school regularly. Whilst parents/guardians can provide explanations for absences, it is at the school's discretion as to whether the absence will be authorised or unauthorised.

COVID-19 update

In March 2020 the government made it clear that no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school at that time due to the Covid 19 outbreak. Schools were then closed to all but a specific group of pupils; those of key workers and vulnerable children.

Now the circumstances have changed, it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development. We know that children have missed being with their friends and the wider social aspects of school.

After so much disruption to your child's education this is not the time to take your child out of school for a family holiday or other term time leave. It is unlikely that any leave will be authorised by the Head Teacher after so much enforced absence from school. The more your child is in school, the more they will catch up.

This means from September 2020 (unless parents are formally notified of a local lockdown where schools are closed), the usual rules on school attendance apply including:

- parents' duty to send their child to school regularly where they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability of local authorities to use legal sanctions, including penalty notices and prosecution in court.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

PART A to be completed by the parent

This form should be completed by the parent and forwarded to the school office before the period of absence.

Name of Pupil: _____

Class: _____

I request leave of absence for my child on the following dates:

From (first day off school) _____

To (last day off school) _____

No. of days: _____

I have read and understand the schools Term-Time Leave of Absence Policy.

The reason for the leave of absence request is: _____

Signature of Parent/Carer: _____

Date: _____

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PART B for school use only

Attendance of child: _____

Leave of absence authorised: _____ Leave of absence unauthorised: _____

Reason for refusal:
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Reason for approval:
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