

New Christ Church Primary School Policy for Taking Holiday during Term Time

Over-arching Principles:

Education is a child's right.

Holiday during term time should be viewed as exceptional and not the norm.

The decision to authorise a holiday during term time is for the Head Teacher to decide and is not a parent's right.

Most requests for holiday during term time will be refused and any resulting absence will be unauthorised.

Legal Context:

The Government is clear in its expectation that every child will attend school on a regular basis.

The law states that it is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly.

Under regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, it is only a **discretionary** power for leave to be granted by the head teacher for the purpose of an annual family holiday. This leave can only be authorised in **exceptional** circumstances.

Guidance issued by the Department of Education 1994 clearly states: "No parents/carers can demand leave of absence for the purposes of a holiday as a right."

Good Attendance:

95% attendance is the minimum expected level of attendance at school. Any attendance figure below 90% is deemed as being 'unsatisfactory'. Research proves that those children whose attendance is 95% or better at primary school achieve well at primary and later on at secondary school.

Every child has a right to experience a good education; this can only be achieved when a child attends school regularly. To fail to ensure satisfactory or better attendance is a denial of a child's right to education, which is unacceptable.

Any absence from school will affect a child's continuity of education – they may miss crucial teaching of new concepts, skills or knowledge and therefore fall behind in their school work – it is difficult for these gaps in learning to be filled upon their return to school.

Requesting Leave of Absence to Take Holiday

The Governors of New Christ Church expect that most family holidays will be taken during the advertised school holiday periods, except in exceptional circumstances.

The Governors recognise and respect that the decision as to whether to authorise holiday or not will be solely at the Head Teacher's discretion and the Governors will support those decisions taken.

Where a parent feels their circumstances are exceptional, they should complete a holiday request form available from the office, and return at least 6 weeks before the holiday commences. Parents are strongly advised not to book any holiday until authorisation has been completed.

What may be classed as 'exceptional' circumstances?

These situations **may** be classed as 'exceptional':

- Where there is a significant, unpredictable event leading to the holiday having to be taken during term time
- Where a parent is restricted to specific holiday periods by their employer
- Where a family has experienced a significant event which necessitates time away together for a period of time
- A once in a lifetime opportunity

This list is not exhaustive or exclusive. The Head Teacher may ask parents to provide evidence or information in order to ascertain whether circumstances are exceptional or not.

The following situations will not usually be deemed as exceptional:

- Cheaper flights or other holiday expenses
- Holiday at a time of the year 'because we've always gone in that week'
- Birthday treats or similar

Again, this list is not exhaustive.

How will the Head Teacher make a decision?

Each situation will be judged on its own merits. Parents should not assume that their holiday request will be granted simply because the request of someone they know has been granted. In deciding each situation, the Head Teacher will

- examine the holiday request form to determine whether the request is based on exceptional circumstances
- refer to the current and previous year's attendance – as a general rule, where either figure is below 95%, the request will be refused
- refer to the child's academic records – where there is concern about the academic progress, the holiday request will be refused
- consider whether holiday leave has already been taken within the current academic year

- consider whether the child is likely to miss significant school based events, such as KS2 Tests week (NB No holiday will be authorised during this week)
- consider any other evidence s/he feels is significant

The Head Teacher may also seek the advice from the Educational Welfare Service.

If Holiday Leave is refused...

In this case, parents should not keep their child out of school. If parents do decide to continue with the holiday, the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absences are monitored carefully by the Educational Welfare Service. Where there a number of unauthorised absences, further action will be taken.

The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 allows a Local Authority to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for poor school attendance. These notices require a penalty to be paid by parents/carers of pupils' who have unauthorised absence from school. A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued if parents take a family holiday during term time without the prior authorisation of the head teacher. In Reading, the policy allows for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued in situations where more than 15 school sessions are unauthorised (i.e. 7.5 school days). The FPN will be applied to each parent and in respect of each child.