



Hampshire
County Council

Family Holidays During Term Time

**Advice to parents and carers from the
Children's Services Department**

- ***Why attend school regularly?***

Research shows that pupils with higher levels of school attendance are more likely to benefit from education, achieve better examination results both at primary and secondary school levels and go on to have more successful careers. Similarly, irregular or poor attendance at school can lead to pupils underachieving and underperforming in examinations and therefore have a detrimental effect upon their careers.

Fact: Hampshire County Council Children's Services Department supports schools in promoting regular school attendance and discourages absence from school for any reason.

- ***Absence from school***

Absence from school can be disruptive not only for the individual pupil but also for the pupil's whole class. Whilst there may be occasions when a pupil is unable to attend school eg due to illness, all other absences should therefore be kept to a minimum and if at all possible avoided.

Fact: 80% attendance or one day's absence per week equates to missing a whole year of secondary school or more than a year of primary school!

- ***School attendance and the Education Act 1996***

Section 7 of the Act requires all parents (and carers) of a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school to ensure that the child attends that school regularly and punctually. **Failure to do so is an offence.**

- ***Approved leave of absence***

Regulations do, however, permit a headteacher to agree to a request from a parent for a pupil to be granted 'leave of absence'. This request for 'leave of absence' can in certain circumstances be granted to enable a pupil to go on a family holiday during term time. The regulations make it quite clear, however, that **parents do not have the right or an entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a family holiday during term time.**

- ***Family holidays during term time***

Under the regulations, approval for a child to be taken out of school to go on a family holiday during term time can only be granted by the headteacher. Government guidance states that “Parents should not normally take pupils on holidays in term time” and “Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it”. **Parents should not therefore expect any request for leave for a family holiday to be automatically approved and in most cases such requests will be refused by the headteacher.**

- ***Requesting leave for a family holiday***

Any request for leave for a family holiday during term time **must be made in advance**, normally in writing, to the headteacher **by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides**. The headteacher will normally only approve the request if there are **special circumstances** relating to the application and **apart from in exceptional circumstances, no more than 10 school days leave of absence is likely to be granted in any one school year.**

- ***What are ‘special’ and ‘exceptional circumstances’?***

The fact a holiday is cheaper during term time is unlikely to be considered as ‘special’ or ‘exceptional circumstances’. ‘Special’ or ‘exceptional’ circumstances are much more likely to be unique and/or one-off situations eg due to a parent’s work/employment commitments, where there has been a trauma or bereavement in the family or where the opportunity for such a holiday is unlikely to arise in the future. Ultimately, however, it is for the headteacher to decide if the circumstances are ‘special’ or ‘exceptional’.

- ***Considering a request for leave for a family holiday***

Each request for leave for a family holiday is likely to be considered by the headteacher on an individual basis. In deciding whether or not to approve a request for leave for a family holiday, as well as considering the circumstances surrounding the request, the headteacher is also likely to take into account the age of the pupil, the time of the year proposed for the holiday, the overall attendance pattern of the pupil and the pupil’s stage of education and progress.

Fact: Hampshire County Council Children’s Services Department will always support a headteacher’s decision to refuse a request for leave of absence for a family holiday during term time.

- ***If my request is approved***

If the request is approved by the headteacher, the pupil's **absence will be recorded as 'authorised'** for the agreed period of absence. If the pupil does not return to school following the agreed period of 'authorised absence' however, unless the extended period of absence is due to some 'unavoidable' cause eg illness, the extended period of absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

- ***If my request is not approved***

If the request is not approved by the headteacher and the parent proceeds to take the pupil out of school for a family holiday, all of the **absence during this period will be recorded as 'unauthorised'**.

- ***What happens if the absence is 'unauthorised'?***

Where a pupil has irregular attendance and the absences are unauthorised, the **parents are committing an offence** and could either be issued with a Penalty Notice or prosecuted under the Education Act, 1996.

- ***What happens if my family has to make an extended visit overseas?***

How a pupil's absence is recorded in such circumstances is up to the headteacher. This may be considered as approved leave of absence and recorded either as an extended family holiday or as some other form of 'authorised' absence. Alternatively, the headteacher may not approve the absence and therefore record it as 'unauthorised'. If the absence is recorded as 'unauthorised', the pupil's name may, depending upon the period of absence, be removed from the school register. In such situations there is no guarantee that a place will still be available at that school upon the pupil's return.

- ***Where can I get more detailed information?***

Further information is available from www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolattendance