



12th May 2023

Dear Parents & Carers

Requests for leave of absence during term time

As you may be aware through reading our blog, amendments to **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**, and that Headteachers should determine the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Some circumstances are of course exceptional, and we are happy to support these in whichever way we can.

Thank you for working with us on this matter; the attendance situation at our school has slightly improved but we need to continue to try and address some areas of concern moving forwards.

We are currently receiving a significant number of holiday requests that do not fit the definition of exceptional circumstances; these will continue to be unauthorised going forward, as they have been recently. However, despite the fact that these requests not being authorised, we are still seeing a significant number of pupils being taken out of school.

Exceptional circumstances are, for example, weddings, family graduations, significant one-off events, bereavements, religious observances, some forces leave, respite on occasions, or unexpected family crises - for just a day or two. Leave is at the Headteacher's discretion.

We want our students to maximise the time that they are in school to best prepare them for their next steps and adulthood. We also have a duty to support the placements of students in school in relation to our agreements with local authorities who support their places here. We know that pupils make more progress when they are in school and it is therefore important that they attend whenever they possibly can.

The government document, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance', to which our policy refers, has been in place since September 2022. This guidance is very clear about persistent and severe absence, and the routes available to schools to address concerns, including legal intervention.

Because of this I'm letting you know that from September 2023 we will seriously consider using more means available to us than we are using now for unauthorised holidays in term time. Up until now, in conjunction with the local authority, we have mainly been using supportive methods. However, if the situation persists then we will consider, in certain cases everything, up to and including fines and further legal action, as per the national guidance.

I appreciate this letter may cause concern amongst some of you and may require you to reconsider plans moving forward. We have tried to be sensitive to the needs of the families of our students and have taken a gradual approach to this issue. I have referred to it many times and written about it in the school blog.

We are committed to improving attendance to ensure that more of our students make the best possible progress. As I said at the start, thank you for the support of an overwhelming number of you - it means a great deal - and I do appreciate how difficult this issue is for some. I hope we can continue to work together constructively on this for everyone's benefit.

With very best wishes

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J Steward', written in a cursive style.

John Steward
Headteacher