



Term Time Holidays and Leave of Absence

After illness, the taking of holidays in term time has been in recent years the single largest cause of absence from schools in England. At Etchells Primary School we believe that holidays in term time are undesirable because of the impact on our pupils' education, and we strongly encourage parents always to take family holidays during the 13 weeks of school holidays which are available to families each year.

Research has shown that there is clear link between levels of attendance and levels of achievement. In short, the more time a pupil misses school, the lower their levels of achievement are likely to be. Taking holidays in term time has a disruptive effect upon pupils' learning and it is often difficult for pupils to catch up with work that has been missed. It may also suggest to pupils that their education is not an important priority.

In 2013 the Government took further steps to discourage holidays in term time. It passed legislation abolishing the right of schools to authorise up to ten days a year specifically for holidays if special circumstances exist. This means that leave of absence for any reason - including for holidays - can only be granted if the school is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist. Even then, schools may still refuse to give permission - for example, if your child has a poor attendance record, or, if the proposed leave of absence is at a particularly important time, such as in the run up to exams or at the start of a new school year.

At Etchells we deal with every application on an individual basis however it is still the case that the circumstances must be exceptional for the absence to be authorised.

The effect of this change means that it is now very unlikely that permission for pupils for leave of absence for holidays or other purposes will be granted. Please be aware that in certain circumstances documentary evidence will also be required to support an application.

Education Penalty Notices

New rules concerning Education Penalty Notice fines which the government have been introduced. The aim of the new rules is to reduce the number of days missed by children due to unauthorised absence, especially for unauthorised term time holidays.

These rules will come into force on 19th August 2024 will therefore take effect from the start of the 2024-25 school year. They will apply only to offences taking place (and fines issued) from then onwards.

The new rules are:

- For the first fine issued for after the start of the 2024-2025 school year, the fine will increase to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.
- If a second fine is then issued to the same parent for the same child within three years of the first fine it will be for £160.
- Subsequent offences - no further fines can then be issued if two have already been issued to the same parent for the same child within the previous three years (starting with the date of the first fine); instead the parent will be prosecuted by the Local Authority in the Magistrates' Court.

As with holidays we ask that, where possible, appointments are made out of school hours or in the holidays to minimise the disruption of the school day.

Requests for Leave of Absence

As mentioned above, parents are strongly advised to take holidays during the school holidays. If you wish to request a period of absence for any reason please complete a Leave of Absence Request Form (see appendix 1) **at least four weeks before** the start of the proposed leave (if possible). The completed form should be returned to the school office who will then pass it on to the Headteacher for consideration.

Forms are available from the school office and may also be downloaded from the school website.