



Artsmark



Allendale First School

www.allendalefirstschool.co.uk

"An Outstanding School" Ofsted

Dear Parents

Following a recent conversation with a parent I would just like to clarify the meaning of authorised and unauthorised absences, especially in relation to holidays taken in term time.

An authorised absence is recorded in such circumstances as when your child is ill or has a medical appointment or in our area, adverse weather conditions, where you have notified school or another absence where the headteacher has given prior consent to the absence.

An unauthorised absence is recorded if your child is absent, even if ill, and you have not notified school, hence we will ring parents who have not notified school about their child's absence, a) to ensure there is no unauthorised absence recorded for a child and b) to reassure ourselves that your child did not set off for school and not get here safely. Unauthorised absences are counted as truancy and can be investigated by the EWO, (Education Welfare Officer); parents can be liable to fines or in the worst case scenario a custodial sentence.

Legal and National Context:

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the Local Education Authority prosecuting the parents. If found guilty of the offence, each parent could be fined up to £2,500 and/or sentenced to 3 months imprisonment. The parent may alternatively be subject to a fixed-penalty fine of £50.

Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 gives schools discretionary power to grant leave - up to 10 days - for the purpose of an annual holiday during term time. But this is not an entitlement and parents cannot expect leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday to be granted as of right.

Nationally, Government policy is to encourage schools to minimise the amount of teaching and learning time lost as a result of term-time holidays and schools are now expected to adopt a much more challenging response to requests for leave for such holidays. Schools are also legally required to set targets to reduce overall absence - term-time holiday absence is a particular category of absence on which schools are now expected to focus.

As stated above, Parents are not entitled to take their child out of school during term time for a holiday. There are a maximum of 10 days absence which can be authorised at the Headteacher's discretion. If you choose to take your child out of school for a holiday without consent, this is counted as unauthorised and parents again can be fined or charged.

I have not as yet, refused to grant any of the discretionary 10 days a child may take for holidays and I do understand that in many cases there are valid family reasons. However, the trend of holidays in term time is increasing. Last academic year 202 school days were lost whilst children were on holiday. Since September 2010, there have already been 113 holiday days taken. This is disruptive both for children and for staff at school. Some children lose their routine and find it hard to adapt to school life again, whilst others miss vital work and staff have to find time to enable them to catch up, which in turn takes support away from other children.

For the benefit of all children at our school, I would request that parents think very carefully about whether time off during term is beneficial for your child's learning and well being at school. I understand that some schools are now making it their policy that under no circumstances will consent be given for any holidays taken in term time. I do not wish to be so black and white about it at Allendale First School and each case will be reviewed on an individual basis but if the 10 day discretion is exceeded, the absence will not be authorised.

I hope that this letter has clarified the authorised / unauthorised absence issue.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs A Hawkins
Headteacher