

Lightcliffe CE (VA) Primary School Policy for Leave of Absence During Term Time

This policy takes into account guidance from Calderdale Council and the Department for Education. The term 'leave of absence' refers to requests for family holidays and occasional days out of school. This policy applies to all children in our school.

Principles

Continuity of learning for all our pupils is very important. The school expects and encourages high attendance (over 95%) from all pupils. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (updated September 2013) and the accompanying guidance make it clear that parents/carers do not have a legal right to take their child out of school for holidays in term time. Requests for leave of absence during term time will not be authorised, except in very exceptional circumstances.

Impact of Absence from school

Missing school for any reason can deprive a child of educational opportunities and hamper their progress at school. 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.

Absence from school can be disruptive not only for the individual pupil but also for the pupil's whole class. Poor attendance at school can also hinder the maintenance of relationships within the pupil's peer group. There are 190 statutory school days a year, so there are 175 other days available for holidays that would not have a negative effect on a child's education. By taking a child on holiday in term time, they may be getting an unspoken message that school is not important.

- Minimum attendance of 95% (10 days absence per year) means that during primary years the child will miss more than a term of education.
- If attendance is between 90% - 95% (10-20 days absence per year) it means that during primary years the child will miss 2 or more terms of education.
- If attendance is between 85%- 90% (20-30 days absence per year) it means that during primary years the child will miss over a year of education.

School Guidance for families requesting time off school

Parents must fill in a Leave of Absence request form at least 2 weeks before the proposed absence. Failure to do so may result in legal sanctions being taken against the parent[s]. Forms are available from the school office or from the school website.

It is also advisable to discuss any application with the school's head teacher at the earliest possible stage. The school will respond promptly, in writing, to all forms received.

Leave of absence may be granted in special or exceptional circumstances only at the Head Teacher's discretion. When considering whether or not to authorise any leave of absence the school will consider each case individually.

Leave will be unlikely to be granted if:

- if a child's attendance record is less than 95% in the previous 12 months.
- if the period coincides with the start of term, or is near to, or coincides with SATs or other significant events on the school calendar
- if there are patterns of non-attendance or if there is Education Welfare Service (EWS) involvement
- if the school have concerns over a child's welfare and safety.

Leave of absence requests for the following reasons are not considered to be special or exceptional:

- availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements
- overlapping with beginning or end of term
- family days out or visiting relatives
- birthday treats
- long weekends
- leaving school early for travel

Involvement of the Education Welfare Service and the issue of a Penalty Notice

Children may be reported as 'missing' to the relevant agencies if they fail to return to school by an agreed date, whether the leave of absence has been authorised or not by the head teacher.

A child who has 10 days of unauthorised absence, or is absent for longer than 10 days after an agreed return date, may legally be removed from the school roll and the parents may be liable to prosecution.

The Education Welfare Service will work in partnership with schools to ensure that if parents are found to be taking their children out of school without the head teacher's authorisation, the Education Welfare Officer for the school will conduct an investigation, which may lead to a parent[s] receiving a Penalty Notice.

The Penalty Notice will be issued by the Education Welfare Service and will be of a value of £60 per parent per child.