

April 2014

Dear Parent/Guardian,

LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Time lost by children and young people due to family holidays taken in term time can be disruptive to their education. In addition, I am concerned that there could be some misunderstanding of the law in relation to absence from school because of holidays taken during term time.

We advise that wherever possible, absence from school should be avoided as it can have a serious effect on your child's educational progress, and can create difficulties for them on their return to school, particularly if they are joining a new school or class. It is important to note that **only the Headteacher can authorise absence from school. Parents/Guardians cannot authorise the absence themselves.**

Recent changes to legislation have removed the discretionary 10 day period of absence which covered family holidays. Schools are now required to refuse requests for holiday absence in term time. Headteachers may grant a leave of absence in **exceptional circumstances**. If you believe that your circumstances are exceptional you can make a request to the school. In considering a request, the school will take into account the child's age, the time of year of the absence, and the nature of the visit. The Headteacher will also consider the child's stage of education and progress and the child's overall attendance record. Headteachers will not authorise absence unless they believe your circumstances are exceptional. Case law identifies that **any** holiday or event which can be arranged during school holiday periods should not be authorised during the school term.

In all cases it is best to have a discussion with the Headteacher in order to look at the issues as they affect your child.

Parents who take their children on an unauthorised holiday in term time could be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. The amount of the fine is £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days.

Where a leave of absence during term time is agreed to be exceptional, **it is vital** that it does not coincide with examinations or other important tests that your child has to take.

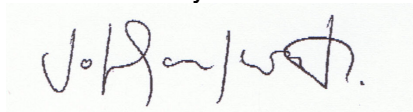
The dates of examinations in 2013/14 are:

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| Key Stage 2 SATs | May – contact school for exact dates |
| GCSE | November/ May/June – contact school for exact dates |
| 'A' and 'AS' | Throughout January, May and June – contact School for exact dates |

Headteachers are advised not to authorise leave of absence where the pupil will miss a public examination.

Many people are working very hard to help your child to succeed. I trust you will support us in this matter, in partnership with your child's school.

Yours sincerely



John Macilwraith
Acting Corporate Director Children's Services

Together we can achieve the best for every child, young person and their family in Cumbria.