

Avoiding term-time holidays

We recognise that parents' circumstances (financial circumstances, working commitments, etc) vary enormously, but we are nonetheless required to ensure that children only miss school if it is absolutely unavoidable. We wish to reduce the amount of time lost to learning because we believe that children's absence during term-time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. When children are absent from school they miss not only the teaching provided on the days when they are away, but are also less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement which schools and parents both wish to avoid.

Hexham Partnership of schools



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ST. MARY'S RC FIRST SCHOOL



Acomb First School



Beaufront First School



Queen Elizabeth High School

Hexham Partnership Policy

for

FAMILY HOLIDAYS DURING TERM-TIME



September 2010

Joint statement from the headteachers within the Hexham Partnership of schools.

Introduction

Children of school-age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. Regular attendance is important, not just because the law requires it but because it is the best way of ensuring that a child makes the most of the educational opportunities which are available. There may be occasions when a child has to miss school - for example, if he or she is unwell. Any other absences should be kept to an absolute minimum. In particular, parents should not expect to be able to take their children out of school during term-time in order to go on holiday unless the circumstances are exceptional.

What the law says

The regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday. Parents should be aware that if leave is granted it will be for the purposes of an **annual family holiday** – that is, a single period of absence which occurs once in the school year. An annual family holiday is not a series of long weekends nor several two or three day breaks.

How schools deal with requests for term-time holidays

All the partnership schools have a policy about term-time holidays which will discourage parents from arranging family holidays during term-time and will, as a rule, state that leave for term time holidays will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances which might justify it.

What are “exceptional circumstances”?

It is the decision of the headteacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term-time leave will be considered on an individual basis. An exceptional circumstance would be e.g.

- The holiday is important for the well-being and cohesion of the family following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.
- Evidence is provided by an employer that leave cannot be accommodated during school holidays without significant consequence.
- Forces Personnel on leave from a foreign posting.

The headteacher will also look very carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have any concerns, for example should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the headteacher will agree to authorise any further absence.

Issues parents need to be aware of

Should a school not agree to grant leave and the parents take their child on holiday regardless then this will be counted as unauthorised absence - this is the same as 'truancy'. (Schools are now legally required to record as a specific category all absences which accrue as a consequence of family holidays which have been taken without authorisation.)