

Holiday Leave Entitlement

Following statements regarding school attendance by the Secretary of State, the Government has now introduced some significant changes to attendance regulations for pupils at school as from September 2013. The most important of these is in relation to term-time family holidays. Below is a quotation directly from the Department for Education Circular:

'Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**.'

We draw your attention to what may constitute exceptional circumstances; *we interpret 'exceptional' in this context as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time.* This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another, and whilst it will be important to look at the whole situation in making decisions about any individual request, the normal response will be that requests will be refused. If leave is taken without authorisation, it will be recorded in the school attendance register as unauthorised absence - that is as truancy - and the matter may be referred to the OCC's Attendance and Welfare team. According to legislation the head has the right to make individual judgements as to what constitutes exceptional circumstances, and as a guide it might include the following:

- *A parent or grandparent is seriously ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday;*
- *There has recently been a death or other significant trauma in the family and it is felt that an immediate holiday might help the child concerned better deal with the situation;*
- *The holiday is a unique one off, never to be repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested.*

The School Attendance Policy reflects this new legislation.

May we therefore ask that you respect these new regulations under which we must now work, and that if you do need to take your child out of school during term time, you make very clear in your request how the circumstances are 'exceptional'. The new legislation continues to explain the imposition of penalty fines for parents and carers taking children out of school in unauthorised circumstances, including holidays; according to recent information this could be at least £60 and more if unpaid after 28 days. Please be aware that we continually monitor absence; that we consider very carefully pupils whose attendance is below 95%; and that we discuss such cases with our school attendance officer and, if necessary, the OCC Attendance and Welfare team.