

Leave of Absence Policy (For Families)

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 have been amended and came into force from 1st September 2013. The amendments remove references to 'holiday' from school and extended leave of absence as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. **Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Requests for leave of absence should not normally be granted for the purposes of a holiday. The law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Headteachers have the discretion to authorise leave of absence in **exceptional** circumstances and it is only for the Headteacher to determine what is truly exceptional. School days are precious; children only attend school 190 out of 365 days. There are 175 days a year which parents can use for any activities other than school.

Leave of absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- Pupil's attendance is less than 97% in the previous 12 months
- During SATs, Phonics Screening Check, GCSE or other public examination years
- In a transition year (Reception, year 2 and 6)
- At the beginning or end of any academic year
- Retrospectively
- If there are any other academic concerns such as poor punctuality, pupil's ability to catch up on the work missed, etc
- If leave of absence has already been taken in the same school year

Examples of exceptional circumstances:

The following are examples of exceptional circumstances where a school may consider authorising term-time leave but are not obliged to do so. The final decision rests with the school:

- Close family member bereavement (up to 3 days)
- Immediate family member wedding (up to 5 days if travel abroad is involved)
- Immediate family member funeral (up to 3 days)
- Unavoidable delay in travel arrangements due to adverse weather conditions, eg: volcanic ash
- Proven parental employment restrictions
- Unavoidable delay in travel due to being deemed unfit to travel by medical practitioner, with proof provided to the school for the period of absence (this presupposes that some leave has already been granted)

We will also take into account the following:

- The pupil's general absence / attendance record, eg: unauthorised absence
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations
- Amount of time requested
- Age of the pupil
- Length of the proposed leave
- Pupil's ability / opportunity to catch up on the work
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Reason provided why absence cannot be taken during the school holiday period
- Frequency of the activity
- When the request was made

Applications for Leave of Absence (LoA)

Requests **must** be made in advance or the absence cannot legally be authorised. All requests must be made at least two weeks in advance to the Headteacher by completing the school LoA application form. A parent / adult with whom the child resides with must make the application even though the pupil may not be taking the proposed leave with them. The form must be fully completed and you will receive a written response confirming if the request will be authorised or not. If leave is granted and you are travelling abroad, you will need to supply us with confirmation of your return flight tickets, such as bringing a copy of the flight tickets into the school reception for us to copy.

Unauthorised Absence

If you take your child out of school without the school's prior authorisation, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised (which is illegal) and noted on your child's school records. Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher.

Where a parent / carer has taken their child on LoA during term time for 5 consecutive school days or more, without the Headteacher's authorisation, Luton Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice. In these circumstances a warning will not be given. Penalty Notices are per parent, per child, as appropriate; so if there are 2 parents, both will need to pay the fine. From 1 September 2013 penalty notices will need to be paid within 21 days at £60 or within 28 days at £120. Unpaid Penalty Notices will result in prosecution for the absence in the magistrate's court.

The school makes the decision as to whether the request of leave should be granted or not and the Local Authority make the decision to impose a penalty for this.

Failure to return to school on the date expected:

If there is a reason which delays the pupil in returning to school the parent / guardian must inform the school immediately. The school will require evidence of this issue and will then decide whether the absence will be authorised. For any travel arrangements outside of the UK we require proof of return flights, prior to the leave being taken. This may prevent you from receiving unauthorised absence for your child and being fined if they are unable to return on the date expected.

Each case will be assessed individually and medical evidence from abroad will not be accepted routinely as evidence that a pupil was unable to attend school.

Roll Removal

A Pupil can be removed from roll in either of these circumstances:

- If you take your child on leave of absence which has been authorised by the school but your child fails to return on the agreed date (any extra time absent from school will be counted as unauthorised). If your child fails to return within **ten days** of the expected date of return, then the school may remove your child from the school roll and notify the Local Authority accordingly
- Or,
- If your child has **20 days continuous unauthorised absence**