



Policy on Family Holidays During Term Time

Date agreed	March 2015
Date for Review	March 2016
Head Teacher	Mary Hennessy Jones
Chair of Governors	Simon Holden
Signed on behalf of the Governing Body by: Name:	Signature: Date:
Signed on behalf of the School by: Mary Hennessy Jones Headteacher	Signature: Date:

In formulating this policy we have consulted with parents, governors and staff and taken advice from the Education Welfare Service Legislation.

Introduction

Absence during term time as a result of term time holidays interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in school. Pear Tree aim to minimise the amount of time lost to term time holidays through a policy which actively discourages parents from arranging family holidays during term time and authorises absence for such holidays only in exceptional circumstances.

This policy is intended to make a clear statement regarding the issue of term time holidays, to manage the issue consistently and to ensure that the amount of teaching and learning time lost to term time holidays is as a result minimised. The policy is intended to support the Headteacher in making consistent, robust and informed decisions with regard to the authorising/non-authorising of leave for term time holidays and to ensure that parents develop a consistent understanding of the response which they may expect from our school.

Legal and National Context

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the Local Education authority prosecuting the parents. If found guilty of the offence, each parent could be fined up to £2,500 and/or sentenced to 3 months imprisonment. The parent may alternatively be subject to a fixed-penalty fine of £60.

Nationally, Government policy is to encourage schools to minimise the amount of teaching and learning time lost as a result of term time holidays and schools are now expected to adopt a much more challenging response to requests for leave for such holidays. Schools are also legally required to set targets to reduce overall absence – term time holiday absence is a particular category of absence on which schools are now expected to focus.

Pear Tree School policy with regard to term time holidays is clearly stated in the school brochure and is regularly communicated to parents.

This policy should:

- Remind parents of the importance of ensuring their children's regular, uninterrupted school attendance
- Actively discourage parents from arranging holidays during term time

- Unequivocally remind parents that they do not have any right or entitlement to expect term time leave to be granted and that all leave is granted at the discretion of the headteacher
- State that leave for the purpose of a family holiday will only be granted in exceptional circumstances*
- Advise parents that if leave is taken without authorisation it will be recorded in the school attendance register as unauthorised absence and that the matter may be referred to the school's Education Welfare Officer. Unauthorised absence can be referred to as truancy.

** Whilst the headteacher will be required to make individual judgements as to what constitute exceptional circumstances, such circumstances might include the following:*

- A parent, grandparent or other very close relative is seriously/terminally ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday. Evidence of the situation will need to be seen.
- There has recently been a death or significant other 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 unique, one-off, never-to-be-repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested for religious or cultural reasons

As a rule, the financial factor of the proposed holiday – whether, for example, it is a fortnight visiting Rome or a fortnight in a caravan at the seaside – should not be taken as constituting an “exceptional circumstance”.

Note

We do not, as a rule, authorise holidays:

- If a child's attendance record over the previous 20 week period is less than 95% - even if any previous absence was due to unavoidable causes such as illness; or
- If the period of leave coincides with the start of the term, or is near to, or coincides with, tests, SATs, exams or other significant events in the school calendar
- If a child's parents are separated and it is envisaged that each parent may make a separate request for term time leave the school may wish to decline both requests in order to counter any potential suggestion of unequal/unfair