

Dear Parent,

REQUEST FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

As I am sure you are aware, the government has high expectations for local authorities and schools to deliver quality education to the nation's children and it is therefore of the utmost importance that all children attend school regularly and punctually.

There will be occasions when a child has to miss school, for example, if she or he is unwell and parents are expected to exercise their judgement on whether their child is fit to attend school if there are signs and symptoms of illness. Any other absences should be kept to an absolute minimum. In particular, parents do not have the right to take their children out of school during term time in order to go on holiday.

Government regulations from September 2013 state that a headteacher 'may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances'. The Hexham Partnership of Schools discourage parents from arranging any events during term time and will, as a rule, state that leave of absence will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances that might justify it.

In exceptional circumstances where leave of absence is granted, the pupil's attainment and ability to catch up on missed schooling will be the primary consideration. The secondary consideration will be the pupil's current attendance. The headteacher will examine the child's 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 any authorised absence will be given. If your son or daughter's attendance falls below 90% it is of great concern to us and we have to discuss the issue with our Educational Welfare Officer. We will not be able to authorise absence under this level. If the absence is due to an illness/medical issue then we will request you obtain a medical note from a GP/hospital. We would remind parents that in all cases where pupils cannot attend school it remains the responsibility of the school to authorise absence, not parents.

Important Information for Parents

- Under The Education Act (1996) requires parents' to ensure their child attends school regularly. There is no automatic right to take your child out of school during term time. The Law does however allow headteachers to consider individual requests to authorise a Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstance(s).
- The headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances to justify an authorised absence. It is the parents' responsibility when submitting the request to provide all the information and evidence to prove exceptional circumstances.
- The request for authorised Leave of Absence must be made at least two weeks in advance and the headteacher may invite the parent into school to discuss the request before a decision is made.
- If the headteacher authorises the Leave of Absence it is expected that the child's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior to and after the date covered by the request.
- If the headteacher refuses Leave of Absence and the absence is recorded as unauthorised, the headteacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority requesting that a Penalty Notice be issued.
- A Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the Local Authority may prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies.
- Where there is more than one child, each parent may be issued with a Penalty Notice in respect of each child.
- Research suggests that children who are absent from school may never catch up on the learning they have missed, which may ultimately affect exam and test results. When children are absent from school, they miss not only the teaching provided on the days when they away, but are also less prepared for the lessons that follow which build on prior knowledge and teaching. As a parent, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not allowing your child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason.

Please support your child in achieving and attaining at school by ensuring that his or her attendance is not affected by avoidable absence.