



# Leave of Absence Policy

<b>PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY:</b>	<b>MRS LOUISE PONSONBY</b>
<b>APPROVED:</b>	<b>MARCH 2017</b>
<b>SIGNED:</b>	<b>ROLE: CHAIR OF GOVERNORS</b>
<b>TO BE REVIEWED:</b>	<b>MARCH 2018</b>

## **Principles**

Governors and staff at Norton Infant School believe that good attendance is essential if children are to gain the maximum benefit from school and acquire the educational and social skills to equip them for life.

Norton Infant School aims to achieve good attendance by operating a Leave of Absence in Term Time policy within which school staff, parents, the Education Welfare Service and other agencies can work together in partnership.

## **Leave of Absence Request in Term Time**

It is a legal requirement for children to attend school. Schools are required to provide education for 190 days per year and it is expected that children who are registered at a school will attend for this time. Parents do not have the automatic right for their children to have authorised absence, this is entirely up to the Head teacher's discretion.

The Head teacher has the discretion, in exceptional circumstances only, to grant any authorised absence in a school year. However, each application will be considered individually taking into account the pupils attendance, the timing of the leave and any exceptional circumstances.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on :

- a. what might be defined as exceptional circumstances;
- b. procedures of applying for leave of absences for holiday;
- c. the criteria the school will use in deciding whether to refer any unauthorised absence due to holidays in term time to the Local Authority which may result in a Fixed Penalty Fine.

## **Guidance on Authorised Absence in schools**

There is some debate about what 'exceptional circumstances' mean when deciding whether to grant absence for pupils during term time. We believe it is valuable to have some guiding principles to back schools in their decisions and provide consistency. The following advice published by the NAHT (October 2014) has been adopted by the Campsmount pyramid of schools.

1. Term times are for education. This is a priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Head teachers will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
2. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
  -
3. Absence during term time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
  -
4. Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
  -
5. Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered exceptional circumstances but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
  -

6. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
  -
7. Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
  -
8. Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
  -
9. Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.
  -

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

### **Procedures for applying for leave of absence during term time.**

- a. Applications for leave of absence for holiday should always be made in advance on the correct form. Forms can be obtained from the school office or can be downloaded from the school website. They should be returned to the office along with supporting documentation.
- b. The exceptional circumstances to explain why the holiday must be taken during term time must be clearly stated at the point of application.
  -
- c. The Head Teacher will decide whether the leave of absence can be authorised and will contact the parent to inform them of the outcome.
  -
- d. Even where there are exceptional circumstances, no holiday requests will be granted during examinations, testing and assessment periods.
  -

**Parents are strongly advised not to take holidays in term time. Even though children are in primary school, the foundations for learning are built during these years and research shows that children who are away from school are very unlikely to catch up with the work that they miss.**

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

A referral for a Fixed Penalty Notice will be made following Local Authority guidelines, including if leave has been already taken in the current school year, Leave of Absence form is not submitted before leave request or if a request for leave of absence is made for 6 days or above. The Fixed Penalty Notice, issued by the Local Authority, is £60 per child/per adult and payable to the Local Authority, within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 per child per adult if paid after 28 days but within 42 days of receipt of the notice. If payment is still not made then the case is prepared for court. If the parent pays the fine the case is closed and the period of time that the parent received the penalty notice for will not be used in any further proceedings. The fixed penalty fine is collected and kept by the Local Authority, not the school.

### **Authorised Leave Request Decisions in Exceptional Circumstances**

The Head teacher will write to the parent who has made the request, informing them of the decision and the date the school expect the child to return. Within the letter it will be made clear how the absence will be marked on the child's attendance certificate.

### **Unauthorised Leave Request Decisions**

The Head teacher will write to the parent who has made the request informing them of the decision and the reason why this decision was made. The letter will state clearly if a fixed penalty referral has been made.

### **Delayed Return following a term time Leave of Absence.**

If a child does not return to school on the agreed date following their leave of absence the school will investigate the absence referring to school's missing child policy.

At Norton Infant School we endeavour to work with parents in order to provide them with clear information so that they are able to make an informed decision.

Louise Ponsonby  
March 2017