

Head Teacher:
Sue Brewer



Holway Park
Community Primary School
Shakespeare Avenue
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 2JA

Telephone: 01823 252126
Fax: 01823 353129

Absence in Term-Time

Dear Parents and Carers,

With the changes in government legislation on school attendance has come a new system of letters sent home to parents. These letters are now automatically generated as the result of a child's attendance falling below 94% whether this is the result of illness or unauthorised absence.

I am sure many of you are aware, through recent coverage in the press and media that schools can no longer authorise holidays during term-time. This means that from September 2013, schools may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Regular time off for illness will be challenged, requiring not only medical evidence but also medical guidance on how schools can best support and 'manage' those children in school. Saying a child is "unwell" will no longer be enough, parents will need to be specific.

This means that from September 2013, schools may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional circumstances does not include

- ü Cheap holiday cost
- ü Getting personal paperwork, visa's updated (this should be planned into holiday periods)
- ü Visiting relatives (this should be planned into holiday periods)

Exceptional circumstances may include

- ü Emergency service / forces personnel with proof of enforced holiday period
- ü Holiday industry employees with proof of this being the ONLY time period allowed by employer
- ü One transcontinental leave request per Key Stage for a very significant extended family event, including seeing and elderly/ seriously ill relative

Any time away from school can have a **significant impact on educational attainment**, success in later life and longer term health and well-being. In law, parents and carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at school.

Therefore, any unauthorised absence in term time can result in the issuing of a **Fixed Term Penalty Notice**. Parents will have 21 days to pay this **£60 fine**, after which it goes up to **£120 per parent per child**.

Failure to pay a **Fixed Term Penalty Notice** within 28 days may result in a criminal conviction and a fine in the Magistrate's Court of up to **£1000**.

A **fixed Penalty Notice** might also be issued if a child's attendance falls below **94%** with **10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence** and no satisfactory reason or explanation is given.

I want to emphasise that these are government changes over which schools have no choice and apply to all schools. The aim is to improve overall attendance figures and reduce the lost days of education which can affect a child's progress. Your continued support in maintaining our very good levels of attendance is much appreciated. Every day counts!

If you wish to challenge this new legislation you will need to take it up with your local Member of Parliament or with the Department of Education.

Yours sincerely
Mrs S Brewer
Headteacher