

Parents should be aware that if leave is granted it will be for the purposes of *an annual family holiday* - that is, a single period of absence which occurs once in a school year. An annual family holiday is **not** a series of long weekends or several two or three day breaks. Odd days off are equally disruptive.

Should leave be granted but the child remain absent for longer than agreed then this extra time will be recorded as unauthorised absence. Should a child fail to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date and there is no contact from the parents the school may remove the child's name from the school roll. There is **no** guarantee that the place would remain unfilled. The school may also inform its Education Welfare Officer. In these circumstances the parents would be responsible for ensuring that their child was registered at and attends another school. *(In such circumstances parents would not be entitled to receive any assistance with regard to transport).*

Extended visits overseas

Occasionally holidays of more than 10 days to visit family overseas may be unavoidable. In such circumstances headteachers will recognise the importance and significance of such visits and will ensure that a positive discussion with the parents takes place beforehand.

In these circumstances, headteachers will stress to parents the likely educational impact upon their child if extended leave is taken during term-time. They will also explain what work the child will miss at school, how this may be addressed on return and how parents can help the child. Headteachers may also consider giving the child work to do while he or she is away.

Why term-time holidays should be avoided

Headteachers recognise that parents' circumstances (financial position, working commitments, etc) vary enormously, but they are nonetheless required to ensure that children only miss school if it is absolutely unavoidable. Headteachers will wish to reduce the amount of time lost to learning because they believe that a child's absence during term-time can seriously disrupt his or her continuity of learning. There is a consequent risk of underachievement which both headteachers and parents will wish to avoid.

Further information

www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolattendance

NB - Throughout this leaflet reference to parent(s) should be understood to include carer(s).



Family Holidays during term-time and extended visits overseas



Information for Parents/Carers

Children of school-age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. Regular attendance is important, not just because the law requires it but because it is the best way of ensuring children make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. When a child is absent from school he or she misses not only the teaching provided on the days when absent, but is also less prepared for the lessons building on that when returning. There is a consequent risk of underachievement which headteachers and parents will both wish to avoid.

There may be occasions when a child has to miss school - for example, if unwell. Any other absences should be kept to an absolute minimum.

In particular, parents should avoid taking children out of school during term-time in order to go on holiday.

What the Law says

The regulations make it clear that parents **do not** have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday. The regulations do state that headteachers may, in certain circumstances, grant up to 10 school days leave in a school year for the purposes of an annual family holiday but parents should not

expect such leave to be granted as a right. Indeed, it is likely that in most cases headteachers will refuse to authorise absence.

The Government's own guidance on the issue of term-time holidays states: *'Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday in term'*.

How headteachers deal with requests for term-time holidays

All schools in Bracknell Forest have a policy about term-time holidays. This policy, stated either in the school brochure or in the school's attendance policy, will strongly discourage parents from arranging family holidays during term-time and will, as a rule, state that leave for term-time holidays will not be granted unless there are **exceptional circumstances** which might justify it. This response will be strongly supported by the Local Authority.

What are "exceptional circumstances"?

It is the decision of the headteacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term-time absence will be considered on an individual basis. A headteacher will not accept as an exceptional circumstance the

fact that a holiday is cheaper during term-time. An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off, unique situation eg a parent, grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill and the holiday proposed is likely to be the last such holiday; or there may have been a significant trauma in the family recently and the headteacher might consider that an immediate holiday might enable the child concerned to better deal with the situation; or the holiday might be a unique, one-off never-to-be-repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested.

The headteacher will also look very carefully at the child's previous attendance record and should he or she have concerns, for example should the child's average attendance be below 95%, it is highly unlikely that the headteacher will agree to authorise any further absence.

Issues parents need to be aware of

Should a school not agree to grant leave and parents take their child on holiday in spite of this then this will be counted as unauthorised absence - this is the same as 'truancy'. (Schools are now legally required to record as a specific category all absences which accrue as a consequence of family holidays which have been taken without authorisation).