Hexham Partnership of Schools – Policy for Leave of Absence During Term Time

Introduction

Term times are for education. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Headteachers will rightly prioritise attendance. The default policy of Hexham Partnership Schools is that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, which are at the discretion of the headteacher to determine.

Why attendance matters

Being around teachers and friends in a school environment is the best way for pupils to learn and reach their potential. Time in school also keeps children safe and provides access to extra-curricular opportunities and pastoral care. Research by the Department for Education shows clearly that pupils who perform better both at the end of primary and secondary phases miss fewer days than those who don't perform as well.

What does the law say?

Regulations state that a headteacher may not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents who take their child out of school without authorisation may be fined. The amount of the fine depends on how quickly it is paid: £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if not; if the fine is not paid the parent can be prosecuted. Both parents may be fined for the same absence. For more details, please see here.

How will schools deal with requests for leave of absence?

A parent/carer requesting leave of absence during term time should make the application in writing at least two weeks in advance. A leave of absence request form is available from the school office or can be downloaded from the school's website. The school will reply to all applications in writing stating the headteacher's decision.

Guidance on exceptional circumstances

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance. 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.

Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.

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.

Schools may 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.