St Oswald’s CE Primary School

**Attendance and Absence – Guidelines for Parents**

*This guidance is based on the latest guidance for schools issued by City of York Local Authority in June 2013.*

* 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 all this time. Parents do not have an automatic right for their children to have authorised absence when they request it for holidays in term time or for any other reason.
* There are clear links between children’s attendance and their attainment. A child absent from school for two school weeks each year will miss the equivalent of two terms’ education over their school career. This is a strong factor in seeking to reduce all avoidable absence.
* Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% are classed by the DfE as ‘Persistent Absentees’. If a pupil’s attendance falls below 90% we will contact parents to notify them of our concerns and discuss how the attendance can be improved.
* Punctual attendance at school is also very important. The school day starts at 8.50am and any pupil arriving after this time will be missing important learning opportunities and may be recorded as ‘Late’. Parents will be contacted if we have any concerns over a pupil’s punctuality.

**Criteria for assessing requests for leave of absence**

Head teachers will be expected to unauthorise all requests for leave of absence unless in **exceptional** circumstances.

This means that:

* Parents CAN NOT demand leave of absence as an automatic right
* Schools CAN NOT apply blanket policies to approve or reject all applications for leave of absence.
* All requests MUST be considered on their own merits
* Leave of absence MUST only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

The power to un/authorise leave belongs to the head teacher.

Leave of absence for any reason, such as family holidays, is not a right. Whilst head teachers may wish to adopt a policy, such as a blanket ban, they should not restrict their discretion and thus prevent them assessing each application on its own merits. It is for head teachers only, not parents, to determine whether a request is exceptional.

**When can an absence be authorized?**

A pupil may be granted leave of absence where

* + - * an application has been made in advance to the head teacher by a parent/carer
* The head teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional **circumstances** relating to that application.

**What are ‘exceptional circumstances?’**

Advice on what may constitute **exceptional** circumstances to grant a request for Leave of Absence suggests examples such as:

* service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil’s education
* When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.
* Any other circumstances the head teacher considers to be exceptional.

It is expected that head teachers will not authorise requests for leave of absence where the following apply:

* availability of cheap holidays
* availability of desired accommodation
* poor weather experienced in school holiday
* periods overlap with beginning or end of term.

In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence i.e. for a family holiday, should the pupil fail to attend within ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which leave was granted, the child’s name can be removed from the school roll.

**Fixed Penalty Notices**

In certain circumstances parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice where they take a holiday in term time which is not authorised by the head teacher. A Fixed Penalty Notice can require a parent to pay a sum of either £60 or £120. Each parent can be issued with a notice for each child so two parents with two children can potentially be issued with four notices. Parents will receive a warning letter and the school will consult with the Local Authority before issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice.

**What should I do if I need to request an absence for my child during term time?**

If you need to request an absence due to exceptional circumstances, you should make an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss your request.

You may be asked to provide further information or evidence to demonstrate that the circumstances are exceptional. In deciding whether the absence can be authorized, the Headteacher will usually also take into account your child’s current attendance record and particular educational needs, as well as other factors such as the length and timing of the requested absence.

The Headteacher will then issue you with a letter confirming the decision. If the absence cannot be authorized, you may also receive a warning letter if appropriate.

The school office will keep records of any requests and decisions so that pupil registers can be marked appropriately.