

29th September 2009

Dear Parents,

Family Holidays in Term Time

As a school we come under great pressure from government and the local authority with regard to the attendance of pupils. Whilst I have great sympathy with parents regarding the much higher costs of holidays at official holiday times, I am obliged to strongly discourage family holidays in term time.

The Cambridge Schools policy, as I understand it, is for heads to authorise up to ten days for children with attendance of 95% or above. I am required to work to agreed policies and so I have been unable to authorise holidays for longer than 10 days, except in exceptional family circumstances. Days lost through the taking of holidays at the start of a term or when they coincide with tests are of concern.

I have been surprised at the number of requests for holidays in term time and would ask parents to work with school in trying to avoid or minimise the number of days lost to your child's attendance.

You will be aware that in the last Ofsted the school gained 'outstanding' in every area except attendance. This is something we would like to rectify next time, and with your co-operation we can easily gain 'outstanding' in attendance.

I have copied an extract of the latest draft for the revised 'Policy for Family Holidays during Term time' which sets out, in no uncertain terms, the government position on this matter. I am sure it will convey to you the pressure we are under as a school.

“Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the Local Authority prosecuting the parents. If found guilty of the offence, each parent could be fined up to £2500, and/or sentenced to three months imprisonment. The parent may alternatively be subject to a fixed penalty fine of £50.

Absence during term time as a result of term time holiday's interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in school. We actively discourage parents from arranging holidays during term time and will only authorise absence for such holidays in exceptional circumstances.

Parents do not have any right or entitlement to expect term time leave to be granted and all leave is granted at the discretion of the headteacher. Leave for the purpose of a family holiday will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. If leave is taken without authorisation, it will be recorded as

unauthorised absence, which is as truancy, and the matter may be referred to the school's educational welfare officer."

I hope you and your family will be able to avoid taking term time holidays in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Burton
Headteacher