



Exceptional Leave of Absence Application

(please complete a separate form for each child)

This form should be completed and signed by **all parents/carers that hold parental responsibility**. It should be returned to the Headteacher, at least 28 days before the absence commences.

Amendments to the Education Regulations 2006 came into force on 1 September 2013. The amendments make it clear that Head Teachers will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**, which will not include reasons of cost or inconvenience (please see overleaf for guidance). This means very few requests for exceptional leave will now be authorised.

Applications to the Headteacher for a leave of absence will be considered individually, following guidelines as outlined in our Attendance Policy and by the Local Authority. The policy can be found on the school's website (for Local Authority's guidance see below), alternatively, please ask at the school office.

You should also be advised, if the absence is not authorised and you decide to still take your child out of school, you may be issued a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority, resulting in a £60 fine per parent/carer per child (if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 thereafter).

Requests for an exceptional leave of absence during term time will be returned to you by the Headteacher, and if your request is not authorised, you will be informed of the reason/s, it is advised, therefore, you give as much detail for the absence as possible.

Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances – A Guidance for Parents

The information overleaf is designed to help parents understand how and when leave of absence in exceptional circumstances may be granted.

The decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Headteachers will rightly prioritise attendance. Generally, absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised by the headteacher in exceptional circumstances.

Penalty Notices for term time leave are issued based on information and referrals received from schools. The Local Authority cannot override the decision made by the Headteacher to unauthorise the absence. If you have any reasons to believe the Penalty Notice should not have been issued please contact the school within 10 working days. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are exceptional circumstances?

Exceptional circumstances are one off events which are unavoidable. Such as the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child or a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

I explained my exceptional circumstances to the school yet I was still issued with a PN fine. Can this be reviewed by the Council?

No. Only the head teacher of a school can authorise any absence under exceptional circumstances. The County Council cannot override any decisions made by the head teacher. If a request is sent to the Council then a PN fine will be issued based on the information received.

My child's attendance record is generally good, can I still be issued a fine for short time unauthorised holiday?

The Cambridgeshire Penalty Notice Code of Conduct allows a Penalty Notice fine to be issued for holiday taken for 3 days or more.

Which parent receives the fine?

Where both parents live together and have day-to-day care and also any absent parent who has frequent contact with the child and is named in the child's school records may receive a fine for each of their children. This will include parents who allow their child to go on holiday with another family member or friend of the family.

Who is fined when parents do not live together?

The situation can become complicated where parents do not live together and both wish to remove their child from school at separate times during the same academic year. Where parents are separated, if an absence request is submitted by the parent not involved with the absence, then both parents may be fined.

Who is considered to have parental responsibility?

The definition of a parent is anyone who has parental responsibility for the child and/or any adult with day to day care and responsibility. (Section 576 Education Act 1996). This will include step parents and cohabiters, partners of older pupils if the partner is over 18 years of age and they are living together, other relatives with residency orders.

What happens if I am a self-employed worker e.g. a Farmer, is an employee with fixed holiday dates, or is on a holiday rota set by my employer?

It is advisable for parents to discuss this with their child's school prior to making any arrangements for absence during school term times. Legislation no longer allows Headteachers to authorise 10 days absence from school for a term time holiday. If you are self-employed then you are able to select when you take your annual leave.

We want to go on a trip of a lifetime. Could this be an authorised absence?

No, this would constitute a family holiday. The Headteacher cannot authorise term time holidays, unless they accept the reason for leave of absence is exceptional.

I have a significant number of relatives abroad and may need to spend an extended period in another country. Could this be an authorised absence?

Headteachers are bound by law to discourage families from taking trips during term time, whatever the reason given.

Can I have a payment plan or make part payments?

No, The Code of Conduct does not allow part payments or payment plans.

The Primary school authorised the absence but I received a PN fine for my secondary school aged child. Is there no consistency?

The Government has given the authority to individual headteachers to make their own decision based on the explanation provided by the parents. What is exceptional has not been defined by the government and therefore individual opinions may differ between headteachers. However, the county council does encourage schools to work together but at the same time take into account circumstances of the individual child's needs.

Could an absence to attend a religious observance or festival be an authorised absence?

Absence that is due to religious observance must be authorised. The day should be marked as authorised where there is an element of worship associated with the religious observance. The religious observance days are set apart by the religious body of the individual religion, not determined by the parents.

