

To all Parents/Carers

1st March 2010
GIW/JV/378

Gareth Williams
0116 305 6300
0116 305 6332
Jane.Yarranton@leics.gov.uk

Dear Parent/Carer

Family Holidays in Term time

I am writing to clarify the position in relation to requests for leave of absence for children during term time. The term 'leave of absence' is used in this letter to refer to any occasion when you are requesting permission to take your child out of school for holidays, trips abroad, family events or other such events.

The vast majority of parents and carers understand the important part good school attendance plays in their child's learning and work closely with the school to ensure that this is achieved. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for this support which I know the County Council can continue to count on in the future.

Leicestershire County Council believes that a good attendance record is an essential ingredient in securing high achievement and attainment and will back the action taken by Headteachers to ensure that this is achieved.

Time off school for a family holiday is not a right, and schools are advised both by the Local Authority and by the Government's Department for Children, Schools and Families to actively discourage this.

Legally, it is the Headteacher who has the discretion to allow up to 10 days absence in a school year, but only in exceptional circumstances such as when a family needs to support each other during or after a crisis.

A number of Headteachers use the Holiday Authorisation Calculator to evaluate and score each individual request against a set of agreed criteria, thus ensuring equity within and between schools on whether or not to authorise a term time holiday.

Requests for term-time leave of absence should be made by the parent with whom the child normally resides. This request must be made in writing to the Headteacher and should be done well in advance, clearly stating start date and expected date of return and reasons for the request. The Headteacher should then respond in writing letting you know his or her decision.

Some Governing Bodies have taken the view that no requests should be granted, and if this is the case, this will be made clear to you in your school's attendance policy.

Where schools decide not to agree to a request for leave of absence, the Council will give its full support to the Headteacher in using the full range of statutory powers if necessary to ensure that the Headteacher's decision is upheld.

Children have fourteen weeks holiday per year leaving plenty of scope for holidays and other family events to be arranged outside school term time. I am obviously aware of the fact that going away is more expensive during the school holiday, and I am sympathetic to the financial pressures on many families.

Holidays in term time should be avoided as it can have a serious effect on a child's educational progress, and can create difficulties for them when they return to school. We want all our pupils to have the opportunity to achieve their potential and hope that you will give your support by doing all that you can to avoid taking holidays in school time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Williams', written over a horizontal line.

Gareth I Williams
Director of Children and Young People's Service