



Special Absence in Term Time Policy

Introduction:

The staff and Governors of St. Michael's CE Primary School are committed to providing the finest education possible. We believe that this can be achieved, with the support of parents by ensuring that holidays are not taken in school time. Absence during term-time for any reasons interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning – disrupting the educational progress of pupils.

Good attendance is essential if pupils are to take full advantage of all aspects of school life, acquire the skills they need and develop good habits.

There is a clear correlation between regular attendance and achievement; as attendance deteriorates, so will performance and achievement.

Our Aims

To encourage parents to support their children in achieving 100% attendance

The Law

The Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981 give schools the discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of an annual holiday during term time. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 clarifies that the granting of a term time holiday (of up to 10 days) is subject to the “special circumstances” of the request. Requests for holidays in term time exceeding ten days should only be granted only in “exceptional circumstances”.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents.

It is only the school, within the context of the law (Section 199 of the Education Act 1993), which can approve absences in terms whether in “special” or “exceptional” circumstances, **NOT** the parents/carers.

Term Dates

The school holiday dates are published each year in advance and parents/carers should only book their family holidays during school holidays.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

The question of authorised and unauthorised absence is a fairly recent issue and to help parents distinguish between the two the following guidelines are included. If after reading these guidelines you are still in doubt please contact the Headteacher.

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Authorised Absences

- a) **Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments** - If the school is satisfied that a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness then the absence will be treated as authorised. Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (i.e. the absence may be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parents (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointments card. A book is maintained by the School Office for the purpose of recording pupils leaving or returning to the site during the school day. Parents are encouraged to make appointments after school. Where this is not possible, pupils must return to school after the appointment if it is in the morning or if the afternoon, they are to come to school in the morning. Failure to do so will result in an unauthorised absence.
- b) **Family Bereavements** - The death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person's life. Schools have discretion to authorise absence to attend funerals or associated events and any request would be dealt with sympathetically.
- c) **Days of Religious Observance** - Absence of a pupil for participation in a day set aside exclusively for religious observation by the religious body to which the parents belong is classified as authorised absence. It is expected that the School will be given advance notice of religious observance days.
- d) **Excluded pupils**
- e) **Special and Exceptional Circumstances**
The Head teacher & Governors may consider that the following circumstances are “special” or “exceptional”:
 - a. to allow pupils to return to their country of origin for family, religious or cultural reasons
 - b. unavoidable circumstances e.g. the parent/carer has inflexible leave allocation and that this has been confirmed by the employer.
 - c. a family member is seriously ill
 - d. there has been a death or significant trauma in the family and a holiday would be beneficial for the child.

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Unauthorised Absences

a) Holidays in Term Time

St Michael's CE Primary School will not grant permission for holidays or extended leave to be taken in term time except in special or exceptional circumstances".

b) Absences not considered as "special" or "exceptional;" circumstances

The following are examples of absences that will not be authorised:

- Availability of "cheap" holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- The prospect of better weather
- Looking after the home, brothers and sisters
- Shopping during School hours
- There will be less traffic
- Birthdays or a Day Out with the family

Holidays Taken In Term Time

The Law

Penalty Notices and Legal Action

Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1) 444 (1A) states that

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

(a) to his/her age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special needs he/she may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Failure to do so may result in legal action taken against the parent under the above legislation.

Leave of Absence

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice will be issued to each parent for each child.

The penalty is per parent per child and will be £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 & 28 days.

If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

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Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in writing in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides. Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parent will be informed in writing of the Headteacher's decision.

There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

Additional Information

St Michael's CE Primary School will ensure that all parents/ carers receive a copy of this Special Absence in Term Time Policy which forms part of the school attendance policy.

Parents/carers will be required to complete a "Special Absence request form", available from the School Office,

Parents/carers may be required to attend an interview with the Head teacher to discuss their request for a Special Absence

Parents/carers will normally be notified of the outcome of their application for an authorised Special Absence within 10 school days of the application.

Where an absence is not deemed to be "Special" or "Exceptional", by the school, the request will be declined. If the absence still goes ahead it will be regarded as an unauthorised absence.

Where a pupil is taken out of school for the purpose of a holiday in term time without the prior permission of the school, the parent/carer of the pupil may be contacted by the Education Welfare Officer.

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Appendix 1 – copy of Special Absence Request Form

St. Michael's CE Primary School

A request must be received by the school at least 3 weeks in advance of the first day of absence and/or PRIOR to making any arrangements ie. booking flights

Please note that it is only the school, within the context of the law, which can approve absences in terms whether in “special” or “exceptional” circumstances, NOT the parents/carers.

Name of Pupil		Date of Birth	
		Class	
Address			
Special Absence Requested			
Start Date of absence		Return date to school	
Reason for Special Absence request			
I understand that keeping my child off school if my request is not granted, will result in the absence being recorded as Unauthorised.			
Name of Parent /Carer			
Signature		Date	

For School Use:

Attendance %.....

Arrange to meet with parent/carer*Yes/No*

Approved/Reject*

Letter sent – Date:

Previous Leave this Academic Year Yes/No*

No of days.....

*Delete as appropriate

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Appendix 2 – sample letter to parents/carers

Dear Parent/Carer

Regular school attendance is essential if your child is to maximise their educational opportunities available to them. Interruptions in school attendance not only disrupt your child's education it also makes it harder to catch up on work missed and it can also affect their social life within school.

It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. We can only do this if your child/ren attends regularly.

In recent years there have been increasing requests for holidays in term time as parents and carers believe that pupils are automatically allowed 10 days holiday from school in any one year – this is not the case. The Government's guidance states that under **special/exceptional** circumstances the Head Teacher **may** consider permission for a child to be absent from school.

In line with national and local guidance we have reviewed our policy and the new attendance and Special Absence policies will apply from September 2012, copies are attached and are available on the school website.

The main changes to these policies are:

- St Michael's CE Primary School will not grant permission for authorised absence from school during term time except in "special" or exceptional circumstances".
- Family holidays are not considered "Special" or "Exceptional Circumstances".
- All requests for Special Absence in term time **MUST** be in writing on the Special Absence Request Form available from the school. The request should be made **BEFORE** any arrangements are made and /or at least 3 weeks in advance of the first day of absence.
- The granting of absence does not set a precedent for similar future requests and the frequency/duration of such leave periods will be considered as factors in any decision.
- Request will be considered by the Head teacher
- Any approved extended leave must be subject to a contract/agreement between parents and the school stating what leave has been granted and the pupil's date of return to school
- The Local Authority may use the full range of sanction where holidays are taken without the permission of the school.

Reviewed: September 2018

Next Review: September 2021

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