



ABSENCE POLICY AND PARENTAL GUIDANCE

Changes to Leave of Absence Policy and Parental Guidance

In September 2013, the school policy on approving requests for leave of absence in term time changed. The most recent guidance from the Department of Education advises that schools should only be approving leave in term time in *exceptional circumstances*.

They advise that holidays taken for the following reasons *should not* be authorised:

- Availability of cheap holidays
- Availability of the desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
- Overlap with the beginning and end of term
- Family celebrations
- The week before and during SAT's week

In September 2014, Sunderland City Council introduced Fixed Penalty Notices for instances where unauthorised absence from school has been taken and the absence meets the penalty criteria. In the case of unauthorised absence due to holiday, a Penalty Notice can be issued if there are 20 or more half day sessions of unauthorised absence in 10 (or more) school days.

Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after this time but within 28 days is £120. Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice. The time frame of the payment and the amount payable are stated in law and cannot be amended.

Any parents requesting a leave of absence will have to formally put their request in writing to the Chair of Governors irrespective of the circumstances. Parents will be notified in writing of the decision taken.