Westmorland & Furness Council

22 February 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Absence from school due to family holidays taken in term time can be disruptive to children's education. It can also be disruptive to other pupils in the class. In addition, I am concerned that there could be some misunderstanding of the law in relation to absence from school because of holidays taken during term time.

Any absence from school should be avoided unless for medical reasons, as it can have a serious effect on your child's educational progress, and can create difficulties for them on their return to school, particularly if they are joining a new school or class. It is important to note that only the Headteacher can authorise absence from school. Parents/carers cannot authorise the absence themselves.

Changes to legislation have removed the discretionary 10 day period of absence which covered family holidays. Schools can only grant requests for a leave of absence in term time in exceptional circumstances. If you believe that your circumstances are exceptional you can make a request to the school. In considering your request, the school will take into account the child's age, the time of year of the absence and the nature of the visit. The Headteacher will also consider the child's stage of education and progress and the child's overall attendance record. It is highly unlikely that leave will be authorised if examinations or other important tests will be missed. Headteachers will not authorise absence unless they believe your circumstances are exceptional. In all cases it is best to have a discussion with the Headteacher in order to look at the issues as they affect your child.

All unauthorised absences, including holidays that have not been sanctioned by the Headteacher, are accumulated and parents who fail to ensure regular attendance of their children at school can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. The amount is £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. It is therefore essential that parents take this into account if they are thinking of a family holiday in term-time.

Many people are working very hard to help your child to succeed. I trust you will support us in this matter, in partnership with your child's school by ensuring good attendance.

Yours sincerely

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Westmorland and Furness Council