

11. LOCAL AUTHORITY - LEAVE OF ABSENCE (HOLIDAY) POLICY

- 11.1 Holidays in term time can damage a child's education and future life prospects, particularly for those pupils with existing attendance problems, struggling with education or being absent at critical times in the school year. The Redcar and Cleveland People Services are committed to working in partnership with schools and families to manage and reduce school absence due to term time holidays.
- 11.2 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 previously enabled a Head Teacher to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday, as long as the leave of absence was made in advance and that there were special circumstances for granting the leave however, these regulations have been amended by regulations of the same name which came into force on 1st September 2013. The new regulations remove all references for holidays and the ability to authorise up to 10 school days of leave, so that leave of absence is only granted where a request is made in advance and the leave is classed as exceptional circumstances. There is no statutory definition of what is classed as an exceptional circumstance and it is the decision of the Head Teacher.
- 11.3 The Government, the Local Authority and the schools acknowledge the financial and work pressures some families are subject to and in exceptional circumstances are prepared to authorise term time leave of absence. Most parents acknowledge the need for these absences to be managed carefully to avoid having a detrimental effect on their child's education and do co-operate with the schools, however, a significant minority of parents take their children out of school without authority.
- 11.4 The government has introduced legislation allowing the Local Authority to issue penalty notices to parents who fail to ensure their children attend school and this is incorporated within our school attendance procedures. All schools within the Borough are encouraged to adopt a common leave of absence policy to ensure legal compliance;
- Parents should provide at least 4 school weeks advance notice in writing of any planned absence, the head teacher has the discretion to authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.
 - The Local Authority may consider taking further action when unauthorised leave of absence is taken at the following critical times and circumstances, **if deemed to be in the public interest.**
 - a) At any time in September
 - b) For any student whose attendance was below 95% within the previous 12 calendar months, measured from the date before the first day of the leave of absence (including authorised and unauthorised absence).
 - c) At any time during formal external examination and assessment periods, including preparation time (school to provide evidence to support).

- d) If a holiday warning letter has been issued in the previous 12 calendar months, measured from the date before the first day of the leave of absence regardless of overall attendance during the previous 12 month period.
 - e) Warning letters will be issued in those cases where attendance is 95% and above during the previous 12 months unless taken at a or c above.
 - f) Warning letters will also be issued at the request of head teachers, for those pupils failing to achieve their academic attainment/potential, patterns of previous attendance concerns/punctuality, or any other concerns that impact on their learning.
- 11.5 The school should publish the formal leave of absence (holiday) policy on an annual basis to all parents. Leave of absence taken without approval for the purposes of a holiday will be recorded as an unauthorised holiday absence (code G).
- 11.6 When the Head Teacher has decided not to authorise a leave of absence in accordance with the policy they may make a referral to the Attendance & Welfare Service. The Head Teacher should specify whether they wish a HOLPOL1 (warning letter) or HOLPOL2 (penalty notice) to be issued. After consultation with the Team Manager the service will issue at the request of the head teacher, either a HOLPOL1 or HOLPOL 2 to both parent(s)/carer(s) concerned. A Penalty Notice will be issued with a HOLPOL2 where the circumstances would support a successful prosecution for failing to ensure the regular attendance of a child in the event of the notice not being paid. Where the pupil has already been referred to the Attendance & Welfare Service and the case is in procedures, the unauthorised leave of absence should be considered as part of that process as the issue of the penalty notice may not be appropriate. A HOLPOL1 warns the family that any future unauthorised leave of absence in term time may result in a penalty notice being issued. If the leave of absence has not been authorised but is outside the terms of the policy the service may decide to take no further action against the family and HOLPOL3 letter will be sent to the Head Teacher.

It is important for the Head Teacher to decide each case on its own merits and to be accountable for their decision should this be challenged by parents. Head Teachers may be required to give evidence in court if a prosecution ensues due to the non payment of the Penalty Notice.

Where a Penalty Notice is unpaid, The Team Manager of the Attendance & Welfare Service in conjunction with the Legal Services Team will make the final decision on whether it is in the public interest to proceed to prosecution.