

The Isle of Sheppey Primary Schools

Dear Parents, Carers & Guardians

Following a meeting by head teachers from schools on the Isle of Sheppey, it was noted that high numbers of teaching days are lost as a result of holidays taken during term time. This applies to other circumstances where a leave of absence may be requested, such a day for a birthday. Therefore, a joint decision has been made in respect of requests for holidays in term time. We would therefore recommend you take time to read and familiarise yourselves with the following information:

The Guidance on The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, by which all schools are bound state quite clearly:

**'Family Holidays are not a right. Head Teachers can grant up to 10 days in special circumstances i.e. for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time - BUT only if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education and:
when a family needs to spend time together, to support each other, during or after a crisis.**

In accordance with the regulations, holidays which are taken for the following reasons will **not** be authorised:

Availability of cheap holidays

Availability of the desired accommodation

Work shift patterns

Poor weather experienced in school holiday period; and

Overlap with beginning or end of term.

Please be aware that the High Court has confirmed that it is only the school, not parents that can make the decision to authorise absence (London Borough of Bromley v "C") - it is not even for Magistrates to consider whether the absence was justified - only - **whether the school granted leave or not.**

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. The Local Authority and schools have an expectation of 95% attendance for all pupils.

A pupil who takes 10 days holiday during one whole academic year will only attain **94.7%** attendance. A pupil who takes these 10 days between September and May will only attain **93.8%** attendance.

In light of the above, we must inform you that the **Island schools** have removed holiday request forms and would respectfully ask that parents/carers refrain from removing their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Should circumstances arise where you feel it is necessary to request leave for holiday, then a letter detailing the circumstances should be sent to the Head Teacher for consideration.

The taking of an unauthorised holiday in term time may result in the issuing of a **penalty notice** by the Local Authority. Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers designated officers of the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This section allows the parent to pay a penalty fine within 42 days is £120 reduced to £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice. Where there are two parents in the household, the penalty notice will be £240 reducing to £120 if paid within 28 days. Non payment of a penalty notice may result in a fast track prosecution under Section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act.

This decision has been undertaken in accordance with the aforementioned regulations, but more importantly in the best interests of the pupils. Attendance is closely linked to your child's progress and 2007 data has shown that fewer than 52% of 11 year olds with an average of 12 days or more absence achieve level 4 in English and Maths compared to 84% with 6 days or less. We therefore hope you as parents/carers will support us in this matter to enable us to achieve the best outcomes for your children.

This letter is sent with the agreement of all primary schools on the Island and in partnership with the Attendance & Behaviour Service.

This action was enforced from Monday 28th February 2011.

Mrs P Shipley, Eastchurch:

Miss J Holmes, Rose Street:

Ms A Donaldson, Richmond:

Mrs B Conroy, Queenborough:

Mr H Fisher, St Georges:

D Wheeler, Minster:

Mr R Driver, Halfway Houses:

Mr A Bayford, West Minster:

Mrs Y Best, St Edwards:

