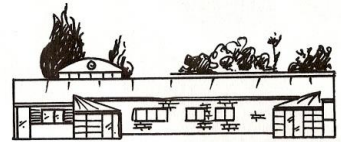


# Northleaze Church of England Primary School

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Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

## Attendance and Leave of Absence during Term Time

As we are hopefully no longer in the position of managing long periods of school closure due to the coronavirus pandemic, I wanted to write with some reminders about attendance expectations and leave of absence during term time. The Department for Education has made it clear that young people need to be back in school after months of missed on-site education and regulations have therefore returned to the pre-pandemic rules. 'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education.' *DfE, School Attendance, August 2020.*

Under the Education Act 1996, it is your duty as the parent or carer to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. **This means that your child must be in attendance every time the school is open, unless he/she is prevented from doing so by reason of illness or any unavoidable cause.**

We are currently seeing an increase in requests for term time holidays at the moment and it is important to remind you that Headteachers **cannot** authorise any holiday in term time unless there are truly EXCEPTIONAL circumstances. In a letter from Gary Lewis (CEO of Lighthouse Schools) to parents in 2018 regarding attendance and term holidays in particular, he stated:

*'The law on this is now very clear and has been tested in the courts: such absences should only be granted in very exceptional circumstances and a family holiday does not constitute such an exception. Our Trust policy is in line with the September 2018 statutory guidance to schools and we have reduced the Headteachers' discretion so that in almost all cases a request for a holiday in term time will have to be refused and if the unauthorised holiday is for 10 or more sessions (i.e. 5 or more full days) it will incur a Penalty Notice. Our Headteachers will use their discretion to consider non-holiday requests for leave where exceptional circumstances exist.'*

Exceptional circumstances could include a family member being seriously or terminally ill, a death or significant trauma in the family where it is deemed that a holiday may help the child cope with the situation. Holidays which are taken for the following reasons, for example, cannot be authorised:

- availability of cheap holidays or desired accommodation;
- parental work commitments;
- family gatherings;
- relatives visiting;
- cheaper holidays in England and abroad;
- family day trips;
- visiting friends/family that have different half terms or holidays;
- because a child has good attendance;
- employment restrictions during the summer holiday.

## **Penalty Notices**

Where there are 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence, this will result in the recommendation to the Local Authority that a Penalty Notice is issued.

Your support in not taking children on holiday in term time is greatly appreciated. We appreciate the challenging times all families have experienced through the pandemic, however, never more has it been crucial that children are at school to benefit from the education their teachers and the curriculum provide each and every day.

I hope this helps to explain our practice in this area. You will find our Attendance Policy on the website if you require further information. Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Reyes  
Headteacher