



Don Valley Partnership

Primary Schools' Policy for Leave of Absence in Term Time

The primary schools of the Don Valley Partnership are committed to raising the attainment of all children, which we ensure by promoting excellent attendance.

Under new government guidelines, it is **illegal** for schools to authorise requests for leave of absence during term time, except under the most exceptional circumstances. However, the schools are also aware that this has caused some hardship, and has resulted in many other problems, including a breakdown in trust between the schools and parents. For instance, some parents have been encouraging children to keep up the pretence of illness when really a leave of absence has been taken. Unfortunately, in those circumstances, if the school has a reasonable belief that a leave of absence has been taken, then we are obliged under the current arrangements, to issue a fixed penalty notice.

An additional problem has been that even when paying a fixed penalty, the leave of absence still works out cheaper when it is taken in term time, and so many parents are still taking these leave of absences.

A further inequality in the system has meant that the poorest families have been unable to take a leave of absence at all. For example, a family may have saved hard for a week in a caravan in term time, but with the addition of fixed penalties, this makes this, or any other leave of absence (holiday), unattainable.

Additionally, people with otherwise excellent attendance have been issued with fixed penalties just the same as those with poor attendance.



Therefore, the partnership has worked together to come up with some more equitable guidelines, even though we are still unable to authorise leave of absence in term time. We are proposing that:

- **If a child's attendance is 96%** or above, and if the attendance rate returns promptly to a high level following the leave of absence, **then any leave of absence up to five days will still be unauthorised, but a fixed penalty notice will not be issued.** This is dependent upon the school being notified properly before the leave of absence is taken. A leave of absence request form should be submitted to the school at least 2 weeks before the intended leave of absence.
- If a leave of absence **over five days is taken, then the whole absence will be subject to a fixed penalty notice as before.**
- If a child's attendance is under 96%, **then all the absence will be unauthorised and a fixed penalty notice will be issued;**
- If you claim that a child is ill but we have reason to believe a leave of absence has been taken, then the onus is upon you as the parent to present evidence to prove otherwise. If not, the absence **will be unauthorised and a fixed penalty notice will be issued.**

The category of exceptional circumstances will be looked at on a case by case basis but may consider such circumstances as bereavements and medical issues. We hope that these new guidelines will help to eliminate the inequality in the current system, and that this has clarified matters for you.