



DORMSTON SCHOOL

Exceptional Leave During Term Time Policy

Introduction

Children of school age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. Regular attendance is the best way of ensuring that a child makes the most of the educational opportunities which are available to him or her.

When a child is absent from school, he or she misses not only the teaching provided but is also less prepared for the lessons after his or her return.

There are only 190 statutory school days in one year and 175 days (weekends and school holidays) available to use for holidays. Therefore every school day counts!

This document has been developed to ensure that the Dormston School provides a clear statement of intent, expectation and consistency in relation to the management of all term time leave.

It has been produced to ensure all decisions are within national legislation. Legally there is no entitlement for parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any leave must be in exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the leave requested. Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

This policy also responds to the updated guidance issued from Department for Education (DfE) which states:-

“The [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant

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any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted”.

The Head teacher has the discretion to grant leave, but will only do so in exceptional circumstances. If the Head teacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from the school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Term Time Leave

The Dormston School recognises the important link between regular attendance at school and the educational attainment of children. **Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Action may be taken by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council’s Education Investigation Service against parents/carers who fail to ensure that their child is properly educated. The action may result in a formal warning, a fine, or an appearance at court. Parents and carers who regularly take their child out of school in term time may be prosecuted via the Magistrates Court.

Parents/carers are legally required to request exceptional term time leave from the Head teacher. The Head teacher will consider all term time leave requests. Each request will be considered on its own merit and the impact upon the child’s learning and wellbeing will be central to the decision made. However, the Head teacher may take into account previous leave requests and other factors related to the child when making the decision.

Parents/carers who do not request term time leave and take their child on ‘unauthorised leave’, or fail to keep the school informed of changes to leave arrangements, may receive a fine, be prosecuted and/or the children may lose their place at the school.

Requesting of Term Time Leave in Exceptional Circumstances

Requests for exceptional term time leave must be made at least 20 school days in advance of any arrangement being made. This will allow sufficient time for the request to be considered by the school. The request is asked to be made in writing (letter or email) by the parent/carer.

Exceptional term time leave requests must include specific start and end dates, as this will formally constitute the leave period. Where no specific dates are provided, then the request cannot be considered or granted.

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We would expect parents/carers who are intending to travel abroad with their children during term time to not book travel prior to securing approval from the school.

The Head teacher's decision is final.

Family Emergency - where no leave has been requested

There will be some occasions where it has not been possible for the parent/carer to make a request for exceptional term time leave. Whilst emergency situations are often difficult, parents/carers are still required to contact the school at the earliest possible opportunity and submit a written request for exceptional term time leave. This written request can be made on behalf of the parent/carer by someone nominated by the parent/carer. The request must include a specific leave period including a return date.

Parents/carers taking their children out of school due to a family emergency are encouraged to consider:

- that they have considered the impact and appropriateness for their child ;
- whether or not alternative care arrangements could be made for the child to remain in school, e.g. stay with an extended family member;
- that they have looked at limiting the amount of time absent from school.

Where parents/carers have not requested leave from the school which their child attends, the child is at risk of losing their place at the school.

The school will consider the exceptional term time leave request and provide a written decision to the parent/carer within 10 school days of the request being received.

The school will consider all requests for exceptional term time leave in accordance with the current legislation and this guidance. Schools may refer or seek the advice of Dudley Metropolitan Borough prior to making a decision but the final decision remains with the Headteacher.

The Head teacher will need to consider each request on its own merits and whether there are exceptional circumstances for authorising the absence.

Informing the Parent/Carer

The school will reach a decision and send a written response to the parent/carer within 10 school days of the leave request being received. The school will ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to communicate the decision to families who have low levels of literacy or where English is not the first language.

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A decision may result in the term time leave request being (a) Authorised, (b) Unauthorised or (c) part Authorised and Unauthorised. For example, Mr Smith has requested 3 weeks term time leave for his child. The school acknowledges that the reason given is important but feels that 3 weeks is excessive and authorise 1 weeks leave, with the remaining 2 weeks being unauthorised.

Recording of Leave by the School

School attendance registers are legal documents and the information recorded in them can be used as evidence in legal proceedings. The school will therefore ensure that the information contained is accurate and the correct absence code is used to record your child's absence. All absences must be coded in accordance with Absence and Attendance Codes: Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities (DCSF, Jan 2009).

CODE	Description	Category
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Authorised (Attending approved educational activity)
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another code or description)	Authorised
E	Excluded (No alternative provision made)	Authorised
G	Family Holiday (NOT Agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised
H	Family Holiday (Agreed) exceptional circumstances only	Authorised
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised
J	Interview	Authorised (Attending approved educational activity)
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised

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N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised
O	Unauthorised absence - not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised
P	Approved sporting activity	Authorised (Attending approved educational activity)
R	Religious observance	Authorised
S	Study leave - Study leave should be used sparingly and only for Year 11 pupils during mock and public examinations	Authorised
T	Traveller Absence	Authorised
V	Educational visit or trip	Authorised (Attending approved educational activity)
W	Work experience - Work experience under section 560 of the Education Act 1996.	Authorised (Attending approved educational activity)
D	Dual registration i.e. pupil attending another establishment – indicates dual registration not attendance	Attending approved educational activity

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Education Investigation Service and the Dormston Schools process for dealing with unauthorised absence

When the Head teacher does not authorise a leave request on legitimate grounds, it sends a clear message to the parent/carer that the school does not agree with the reasons provided by the parent/carer for the request for term time leave. If the parent/carer still takes their child on holiday in school term time the following may apply:

- issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice;
- prosecution for non-payment of the fixed penalty;

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If Parents/Carers are found guilty of an offence, when prosecuted by magistrates Court, they can be sentenced to a fine, or a community penalty.

The Dormston School will always make arrangements to support parents/carers who have low literacy skills or for whom English is not their first language.

An absence for religious observance is recorded as authorized (R in the school register) where the absence is in order to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals. Parents are asked to put this request in writing for advanced notice.

The essential issue is that the day is "set aside exclusively" meaning that the faith community would not be expected to work that day. All absences on such days must be authorized by the school.

If the religious body has not set the day apart, such as for personal or family occasions like weddings, confirmation bar mitzvahs and so on, there is no requirement for the school to approve the absence or grant leave on religious grounds. Schools would be expected to treat such occasions as any other request for leave of absence.

Additional holidays and days off linked to the religious festival but not "exclusively set aside for religious observance" by the religious body are not marked using Code R. If a family extends an approved religious holiday without permission, the Head teacher may decide not to authorize the extra absence.

If your child can not attend school because of long term illness or injury, the school and Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council will provide support to ensure your child does not suffer.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Resources Committee and the Head Teacher.

Appendices

1. Dormston School Letter of refusal

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Re; _____ Form _____

Thank you for your request for a leave of absence for your child. Due to a change in legislation from September 2013, schools are now unable to authorise **any** leave of absence unless the circumstances are truly exceptional in the eyes of the Head teacher.

Therefore your request for leave has been declined. This absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will have an impact on your child's overall attendance percentage for the school year.

Please be advised that the expected level of attendance for Pupils at Dormston School is 95%. If your child's attendance falls below this level it may be referred to our Attendance Consultant and/or Dudley Education Investigation Service.

Yours sincerely

Mr B Stitchman
Head Teacher

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