

Absence – Guidance for parents.

During term time education is the priority for your child. By law, every school has to register pupils twice a day; at the start of the school day, and again in the afternoon. If a pupil fails to attend or arrives late they can be marked absent. If a pupil is absent, the register must show whether the absence was authorised.

‘Authorised absence’ means the school has either granted leave of absence in advance, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for unplanned absence.

The decision to authorise absence is the responsibility of the Head. Government policy is that absences are not granted except in exceptional circumstances. ‘Exceptional’ means rare, significant, unavoidable and short. ‘Unavoidable’ means an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. Absence during term-time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.

The Head considers each application individually taking into account the specific circumstances and relevant background context. Application must be made in advance and authorisation will only be granted when the Head is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school and will take a student’s record of attendance into

account. The Head will not authorise absences if it is to the unreasonable detriment of a child's education.

Illness (not medical or dental appointments): The school authorises absences due to illness unless we have cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, we may request medical evidence to support illness and will record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Medical or dental appointments: Missing school for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. We encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment and the school should be advised in advance where possible.

Religious observance: The Head will usually authorise absence when it is due to religious observance, however the day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which you belong and authorisation will only include the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. It would not be usual for this to include "rites of passage" which can be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours.

Interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment: The Head must be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

Service personnel: The Head will take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.

Compassionate leave: Absences to visit family members are not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours.

It is recognised, however, that children may need time to visit close relatives who are seriously ill. Absence for a bereavement of a close relative is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave. 'Close relative' would usually mean grandparents and their descendants only.

Family celebrations: Birthday and wedding celebrations usually come into the category of events that can be scheduled outside of school time. However, we appreciate that the timing of such is not always within your control and travel-time can be significant so permission may be sought although it will not necessarily be granted.

Unauthorised Absence

If the Head does not authorise a leave of absence but you still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised, as is absence when the school is not satisfied with the reasons given. Government regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. **If you do not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised** unless it is justified unplanned absence.

Any unauthorised absence will be recorded on your child's attendance records. This may result in Birmingham City Council taking legal proceedings against you, either through a Penalty Notice or the Magistrates' Court.

Lates: The school encourages punctuality, and where a pattern of late arrival is apparent, will seek an explanation from the pupil and/or parents as appropriate.

To request authorised leave of absence

Please print and complete the "Request for authorised absence" found on the school website under **NEWS - School letters – Term time leave form**. Completed forms, together with any supporting documents, should be handed in/posted to the School Office addressed to Mr T.Cook, Attendance Officer, preferably at least two weeks in advance. If your request is authorised, it is your responsibility to ensure your child catches up on any missed school work.