



29th June 2011

Dear Parents

Re: Extended Leave

As I am sure you are aware the Local Authority does not allow holidays during term time as children only spend 190 days out of 365 days a year in school. Their guidance states that “time off school for holidays is NOT a right” (*EWS, October 2008*) and that Headteachers have discretion to allow upto 10 days absence in exceptional circumstances only. The Council has moved to this decision following the latest guidance from Government and has been doing so since 2004.

In 2004 the Local Authority issued guidance that stated ‘Parents and carers should be discouraged from arranging holidays, here or abroad, or visits to their country of family origin, during term time.’

The guidance also stated that the Head and Governing Body are within their rights to turn such applications down and refuse permission for parents/carers to take their children out of school during term time. Such decisions were made in the best interests of the pupil’s educational progress and attainment and with due regard to their previous attendance record.

In 2007 the Joint Area Review of the Authority confirmed that holidays and extended leave in term time was a major concern for Headteachers. The discretion given to Heads and Governing Bodies to determine whether to grant leave of absence in individual cases and how much absence to sanction resulted in inconsistencies across the city and this was compounded by varied parental interpretations of guidance on holidays during term time.

The issue of removing pupils from the school roll when they fail to return to school within an agreed period, also results in widely differing policy and impacts upon school admissions with clusters of schools. Therefore, Education Welfare Service stated within their 2008 guidelines that schools should “establish consistent policy and practice within Birmingham schools”.

They also stated that ‘granting such a block of leave should be an absolute exception’ and the Local Authority recommended that ‘schools give a clear and consistent messages to parents/carers that absences for the purpose of holidaying or making visits abroad during term time are not allowed as a rule and that taking children out of school during term time is not in the best interest for their educational progress or attainment.’

Cont/d

In response to these guidelines from 2008 we now consistently, and in line with other local schools, Adderley, Alston, Highfield, Leigh, Nansen, Parkview, The Rosary, Shaw Hill, St Saviours, Ward End and Wyndcliffe, follow the Local Authority ruling that 'Holidays during School Termtime are not Allowed', and to be fair to all families we do not make exceptions to the ruling (the only exception to this ruling would be if there was a death to the parent or sibling of the **child**).

Whilst we understand that it is important for children to learn about their culture and traditions we feel that taking time out of school during school time is incredibly detrimental to their learning and has an adverse affect on their education and future employment.

We give all parents interested in going abroad the pamphlet published by Birmingham City Council relating to holidays called 'Holidays during School Termtime are not Allowed' and details are also contained within the school prospectus.

Following these guidelines we do NOT ever authorise leave and when a pupil does not return to school within 20 school days on the 21st day the pupil is deleted from the register. (This is the shortest time allowed by the recent Ombudsman decision). All families have written confirmation of this fact with dates given when they reach the 10th day of absence.

Although this can sound a very strict system it has to be remembered that

- 1) 600+ extra school places are needed within this area, causing schools to have waiting lists of 100+ applicants for each year group
- 2) air travel is more widespread now than in the past with long haul travel being much more the 'norm' and families regularly going on holiday for 1 or 2 weeks which involve 9+ hour flights
- 3) there are lots more flights available throughout the country from different airports.

During a recent Ofsted inspection in one of the above schools, the 'no leave allowed' system was explained to the inspection team and it was approved of wholeheartedly as they felt it would enable and support pupils' attainment and raise the standard of education throughout Birmingham. As noted recently in a Birmingham secondary school - **'A 1% drop in attendance can lead to a 6% drop in attainment.'**

Yours sincerely

Parkfield School in conjunction with
Adderley School, Alston Primary,
Highfield School, Leigh School,
Nansen School, Parkview School,
The Rosary, Shaw Hill School,
St Saviours School, Ward End Primary
& Wyndcliffe Primary