



GUIDANCE ON AUTHORISED ABSENCE IN SCHOOLS

There is some debate about what is meant by the term 'exceptional circumstances' when Headteachers are deciding whether to grant absence for pupils during term time. By definition, the word 'exceptional' means that the request will not be authorised if it is for a regularly occurring event. However, as there are no absolute rules on what constitutes an 'exceptional circumstance', parents may find the following guidance useful:

- If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
- Absence during term time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
- Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
- Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- The needs of the families of service personnel are taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
- Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
- Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.