

February 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian,

FAMILY HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

I am writing to ask you to consider carefully before you take your child out of school for a holiday. Time lost by children and young people due to family holidays taken in term time can be disruptive to their education. In addition, I am concerned that there could be some misunderstanding of the law in relation to absence from school because of holidays taken during term time.

We advise that wherever possible, absence from school should be avoided as it can have a serious effect on your child's educational progress, and can create difficulties for them on their return to school, particularly if they are joining a new school or class. If, after serious consideration of this, you still propose to take your child away from school for a holiday, it is important to note that **only the Headteacher can authorise that absence. Parents/Guardians cannot authorise the absence themselves.**

Whenever possible therefore we would ask that family holidays should be arranged to take place during school holidays. Schools do have discretion to grant up to 10 days leave during term time, but before doing so they will consider your child's situation carefully. In considering a request, the school will take into account the child's age, the time of year of the holiday, the nature of the visit and parental wishes. The Headteacher will also consider the child's stage of education and progress and the child's overall attendance record. Headteachers will not authorise absence if they believe that your request is unreasonable and you must ensure that your request is made to the school **at least two weeks** before the start of the holiday. Only in **exceptional** circumstances can a Headteacher grant leave of more than 10 days in term time.

In all cases it is best to have a discussion with the Headteacher in order to look at the issues as they affect your child, before any decision to book a holiday during term time is made.

Where a family holiday during term time is agreed to be unavoidable, **it is vital** that it does not coincide with examinations or other important tests that your child has to take.

The dates of examinations in 2011/12 are:

Key Stage 2 SATs Monday 14th May – Wednesday 23rd May Inclusive

GCSE November/ May/June – contact school for exact dates

'A' and 'AS' Throughout January, May and June – contact School for exact dates

Headteachers are unlikely to authorise absence for holidays where the pupil will miss a public examination.

Many people are working very hard, as you are, to help your child to succeed. I trust you will support us in this matter, in partnership with your child's school.

Yours sincerely



Julia Morrison
Corporate Director Children's Services

Together we can achieve the best for every child, young person and their family in Cumbria.