

Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances Procedure



Background

Schools are required to provide education for 190 days a year and it is expected that children who are registered at a school will attend for this time. Parents do not have an automatic right for their children to have time off school and any requests for absence are entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Research shows that children do not achieve as well in their education and in public examinations the more school absence they have. A child absent from school for a period of two weeks each year, for exceptional circumstances and with the average absence for illness will have missed the equivalent of one whole year's education over their school life.

General Principles

The following general principles underpin this procedure:

- The principles of honesty, openness, transparency and the spirit of co-operation underpin the policy.
- All schools across The Education Alliance agree to follow it through to penalty notice if appropriate and in line with the school's attendance policy. This will ensure that the procedure is applied in a consistent manner and provides equity for all parents and schools.
- Where a request for absence form is not submitted, absences cannot be authorised retrospectively; this is prescribed in law, in these circumstances the penalty notice code of conduct for the school's local authority will be followed.
- Data from each individual school in relation to requests for absence will be monitored by The Education Alliance and shared with schools. This will allow The Education Alliance to assess the impact of this procedure.
- The Education Alliance will review this procedure annually or in line with any legislative changes.

Content

In order for consideration to be given, requests for absence must be for exceptional circumstances only, these could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 4 above, the Headteacher agrees to consult with either the TEAL 'Be Well' lead or a TEAL Headteacher colleague prior to any authorisation being given to the parent/carer.

Evidence would be required in each case.

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

- The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
- Year six transition day (for pupils in year six).
- Year six SATs week (for pupils in year six).
- Year nine options time (for pupils in year nine).
- At any time during years 10, 11, 12 and 13 (for all pupils in these year groups).
- At any time specified by the school (this will be communicated to parents by each school).

Headteachers are encouraged to keep a log of their decision making rationale. This will be useful should a parental or legal challenge arise.

Looked After Children

This policy applies to all children, including those who are Looked After Children. The Headteacher will only approve an absence for a Looked After Child having first consulted with the local authority Virtual School.