



Westlands Primary School

A member of Swale Academies Trust



Headteacher: Mrs L Hopkins

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VCC/ELB/Attendance

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Dear Parents and Carers

I wanted to write to you to give you better clarity on how we will make a decision about whether an absence will be authorised or unauthorised following a request from a parent/carer, with a particular regard to holidays in term time. It is fair to say that during the school year 16/17 there has been a volatility in approach due to a high profile court case. The Government and Kent County Council have changed their approach as this case has developed. This has led to confusion for both schools and parents. However, this situation appears to have now been resolved. Therefore, as part of Swale Academies Trust we will be adopting a consistent approach from the start of the new school year.

The Headteacher will continue to make the decision about authorising an absence. Our approach can be summarised in the following sentence:

A request for time off in term time will only be authorised in the most exceptional and rare circumstances.

Of course there is an infinite list of circumstances for which parents may request time off, so I have listed a few of the more common examples below which should act as a benchmark. Hopefully they will give you a better idea of what we believe is an exceptional circumstance. It is also worth noting that the government expectation is that a child's attendance is 96% (7-8 days absence a year), so I am unlikely to approve any absence if a child falls significantly below this. Some parents appear to believe that 90% is a good attendance, but this is the equivalent of a day off every fortnight!

Reason	Authorised (NO or POSSIBLY)
<i>A week off to attend a family wedding in Spain.</i>	NO
<i>A Friday afternoon off to travel to Cornwall for a family wedding on the Saturday.</i>	POSSIBLY
<i>Two weeks holiday due to parents work commitments during the school summer holidays.</i>	NO
<i>A few days away due to parents who work in the armed forces or police being directed as to when they can take their holiday.</i>	POSSIBLY
<i>Two days off to visit grandparents who are celebrating an anniversary.</i>	NO

Westlands Primary School is a creative learning environment where all children are supported to achieve their best.

Trust Principal: Mr J Whitcombe MA

Director of Primaries: Mr M Wilson

Swale Academies Trust Registered Office: Ashdown House Johnson Road Sittingbourne Kent ME10 1JS

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<i>A family holiday which has to be arranged around a member of the family with a severe disability.</i>	POSSIBLY
<i>A short break away given as a gift by grandparents who did not know the term dates.</i>	NO
<i>A short break away related to a club or sports team who are touring abroad.</i>	POSSIBLY
<i>A week's holiday in term time to avoid the higher costs of travelling during the school holidays.</i>	NO

If a pupil has a period of 5 days of absence which is deemed unauthorised a Penalty Notice is normally issued by KCC. The fine is currently £60 per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 thereafter. Further details of our attendance policy can be viewed on our website.

I do hope this makes things much clearer for you and that we can work together to ensure your child's attendance is as high as possible. After all, attendance has a massive impact on achievement.

Yours faithfully

Miss V Chant
Acting Headteacher