



# THE STONEHENGE SCHOOL

## Guidance for parents on authorised absence from school : Issued September 2015

There is some debate about what 'exceptional circumstances' means when deciding whether to grant absence for students during term time.

1. The decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject. It is not the policy of this school to authorise absences for GCSE students in Year 10 or Year 11.
2. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The school will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy is that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
3. If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
4. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
5. 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.
6. Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only plus reasonable travelling time, not extended leave.
7. 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.
8. The school does take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
9. The school will make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
10. Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis. Requests are considered individually according to their circumstances.



11. It is usual to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions. A request is highly unlikely to be authorised for any student whose attendance is below 95%.

12. It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.