



GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS ON AUTHORISED ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

1. The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.
2. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via www.stonehenge.wilts.sch.uk/app/uploads/2022/08/Leave-of-Absence-Request-Form.pdf
3. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision regarding their request. Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence unless the request is received before the period of absence begins.
4. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.
5. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. In considering a request, the school will take account of the following factors which may help to reach a decision: -
 - the exceptional circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
 - time of the academic year when the leave has been requested
 - duration of the absence – number of school days being missed
 - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 will not normally be granted leave of absence.
 - the child's current attendance and punctuality rate and overall attendance pattern. A request is highly unlikely to be agreed for any pupil with an attendance below 95%
 - exceptional term time leave requested/taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose
 - Whether parent/carers have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent from school e.g. wrapping around school holiday
 - Have alternative care arrangements been considered to limit the time away from school
 - Impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family e.g. family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN
6. **Examples of circumstances NOT considered as Exceptional**
 - **Holidays** taken in term time, or any event that can be scheduled **outside of term time**
 - Absences to **visit family members** if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours.
 - Holidays **abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative or attending a wedding**, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.
 - **Absence will not be authorised for reasons such as:** To care for other family members; Birthdays; No school uniform/shoes; Bullying; Friendship problems; Family Anniversaries; Death of a pet; Travel problems; School refusal

7. Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- **Illness and medical/dental appointments** (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 of the attendance policy for more detail)
 - **Religious observance** – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. Time granted would be for the religious observance and travelling time and intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
 - **Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes** – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
 - **If a parent is Service Personnel** and is 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.
 - If the family have recently experienced a **trauma or crisis**
 - Time to visit **seriously ill relatives**
 - **A wedding of an immediate family member** - time for the wedding service, plus reasonable travelling time, not extended leave, where an invitation has been provided as evidence
 - **Graduation/Passing out parade of an immediate family member** – time for the wedding service, plus reasonable travelling time, not extended leave, where an invitation has been provided as evidence
 - The **death and funeral** of a close relative – time for the funeral service, plus reasonable travelling time, not extended leave.
 - **Out of school programmes** such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement such as County level or above. Documentary evidence of this event will be required from the arts/sports regional governing body.
8. Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The head teacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. However head teachers may choose to liaise with each other as part of their decision-making process.
9. Should the school decide to grant leave of absence, but the child does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
10. Should the school decide not to grant leave of absence and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This action may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent* per child. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings.
11. The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school absences during term time and support head teachers in challenging parents who ignore the law.

* Generally the DfE states that parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.