

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Holidays in Term Time

We aim to ensure that all pupils make continual progress and achieve success in school, so it is important that parents do their best to encourage their children to attend school for the full 190 days in an academic year as stated in the Education (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006. As such, we hope that you can support this policy wherever possible by arranging your holidays around the existing 175 days when the school is closed during weekends and school holidays and thus help us to support your child in achieving success in school. There is a strong correlation between good attendance and achievement in school and as a Local Authority, we actively encourage parents not to take time off during term time so that children can fully benefit from the opportunities their school provides.

However, we accept that there may occasionally be unavoidable circumstances in which a family holiday needs to be taken in school time and the law allows for this eventuality. **Nevertheless, it must be understood that this is not an automatic entitlement for parents and that approval for leave of absence from school for a holiday is entirely at the discretion of the head teacher.**

The Pupil Registration (Wales) Regulations 2010 provide head teachers with a discretionary power to authorise leave for a family holiday during term time where parents seek permission. Permission should be sought well in advance of the planned holiday and in writing. Except in exceptional circumstances, no more than 10 days leave can be granted for this purpose. The head teacher will consider a number of factors before a decision is made as to whether to authorise any periods of holiday requested during term time. These factors could include the child's recent pattern of attendance, whether any key periods of learning, assessment or examinations may be missed during the period of absence and individual family circumstances. These will always be considered on a case-by-case basis and the reasons for any refusal given in writing to the parent.

Only schools, not parents, can authorise absence. If the headteacher refuses a request for absence for a holiday in term time and the parent still decides to take the child on holiday, it will be marked in the register as an 'unauthorised absence'.

Where schools have concerns about unauthorised absence, then they can request that the Local Authority issue a penalty notice in respect of your child's attendance under the Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 if the local authority considers that the parent has failed in their duty to secure regular attendance of their child at school. Penalty Notices can be considered where:

- a pupil has a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) that have been lost due to unauthorised absences in the current school term .
- there is persistent late arrival at school i.e. after the register has closed ('U' code as in the Codes Guidance Document 2010). Persistent means at least 10 sessions of late arrival during the current school term.

These absences do not have to be consecutive and can be a combination of the above.

Further details of the Penalty Notice scheme are available in the Carmarthenshire Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices, however, as a Local Authority, we would of course wish to avoid any such formal intervention and to work with you and our schools to ensure a consistent and high level of school attendance.