

September 2009

Dear Parent

FAMILY HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

There is continuing concern about the amount of time lost by pupils due to family holidays in term time and the disruption it causes to their education. In addition, there is a general misunderstanding of the law in relation to the absence of pupils from school whilst on holiday in term time.

Whenever possible, absence from school should be avoided as it can have a serious effect on a child's educational progress, and can create difficulties for them on their return to school, particularly if they are joining a new school or class. If, however after serious consideration of this you propose to take your child away from school, only the Headteacher can authorise the absence. Parents cannot authorise the absence themselves.

Whenever possible therefore, family holidays should be arranged during school holidays. Schools do have discretion to grant up to 10 days leave during term time, but before doing so will consider your child's situation carefully. In considering a request, the school will take into account the child's age, the time of year of the holiday, the nature of the visit and parental wishes. The Headteacher will also consider the child's stage of education and progress and the child's overall attendance record. Headteachers will not authorise absence if they believe that your request is unreasonable and you must ensure that your request is made to the school **at least two weeks** before the start of the holiday. Only in **exceptional** circumstances can a Headteacher grant leave of more than 10 days in term time.

In all cases it is best have a discussion with the Headteacher in order to look at the issues as they affect your child.

Where a family holiday during term time is agreed to be unavoidable, it is vital that it does not coincide with examinations or other important tests that your child has to take.

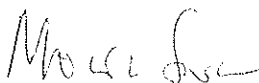
The dates of National Curriculum tests in 2009 - 2010 are:

Key Stage 1	Can be at any time (although would usually be in the first three weeks of May)
Key Stage 2	10 May – 14 May 2010
GCSE	May/June – contact school for exact dates

Headteachers are advised not to authorise absence for holidays where the pupil will miss a public examination.

I trust that you will make every effort to co-operate in this matter in partnership with your child's school and the Education Service.

Yours sincerely



Moira Swann
Corporate Director Children's Services

Children's Services – 'A strong commitment to developing children's services and to improving the life chances of all young people in Cumbria' (Joint Area Review 2006)