

Absence requests – exceptional circumstances

Headteachers have **discretion to authorise absence** *only* in **exceptional circumstances**; there is **no entitlement** for parents to take children out of school for holidays or other non-essential reasons.

“Exceptional” means **rare, significant, unavoidable, and short** — events that *could not reasonably be scheduled outside term time*.

As a guide (and there may be exceptions to this) the following **considerations** are used to consider whether the request is exceptional.

- Is the reason **rare and unavoidable**?
- Could this event **only** happen in term time?
- Has the parent provided **supporting evidence**?
- What is the **impact on the pupil’s learning and attendance history**?
- Does the reason align with categories outlined in the policy?

Examples of exceptional circumstances – this is not an exhaustive list

- **Death or serious illness of a close family member**
- **Attending a funeral or memorial service** (for the service and travel time only)
- **Wedding** of a parent or close family member (for service, celebration and travel time only)
- **Serious short-term illness OF PRIMARY CARE GIVER** (including worsening of an ongoing condition or mental health) where alternative arrangements for getting to school have been exhausted including discussions with school.
- **Medical or dental appointments** which cannot be rearranged for before/after school or in a holiday period.
- **Absence recommended by a health professional** as part of treatment, rehabilitation, or recovery for the pupil.
- **Religious observance** on a day set apart exclusively for it and reasonable travel time (for the event and travel time only).
- **A housing crisis** which prevents a child from attending school
- **Respite care** for a child who is looked after by the Local Authority
- **An interview for another school**
- **A child taking part in a performing arts/sporting event** where the child is *participating* at county, national, or international level and *cannot reasonably attend outside term time*.
- **For service children:** preparing for or returning from operational tours, or when shift patterns only allow leave during term time
- **Where parental work requirements genuinely cannot be scheduled outside school holidays** — for example, essential work commitments with evidence from an employer.
- **Acute family emergencies** which cannot be planned for.
- **Other exceptional circumstance which are not listed** – details must be provided as to why it is exceptional and how it meets the considerations;
 - Is the reason **rare and unavoidable**?
 - Could this event **only** happen in term time?
 - Has **supporting evidence** been provided?
 - Does the child have **good attendance** and are they **keeping up with their learning**?

Important considerations

- **Holidays are not exceptional:** Taking a family holiday during term time is not considered an exceptional circumstance, and you cannot usually take your child out of school for this purpose. You could be fined for this.
- **Evidence is often required:** Schools may require proof, such as a medical note/employer confirmation.
- **Case-by-case basis:** The head teacher makes the final decision, and the school will consider each application individually.
- **Consult the school:** It is best to inform the school as soon as possible and consult with them about the specific circumstances