



MELKSHAM AREA SCHOOLS

Dear Parents,

All schools serving Melksham and the surrounding area, including Melksham Oak Community School, have adopted the same policy with regard to parental requests for children to be absent in term time.

The policy described below follows the instructions of the Local Authority (LA) in Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996.

Absences in Term Time

Schools need to consider the potential negative impact that any absence can have on a child's academic progress, even if a child's attendance is good.

Schools are unable to authorise a pupil being absent in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances such as:

- ◆ when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- ◆ for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time.

With effect from 1st January 2009, absence for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- ◆ availability of cheap holidays;
- ◆ availability of the desired accommodation;
- ◆ poor weather experienced in school holiday periods, and
- ◆ overlap with the beginning or end of term.

Whatever the circumstances, schools are unlikely to authorise absence if:

- ◆ the student already has poor attendance (less than 90%) and the Education Welfare Service is involved;
- ◆ the student would miss public examinations such as Key Stage 2 SATs, GCSEs or similar.

Any child's absence for a morning or afternoon for holiday will be recorded as a session of unauthorised absence unless special circumstances have been agreed in advance with the school.

If the school register records a child with 10 half-days (5 days in total) of unauthorised absence in a sixth month period of a school year, the school will have to send a form to the LA (Wiltshire Council) and a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent of the child.

Penalty Notices

A penalty notice will involve payment of £120 within 28 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice. This sum is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days.

If the penalty is not paid in full within 28 days the LA is required to commence court proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of the child's poor school attendance.

Making a Request for Absence

It is important that parents discuss any holiday plans for term time holidays with the headteacher of their child's school before making any bookings. Schools may have a form for such absence requests.

Parents should make their request after reading the policy outlined above.

Further details or clarification

In the first instance parents should talk to their child's school. Alternatively, the Penalty notice Officer can be contacted on 01722 438123.