

A request by a parent, that a future absence/period of absence be authorised by a school/college/academy

Schools are only allowed by law, to authorise non-medical absences if requested in advance by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides. A school can only authorise such a request if they are satisfied that there are “exceptional circumstances” which apply. However, even if there are exceptional circumstances, schools can still consider any other relevant factors such as previous attendance rates; the ability of the pupil to catch-up on missed work; the wider impact of missing the specified period of time.

Devon County Council’s advice is that schools must be extremely cautious about approving such requests if the pupil’s education is likely to be significantly impacted upon.

Parents should ensure that they know whether the absence will be authorised or not before they go away as an unauthorised absence will likely result in a penalty notice or court summons being issued to each parent for each pupil affected. It is therefore recommended that this completed form is sent into the school **at least three school weeks** before the intended absence.

To be completed by a parent with whom the child(ren) lives.

Child’s name: Class/Year Group:

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Full name(s) of all parents going away with the child(ren) listed above:

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

Period Absent: **From** **To**.....

Number of school days that will be missed:

Please explain the reason for the absence (consider that the school will use this to determine whether the “exceptional circumstances” criteria is met.

You are asked to sign this request to confirm that the information provided above is correct, and that you have read the warning contained in the Additional Information overleaf.

Name of parent completing this form: Signed:.....

Date:

For school use. To be completed by a member of staff so authorised

Date form received in school:

Pupils current attendance rate:%

Number of unauthorised absences in last 6 months:

- Absence authorised – the school authorises the above absence as requested, satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply to this specific request.
- Absence unauthorised – the school is unable to authorise the absences specified overleaf.

If request is unauthorised, the main reason(s) are: (please tick all/any that apply)

- Circumstances not deemed to be exceptional
- Current attendance rate is low
- The period covered by this request (length)
- Number of unauthorised absences is high
- The time of the school year
- Other (please specify)

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.....
.....

Date parent notified of school decision:

Signed (member of staff making determination): Designation:.....

Additional information for parents.

If this request is unauthorised by the school, a penalty notice may be issued by Devon County Council. A penalty notice offers a parent the opportunity of dealing with a potential offence without going to court, by paying a penalty. If parents can't afford to pay, or for any other reason do not take the offer of paying the notice within a set time, then the case will proceed to a magistrates court. The provision of penalty notices is set by Regulations and the amount of the penalty, timeframe for payment or payment method are not able to be varied by Devon County Council.

Parents should note that only one penalty notice per parent per child will normally be issued within a two year period. Any second 'offence' within a two year period will be referred straight to court.

Dear parents and guardians

Re: Holidays and Avoidable Absences in Term Time

The Government's view is that every minute of every school day is vital and that pupils should only be granted authorised absences by the school in 'exceptional circumstances'. A family holiday is not normally considered by the Government to be an 'exceptional circumstance' and therefore will not be authorised by this school.

I must take this opportunity to remind you that should you choose to take your child out of school without the authorisation of the school Parental Responsibility Measures could be instigated. This could mean receiving any of the following:

- A Penalty Notice
- A summons to the Magistrate Court which could result in a fine larger than the original Penalty Notice and/or a term of imprisonment

Schools are required to notify the Local Authority if a pupil has ten unauthorised absences (equivalent to five days and not necessarily consecutive) within a two-year period upon issuance of this letter.

An unauthorised absence can be acquired when:

- Leave has been requested, but the circumstances are such that the school is unable to authorise the leave and it is taken anyway.
- Leave is not requested and/or the school has grounds to believe that the child has been taken out of school for an avoidable reason (example – a family holiday). Only the Head teacher can authorise an absence. There have been occasions when schools have been notified that the pupil is sick, but the school later discovers and reasonably believes that the reason given for the absence is not genuine.
- A child continually arrives late after the registration period has closed at 9.10am.

This school will be notifying the Local Authority in all of the circumstances listed above and other instances.

Should a Penalty Notice be issued as a result of unauthorised absence then one notice will be issued to each parent/carer for each child involved. Currently, each Penalty Notice is for £120, which is reduced to £60 if paid within the first 21 days. This will increase to £160 and £80 from August 2024. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days, then court proceedings will be initiated.

This policy represents the School's responsibility and commitment towards providing your child's education and we understand the disappointment that the refusal of a leave request may cause. We hope you will support us by ensuring that your son/daughter obtains the maximum benefit from their time at school by attending punctually for the 190 days each year that the law requires (unless prevented from doing so by unavoidable circumstances).

Thank you for your anticipated support in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Jeremy Cooper

Headteacher