

2nd September 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian

HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

There is a continuing concern, both locally and nationally, about the number of school absences linked to term time holiday. Although our school achieves excellent results and enjoys a very positive reputation, we still suffer from term time holiday absences; in the Autumn Term 2008, 222 school days were lost this way.

The law says that school has the *discretion* to grant up to ten days authorised absence in a school year. It is neither a right, nor expectation, that children should miss ten days' schooling. Each application has to be considered individually by the school, taking into account factors such as the timing of the holiday and the child's attendance and performance record. Holiday absences are only authorised in exceptional circumstances. Any possible absences must always be discussed with us as early as possible and before any bookings are made.

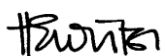
It is easy to underestimate the impact of a few days away from school on a regular basis. A 90% attendance rate over a child's time at school (on average just 19 days' absence each year) would mean that by the end of Year 11 the equivalent of over a school year will have been missed. There is also much statistical evidence showing the detrimental effect absences can have on test and examination results. On average 17 absences during a school year results in one less grade for a GCSE. 2007 data shows that about two thirds of pupils with an average of over 12 days absence per annum achieved less than 5A*-C or more.

The Schools Minister, has recently said that parents needed to understand that even a couple of days off during the term can have a negative impact on their child's progress, "While it's fair that Heads should have the discretion to allow parents up to ten days for holidays in exceptional circumstances, local authorities should not tolerate instances where parents wilfully take their child out of school without authorisation".

Education Welfare Officers monitor the attendance of all pupils and will initiate formal procedures where necessary. Parents and guardians are reminded that Penalty Notices will be considered in cases where pupils are either absent from school without authorisation or when an absence is linked to a holiday application that has been turned down.

Penalty notice information can be found at www.wokingham.gov.uk/penaltynotices.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Winter
Headteacher