



*Knowsl@y Council*

**Policy Guidance**  
**Holidays during Term-Time**

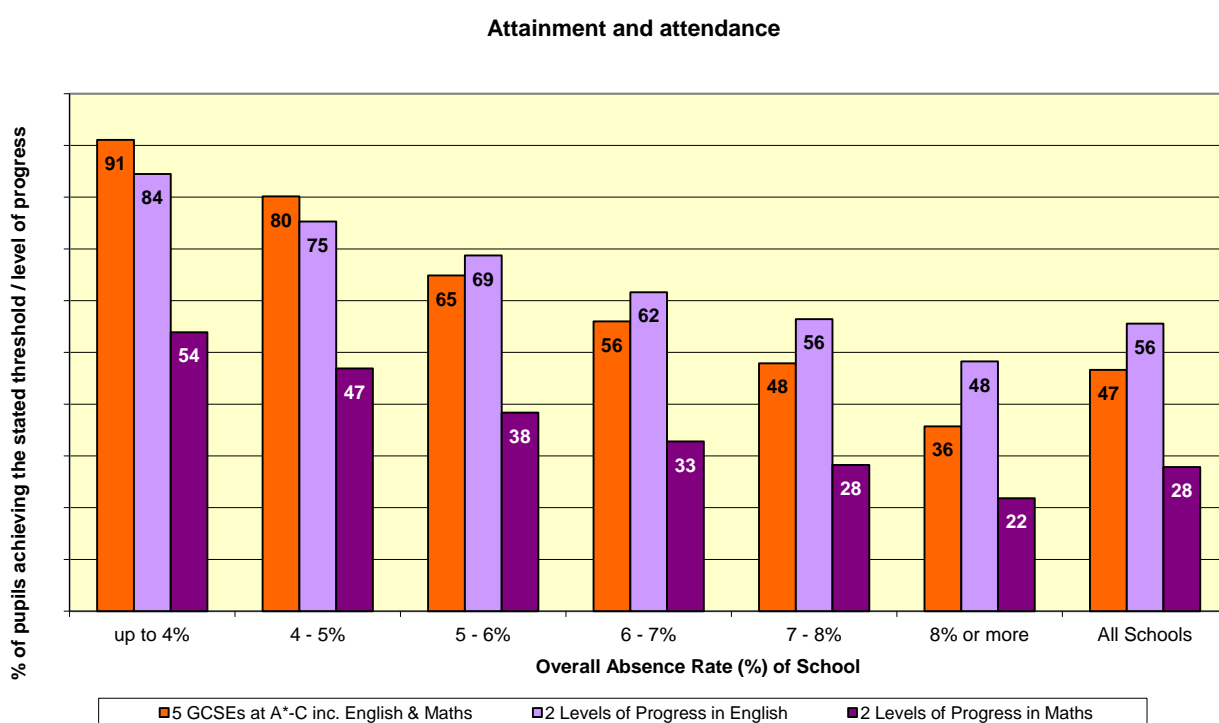
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## Introduction

All children of compulsory school age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or through other arrangements. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

Holiday absence during term-time interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools. Knowsley schools and the Local Authority aim to minimise the amount of time lost to term-time holidays through a policy which actively discourages parents from arranging holidays during term time and supports schools to authorise absence for such holidays only in exceptional circumstances\*.

## **Pupil Attainment by Absence Data**



## Legal Context

Pursuant to Section 7 of The Education Act 1996, parents have a statutory duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Under Section 444(1) and (1A) of The Education Act 1996 a parent is guilty of an offence if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend school regularly or if the parent knows that his child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to cause him to do so.

Pursuant to Regulation 7 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, leave may be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school. Head teachers are able to authorise absence –up to 10 days- for the purpose of family holidays during term time. This is not an entitlement and parents cannot expect leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday to be granted as of right.

Nationally, Government policy is to encourage schools to minimise the amount of teaching and learning time lost as a result of term-time holidays and schools are now expected to adopt a much more challenging response to requests for leave for such holidays. Schools are also legally required to set targets to reduce overall absence – term-time holiday absence is a particular category of absence on which schools are now expected to focus.

Within Knowsley, overall pupil attendance is significantly below the national average. As a consequence, improving pupil attendance is a key priority. In order to achieve the 2011 Children’s Plan target for attendance, this policy guidance **recommends all schools in Knowsley adopt the practice of only authorising a maximum of 5 days leave for term time holidays and only in exceptional circumstances.\***

### **Policy guidance**

The Local Authority in issuing the **recommendation to only authorise a maximum of 5 days leave for term time holidays and only in exceptional circumstances**, intends to:-

- encourage and support schools to make a clear statement regarding the issue of term-time holidays,
- enable schools across Knowsley to manage the issue consistently,
- ensure that the amount of teaching and learning time lost to term-time holidays is, as a result, minimized,
- ensure that parents develop a consistent understanding of the response which they may expect from Knowsley schools.

### **In adopting the LA guidance, schools need to ensure their attendance policy:**

- reminds parents/carers of the importance of ensuring their children’s regular, uninterrupted school attendance;
- actively discourages parents/carers from arranging holidays during term-time;
- informs parents/carers that **time off school for family holidays is not a right.**
- informs parents that applications for holidays during term time must be made in writing to the head teacher at least 4 working weeks prior to the start of the holiday,
- communicates the school’s policy to only authorise 5 day’s absence in a school year for holidays during term time and only in exceptional circumstances

- advises parents of the school's ability to consider up to 5 days holiday/ extended leave of absence in special circumstances, such as:
  - for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education; and
  - when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis e.g. bereavement / serious illness.

It is accepted that some families may wish to visit their country of origin where they still have family ties and it is important that schools are sensitive to the different issues involved when making decisions about such visits.

Schools should consider factors such as:

- The significance of visiting family where family live overseas
- The potential importance to the child's identity and self esteem.

### **Requests for leave of absence during term time**

**Schools will need to make it clear to parents that a request for leave will not automatically be authorised.**

Knowsley Local Authority policy guidance recommends parental/carer application for holidays during term time, must be made in writing\* to the head teacher, at least **4 working weeks** prior to the start of the holiday.

It is also recommended that a standard proforma\*\* is used, for any application for holidays during term time, which could be completed by the school on behalf of the parent/carer. The use of the proforma would enable a consistent approach to be adopted and ability to analyse the nature of requests being made.

Once an application has been made to the school the following factors **need to be taken into consideration by the Headteacher** when considering whether to authorise the leave:-

- The age of the pupil- if the pupil is in Y6, Y10 or Y11, this will impact on student attainment
- The impact on the pupil's education
- The overall attendance pattern of the pupil
- The pupil's educational needs

If any of these factors are deemed to affect the child's education and are not outweighed by the reason for taking leave or holiday, the school should not authorise the holiday application

It is also recommended that schools do not authorise any application for holidays during term time **unless the pupil has achieved 95% attendance within the previous school term.**

If an application for **5 days** leave in term time is to be authorised by the school, parents will be invited to attend a meeting. A home/school agreement should be completed immediately or as soon as possible after the initial request to ensure the pupil completes any work missed during the leave period. This is to be signed by parents and a record kept by the school.

If the application is **not** agreed, the school should make this clear to the parents and the pupil will be marked unauthorised throughout the period of absence, this must also be communicated to the parents. Periods of unauthorised absence for holidays (or other circumstances) may lead to legal action against the parents. In such cases schools should liaise directly with the School Attendance Service. Guidance around the use of legal action, which includes the issuing of penalty notices and fines, is contained within the Knowsley Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

If a period over 5 days is requested, the request should be referred to the Governing Body as this will be considered exceptional and the implications should be carefully considered.

Further guidance and support around attendance policy development for term time holidays will be available from the School Attendance Service, Education Change Team and the Behaviour and Attendance Consultant.