

Absence to be granted only under exceptional circumstances

On 1 September, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force, changing the rules about term-time holidays. The amendments remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. The amendments specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless they consider there to be "exceptional circumstances" for doing so. If leave is granted, headteachers should determine the number of days a child can be away from school. The government has not defined the 'exceptional circumstances' referred to in the 2013 regulations. It is for the headteacher to decide what they view as exceptional circumstances.

Guidance suggests:

Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advanced notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

The DfE explains that although headteachers have the discretion to grant leave:

Leave is unlikely to be granted ... for the purposes of a family holiday.

As a Governing Body we define exceptional circumstances as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.