



# St Augustine's Federated Schools (Primary)

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City of Westminster LA  
Diocese of London  
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Head of Primary: Ruth Vince  
Assistant Heads: Catrin Cunningham & Emily Bettoni  
Senior Leader: Carla Sorbello-Bali

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024

## Absence During Term Time – Holidays

Dear parents/carers,

I am writing to you because I am continuing to receive a number of requests from parents about taking their children out of school during term time for family holidays or to visit relatives. We have also noticed a significant increase in the number of children being taken out of school before the end of term, or returning late in the Michaelmas (Autumn) term without prior authorisation from the school. The DfE are also very concerned about attendance and have issued new guidance regarding absence from school which is about to come into force. I therefore want to make very clear what will happen if you do take your child/children out of school without permission.

If a child is out of school for 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, all Local Authorities are required to carry out penalty notice procedures which may lead to a fine being issued to the family. If your child does not attend school and you do not provide a valid reason, this will be considered to be an unauthorised absence. If we are not able to contact you during first day calling, or we hear an overseas dialling tone when trying to make contact with you, this will also be recorded as an unauthorised absence. If you report that your child is absent due to illness during the last week of this term or the first week/s of the Michaelmas (Autumn) term, we will ask you to provide medical proof of this (such as a doctors note or evidence that an appointment has been made with your GP **during the period of your child's absence**).

Taking children out of school before the end of term, or returning children to school after the start of the term, has a significant impact on their learning and is leading to a number of children falling into the category of concern with regard to attendance. It is expected that you will organise all family holidays and visits to relatives during the school holidays and, as I have reminded you previously, the Government has advised that time off school during term time should not be permitted.

I would also like to take this opportunity to clarify expectations and procedures regarding absence during term time.

As a parent, it is your duty to ensure that your child is attending school. You can only take your child out of school during term time in **exceptional circumstances**. However, in very exceptional circumstances, there may be a necessity for your child to be taken out of school during term time.

You can only do this if:

- you make an application to the Head teacher **in advance** (as a parent the child normally lives with).
- there are exceptional circumstances

To request permission from the Head teacher to take your child out of school during term time, you **must** complete the Application for Time Off During Term Time form, which can be requested from the office. This application should be made as early as possible, but usually at least two weeks before you intend to travel. Evidence will be required to support any applications, including those for exceptional circumstances, such as a serious family illness or bereavement. You can be fined for taking your child on holiday during term time without the school's permission.

The Head teacher cannot give authorisation for absence during term time for a family holiday or to make a visit to relatives, as the Education Act makes it clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. A family holiday does not qualify as an exceptional circumstance.

You should not make any bookings or buy any tickets until you receive a reply from the Head teacher. Each application will be considered individually, but parents must accept that the school is not obliged to agree to time off and will only do so in exceptional circumstances. The outcome of your application may be that the Head teacher will refuse the whole period requested; authorise part of the period and refuse the remainder; or authorise the whole period.

Thank you for your support in this matter. I am sure you agree that it is in every child's best interest to attend school on time, every day in order to make the best possible progress.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Vince". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ruth Vince, Head of Primary