

Sheffield
Every School ✓
day matters!

enjoy • learn • achieve

sheffield.gov.uk/schoolmatters

Attendance Guidance

SHEFFIELD LOCAL AUTHORITY

LEAVE IN TERM TIME GUIDANCE

AUGUST 2025
(Review August 2026)

Adopted by
Ecclesall Primary School

Primary
ECCLESALL
School

Introduction

This policy document has been developed to ensure that Sheffield City Council provides a clear statement of intent, expectation and consistent guidance in relation to the management of ALL term time leave of pupils who attend a school in Sheffield. It has been produced to ensure all decisions are within the national legislation.

Parents can receive a Fixed Penalty Notice for taking their children out of state funded school during term time without agreement from the school. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.

This policy also responds to the updated guidance issued from Department for Education (DfE) which states: -

Term time leave

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. **The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

The Policy includes several guidance documents and templates to be used alongside this policy, to support schools in managing Leave in Term Time and Children Missing from Education.

Rationale

This guidance is provided for parents/carers, schools, and governing bodies, on the process affecting notifications for, and considering the authorisation of exceptional term time leave.

This guidance is provided for schools to manage and respond to situations where leave is not authorised or agreed and the procedures for the removal from school roll. This would include parents/carers who prevent their child from attending school regularly without a valid reason for the absence. Examples include parents/carers who regularly take the extended weekend (Monday or Friday), take advantage of last-minute deals, or repeated visits abroad.

There may be exceptional circumstances where leave in school term time may be granted. This would be decided by the headteacher on an individual basis for each notification. There is strong evidence from research to indicate that significant absence from school during term time can have a negative impact upon a child's attainment and learning.

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupils reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. Schools should not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices and should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the country.

Term time leave

Sheffield Local Authority recognises the important link between regular attendance at school and the educational attainment of children.

Action **may be taken** by Sheffield Local Authority against parents/carers who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance as irregular attendance could affect their child's level of attainment. The action may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice , or a court summons being issued.

Parents and carers who regularly take their child out of school in term time may be prosecuted via the magistrates' court.

Parents/carers are required to notify school of their intention to take leave in term time from the school at which their child is registered. If parents/carers do not submit a request for term time leave notification, school should ensure a letter (Appendix 9) is sent to the parent/carer to advise that the absence is not authorised, unless they are able to provide school with an appropriate reason for their child's absence.

Headteachers must operate a fair process when considering parent/carer reasons for exceptional leave in term time. Holidays, leisure or recreational activities should not be considered as exceptional circumstances. All requests for exceptional leave in term time must be considered on its merits as it is the headteacher whom makes these decisions. If leave is unauthorised a Penalty Notice must be sought. The impact upon the child's learning and well-being must be central to the decision made. The Headteacher may consider previous leave requests and other factors related to the child when making their decision.

Parents/carers who do not notify school of term time leave and take their child on 'unauthorised leave' or fail to keep the school informed of changes to leave arrangements, may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice, be prosecuted and/or the children may lose their place at their school.

Notifications of term time leave in exceptional circumstances

Notifications for exceptional leave in term time should, where possible, be made prior to booking any leave. This should be at least 20 school days in advance of any arrangements being made. This allows sufficient time for the notification to be considered by the school. If notification is not submitted, the head teacher is unable to authorise the leave retrospectively. The notification should be made in writing (letter or email) by the parent/carer using Appendix 1: Notification for Leave in term time. One form per family per notification should be completed, unless siblings attend a different school, parents should inform each school.

Schools should plan to support parents/carers who have low literacy skills or for whom English is not their first language.

Term time leave notifications should include specific start and end dates, as this will formally constitute the leave period.

Parents/carers who are intending to travel abroad with their children during term time should not book travel prior to securing approval from the school.

Any changes to dates agreed by the school will require a re-submission for authorisation prior to departure.

Parents/carers should ensure they have read schools term time leave policy.

The headteacher's decision is final.

Family Emergency - where school have not been notified of leave

There will be some occasions where it has not been possible for the parent/carer to notify school of exceptional term time leave.

Whilst emergency situations are often difficult, parents/carers are still required to contact the school at the earliest possible opportunity to inform of the absence and reasons for this.

Parents/carers taking their children out of school due to a family emergency are encouraged to consider:

- That they have considered the impact and appropriateness for their child
- Whether or not alternative care arrangements could be made for the child to remain in school, e.g. stay with an extended family member
- That they have looked at limiting the amount of time absent from school
- If term time leave is for an extended period, parents/carer should consider admission at another local school whilst on term time leave

Where parents/carers have not notified school of leave, the child is at risk of losing their place at the current school in accordance with Section 8(h)¹. Parents may also receive a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Considering the exceptional term time leave notification

The school will consider all notifications for term time leave in accordance with the current legislation and this guidance.

It is good practice for schools to meet or converse with parents/carers (wherever possible) to discuss any exceptional circumstances raised prior to making the decision.

The school will need to consider each notification for exceptional leave in term time on its own merits and whether there are exceptional circumstances for authorising the absence. Holidays, leisure or recreational activities should not be considered an exceptional circumstance.

The decision and informing the parent/carer by the school

The school will reach a decision and **may** inform parents of the outcome in **accordance with their own school policy**. If parents are not informed of the outcome, they should assume it has not been authorised.

¹ The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006)

Schools must ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to communicate the decision to families who have low levels of literacy or where English is not the first language.

A decision may result in the term time leave notification being (a) Authorised², (b) Unauthorised³ or (c) part Authorised and Unauthorised. For example, Mr X has requested 3 weeks term time leave for his child. The school acknowledges that the reason given is important but feels that 3 weeks is excessive and authorise 1 week's leave, with the remaining 2 weeks being unauthorised.

Unauthorised leave Fixed Penalty Notice

If parents/carers choose to take their children out of school during term time for 5 or more consecutive school days (spanning over holiday periods, inset days or weekends would constitute consecutive school days, and this is not authorised by the School, the School are expected to request the Local Authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice of £160 (if paid between 21 and 28 days) this is reduced to £80 (if paid within 21 days for a first offence). Each parent/carer can be issued with a penalty notice, for each child, one per parent per child, issued separately. All Penalty Notices are issued in line with the National Penalty Notice Framework.

For example: 2 parents/carers 2 children. Each parent/carer will be issued 2 Fixed Penalty Notices, one for each child. The overall cost to each parent would be £320 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £160 if paid within 21 days for a **first offence**. For a **second offence** amount would be £320 as there will be no opportunity to pay at the reduced amount.

The responsibility for requesting a Fixed Penalty Notice is with the school and will be issued when requested by the headteacher.

The school should provide the paperwork for pupils identified and this should include:

- Original notification for exceptional leave in term time notification (appendix 1 form)
- Exceptional leave response in line with school policy
- Appendix 9 evidence letter (if notification not received)
- Year-to-date attendance certificate – showing unauthorised absence (G code) – and signed by the Head Teacher

All requests (paperwork) for a Fixed Penalty Notice must be submitted via the Penalty Notice Portal and selecting Term Time Leave in the drop-down box.

Any incorrect paperwork **will be returned via the portal and provide an opportunity to resubmit correctly**.

Any late submissions will not be processed.

Recording of Leave by the School

School attendance registers are legal documents and the information recorded in them can be used as evidence in legal proceedings. It is therefore important that the information contained is accurate and the correct absence code is used. All absences must be coded in accordance with Absence and Attendance Codes: Guidance for Schools

² Authorised - where the school has agreed that the leave is granted

³ Unauthorised - where the school does not agree that the leave request should be granted

and Local Authorities (Working Together to Improve School Attendance).

If the Term Time Leave is unauthorised then G code should be recorded, and a penalty notice requested.

C code should be used if the leave is deemed to be an exceptional circumstance.

If part of the period is granted C code should be used for those dates, and the G code for the remaining dates.

CODE	Description	Category
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another code or description)	Authorised
G	Family Holiday/leisure or recreation (NOT Agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised

Mobile Child: Where the pupil is a mobile child, and their parent(s) is travelling during their trade or business, and the pupil is travelling with them a T code should be used in the register.

Sheffield Local Authority and Schools process for dealing with unauthorised absence

When a headteacher does not authorise a term time leave request on legitimate grounds; it sends a clear message to the parent/carer that the school does not agree with the reasons provided by the parent/carer for the request for exceptional leave in term time. If the parent/carer still takes their child on leave in school term time the following may apply:

Issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice

Prosecution for the original offence of failing to secure regular school attendance

If Parents/Carers are found guilty of an offence, when prosecuted by magistrate's court, they can be sentenced to a fine, or a community penalty.

Communicating the policy to Parents/Carers

Term time leave policy should be communicated to parents/carers regularly. It is considered good practice for schools to:

- Refer to the policy in the school's attendance and behaviour policy.
- Promote the policy on the attendance board and in the school newsletter.
- Provide a leaflet on leave during term time for parents/carers of key points. The leaflet may be translated into community languages where possible.
- Promote the policy at parents' evening and school events for new starters.
- Refer to the policy in home/school agreements.

Process for removing a child's details from the school roll if they do not return following a period of Term Time Leave

Refer to Child Missing from Education Handbook

Return to the UK, where a child does not have a school place

If a child and their family return to the UK, the parent/carer will need to re-apply for a school place. Parents/carers requiring a school place must contact the Children Missing Education (CME) team on 0114 273 6462.

The CME team can provide support to parents/carers to secure school places and other forms of education provision.

School Decision Letter (template)

SCHOOL NAME:

Date:

Name:

Address:

Reference:

To the Parent/Carer of

On the (date) you requested that the school consider exceptional leave in term time for your child(ren) (name, DOB). You said that you wanted to go to (place) for (reason). You said that you would be away from school from (date) to(date). This equates to school days

The Head teacher has considered your request and has reached the following decision:

☐

School days will be **agreed** by the school

☐

School days will **not be agreed** by the school

The reasons for the headteacher's decision are given below.

We expect your child to return to school on (date). If your child is unable to return on this date please let us know, as failure to do so may result in your child losing their place at this school. This will mean you will have to re-apply for a place at this school. You may also risk being fined or prosecuted by Sheffield City Council if your child is absent from school without the headteacher's permission.

Signed on behalf of the School:

Printed Name:

Exceptional Leave in Term Time Request for issue of a Penalty Notice



Inclusion & Attendance Service, Education & Skills

Submit Via Penalty Notice Portal

Name of Child: (Office Use ONLY) Child ONE ID:	Date of Birth:
Address: Postcode:	Siblings (School/DOB):

Name of each person who has day to day care of the child and you would like to request a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued (ensure correct details are provided)

NB: these will be the individuals who will receive a fine (if separated request on who is taking child)

First Name	Surname	Relationship to Child	Date of Birth	Address if different from above

School Name:	School Address and contact number:
Referrer Name:	
Name of Headteacher:	
Date:	

Any comments in addition to Appendix 4 letter:

Week Beginning to week ending of Leave
(Note: 10 sessions per week)

Date From:

Date To:

Please ensure the following relevant documents are attached otherwise requests will be rejected:

- Pupil registration Certificate (signed by head) ☐
- Original notification for leave (Appendix 1 form) ☐
- Exceptional leave response (if leave granted, Appendix 2) ☐
- Appendix 4 evidence letter (if notification not received) ☐

Appendix 4
Template Letter to parent (no request for leave made to school)

School's logo

Parent name and address

Dear parent/carer(s) of

RE: Child/ren's name

We have reason to believe that you have taken your child/ren out of school without agreement of the head teacher during the period to

Please could you provide evidence of the reasons for absence to school by, failure to do so may result in school referring the information to the Local Authority for a penalty notice to be issued for unauthorised leave in term time.

Practice Guidance for Schools

Unauthorised leave of absence in term time

Why should we do it?

- To improve attendance and attainment
- Government guidance from September 2013
- Shows level of importance schools place on the education they are providing. Does it matter if a child is missing for a week or two?
- Should provide consistent approach for families as all schools should be working to guidelines, otherwise they risk undermining colleagues in other schools and promoting discontent between families and friends.

What school should do?

- Constantly advertise (use school website or newsletters) that Unauthorised Leave of Absence in Term-time is not appropriate and ensure parents clearly understand what to expect if they choose to take leave.
- Ensure the response to ALL parents is consistent and clear
- Ensure process and policy is in place as this could result in legal proceedings which may have serious implications for parents
- Ensure information given to school and parent is current and correct
- Guidance needs to be shared with those completing the paperwork for requesting a penalty notice

School process should include:

- Exceptional Leave of Absence in Term time notification form which allows parent/carer to give details for leave, this should be completed at least 20 school days in advance, of leave being taken. **Leave cannot be granted retrospectively.**
- This form must have a paragraph which states the parent/carer maybe at risk of receiving a penalty notice.
- Meeting/conversing with parent/carers where possible
- Response to parents/carers if authorised due to exceptional circumstances as per policy
- Decision to allow Exceptional Circumstances should only be made by the headteacher, most notifications for Leave of Absence in term time should be forwarded submitted via the penalty notice portal.

Before sending to Inclusion and Attendance, check...

- Pupil is statutory school age (term after 5th birthday) – *a child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1st January and 31st March, they are of compulsory school age on 31st March; if they turn 5 between 1st April and 31st August, they are of compulsory school age on 31st August. If they turn 5 between 1st September and 31st December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31st December.*

A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

- Check if period of leave is 5 or more consecutive school days. If taken either side of a weekend of holiday it would be added together.
- Check paperwork is complete and correct
- Ensure you are clear on who you are requesting fines to be issued to
- Check parent/carer details are correct

Paperwork for Inclusion and Attendance Team should include:

A- Completed term time leave Penalty Notice Request.

Please complete only one form per family, include all children in the family. Ensure the details are correct and up to date. It **must** include the full names of persons to receive a Fixed Penalty Notice. Highlight which items of documentation are being submitted with the request

B- School Notification Form (where leave requested)

This document should be the one provided by the Local Authority for consistency across the city. Requests for penalty notices will only be processed if submitted on this form.

Please ensure details on the form are correct and complete with names of any siblings at other school and full names and Date of Birth (if school have this) of parent/carers to be fined (Mr and Mrs Brown is not acceptable)

Check if parents are both living at the address you have on your system. Where parents are separated or divorced it is advisable to request for the parent who is taking or allowing the child to be taken away.

Where there are two parents in the family living at the same address, both should parents' details should be detailed on the request form.

Where a parent has a partner who lives with the family and has taken time away with them, they should be receive a Fixed Penalty Notice as they are accepting day-to-day care.

C- Schools' Response to Parents Request.

See Sheffield City Council's codes of conduct for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices 7.2 School should state in their policy how they will respond to parents. **The Local Authority suggest that within a school's policy it states that parents will only receive a response if the leave is granted.**

D- Pupil Registration Certificate

This must show that on the dates of the requested leave the pupil was coded with a 'G' in the register. Where leave was not requested but school can evidence that unauthorised leave was taken 'G' codes should be entered into the register and the supporting evidence provided with the request for a Fixed Penalty Notice.

This must be signed and dated by the Head Teacher.

Where a pupil is returning to school mid-week, please ensure you complete the full week attendance before printing the registration certificate, you must show the pupil has returned.

Please send a registration certificate with the pupil address on as this allows for further checks to be made before issue of the penalty notice.

E- Evidence to prove leave taken (if request not received)

This maybe a transcript of a telephone conversation with a parent signed and dated by the person who had the conversation.

Transcript of discussion in school with a parent or pupil signed and dated by the person who had the discussion.

Evidence of a home visit by a member of school staff, where information may have been collected

If school have reason to believe a child has been away but no request submitted or evidence gathered to confirm this is the case, school should use the template letter (appendix 4) provided by the Local Authority which gives parents chance to provide evidence of absence

Advice: if a parent refuses to pay their penalty notice and is taken to court, the onus is on the parent to prove where the child was and why they were unable to attend school.

Time limits affecting the process

All requests for a Fixed Penalty Notice should be sent via Penalty Notice Portal within 30 days of the pupil's return to school, with the exception of leave requested for the end of an academic year.

Common Errors on Requests

- Address on school system not updated to central system (Data transfer not activated or working?)
- Parents' first names missing or parents names incorrect
- Penalty Notice only requested for Mum but request states only time dad can take. Should be requesting for both parents
- School's information not up-to-date with status of parents

