



TERM TIME HOLIDAYS – GUIDANCE

The Department for Education (DfE) states that **schools must open for 190 pupil days per year, plus five INSET (teacher training) days**. Schools can also have up to three occasional days per year (where the school is closed to pupils for reasons other than staff training, such as for religious festivals) as long as they don't eat into the 190 statutory pupil days.

For maintained primary schools, term dates are set by the local authority, in consultation with schools, neighbouring authorities and groups representing teachers and other staff, such as unions. Because local authorities set their own term dates, there are often slight differences between schools in different areas – although the fact that neighbouring local authorities consult with each other means the dates tend to be broadly similar, give or take a few days, nationwide.

Within a local authority area, the differences often come about through INSET (staff training) days. Schools are generally free to decide the timings of their own INSET days; some will add them onto a school holiday, while others scatter them throughout the school year. At Kinnerley, we link our INSET days with those of the Corbet School to try to minimise disruption for parents as much as possible.

Authorised absences are those where the school gives permission for a child to be away in advance, or accepts the explanation offered afterwards. These include being absent due to illness, a funeral, a medical appointment or a religious observance.

Unauthorised absences are not approved by the school, and typically include holidays and outings, or absences with no explanation.

A school with lots of unauthorised absence is likely to come under scrutiny from both Ofsted and the local authority. Parents also have a legal responsibility concerning their children's attendance, and local authorities can bring legal action against families where attendance levels cause concern.

From September 2013, legislation concerning term-time holidays has changed. Previously, schools were allowed to grant leave for family holidays of up to 10 days per year, and of over 10 days in 'exceptional circumstances,' at the head teacher's discretion. Now, however, head teachers can't grant any authorised absence during term-time, unless in exceptional circumstances. Those circumstances are up to the head, but, essentially, term-time holidays will no longer be authorised.

Schools and local authorities can ask for evidence of exceptional circumstances such as weddings or funerals, and for evidence of illness if children are off sick. The statutory ten-day threshold for term-time absence has also been removed; now, if a head teacher grants authorised leave, he or she will determine for how long.

If your request for leave is unauthorised and you still choose to take your child out of school for a holiday or another reason, you may be fined £60 per child per parent, rising to £120 per child per parent if not paid within 21 days. If the fine is unpaid after 28 days, court proceedings can be initiated. The decision over whether to issue a fine is made following discussions between the Local Authority and the head teacher. Factors such as the pupil's overall attendance and whether there is a history of previous unauthorised attendance are taken into account.

