



Tel: 01904 653279
Fax: 01904 610287
E-Mail: knavesmire.school@york.gov.uk
Website: www.knavesmire.org.uk
Headteacher: Mrs. C. Weston

Knavesmire Primary School
Trafalgar Street
South Bank
YORK
YO23 1HY

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Dear Parents,

The DCSF are asking schools to encourage parents to avoid term-time holidays whenever possible. Absence as a result of term-time holidays interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools. 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. As a result **all** of York’s Primary Schools are introducing a new holiday request form from September 2009 (copy attached).

Please remember that schools can only approve absence for family holidays if they consider that there are special reasons which warrant the holiday. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the maximum allowance is ten school days in a school year regardless of the number of holidays taken in previous years. **Holiday prices, availability of flights and/or accommodation and the fact that parents have booked a holiday before checking with the school are not special reasons.**

Ten days absence for a family holiday can result in pupils with poor attendance becoming persistent absentees. Examination of data from 2005 by the DCSF shows a strong correlation between average absence levels in schools and their pupils’ attainment. 87.5% of pupils reach Key Stage 2 Level 4 Maths (the average expected level) in schools where pupils average fewer than 7.5 days absence a year - but this drops to 62.1% in schools where average absence is more than 15 days. In general schools are not able to authorise absence if:

- if a child’s attendance record over the previous 20 week period is less than 95% - even if any previous absence was due to unavoidable causes such as illness; or
- if the period of leave coincides with the start of a term, or is near to, or coincides with, tests, SATs, exams or other significant events in the school calendar.

Please note that if leave is granted it should be for only **one** holiday in any one school year.

If you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs C. Weston
Headteacher

