

Saint Bede's Catholic High School
A Business and Enterprise College
with an Additional Specialism in Languages

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Dear Parents / Guardian

As you know, we emphasise the importance of pupils achieving an excellent attendance record and, with your invaluable support, achieve an overall level of attendance that is 'outstanding' for a secondary school. We know that you are aware of the impact of absence on academic progress and of the importance that employers and further education establishments place on high levels of attendance for prospective employees and students. We also recognise the various pressures and challenges placed upon families and have, until now, been able to exercise some discretion when considering any requests for planned absence.

However, from September 2013, the Government has amended key legislation relating to attendance. This decision has been made to encourage schools to take a firmer stance on absence and to make parents aware that there is no entitlement to time off for holidays during term times. This statement was released by the Government to clarify their position:

'As of 1st September 2013, Headteachers cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.'

We are required to outline what is meant by 'exceptional circumstances' using the officially worded and sanctioned letter below:

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school, but it is important that you understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

In considering the request we will also look at various factors such as:

- The timing of the request:
When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
Pupils should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods eg SATs, GCSE or any other public examinations.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 95% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave.
- Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

In certain circumstances, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Readmission cannot be guaranteed.

Yours sincerely

P Grice
Headteacher



Specialist Schools
and Academies Trust
EXCELLENCE AND DIVERSITY

