



All Children Can Succeed

# CLITHEROE ST JAMES' C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Greenacre Street, Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 1ED

## ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

With effect from 1 September 2013, the rules and guidance on School Attendance have changed. The Government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to:
  - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
  - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
  - Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education; missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

## Holidays/Extended Leave

**Time off school for family holidays is not a right.** Schools may only agree up to 10 days "holiday leave" in special circumstances such as:

- For service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

Written evidence is required to support applications in these circumstances.

Holidays which are taken for the following reasons cannot be authorised:

- Availability of cheap holidays.
- Availability of the desired accommodation.
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term.

In exceptional circumstances, schools can approve more than 10 days holiday leave – called **extended leave of absence**.



Forms for “Application for Absence from School” are available from the School Office. They should be completed and returned to School with the supporting documentary information at least 2 weeks before the intended date of departure.

### **Religious Observance**

Schools must authorise absence that is due to religious observance, but the day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance and set apart by the parents’ religious body (not the parents). If the religious body sets apart a single day for religious observance and the parent/carer applies for 4 days leave of absence, the school is only required to allow one day.

### **Unexpected and Unexplained Absence**

When a child is unexpectedly absent due to illness or other circumstances, parents/carers are to contact school prior to 9.30am on that day. If the School has not been contacted by 10.00am then a call will be made to the parent/carer to ascertain the whereabouts of the pupil. A subsequent phone call by the parent/carer on each day of absence is now required to confirm that the child should not be expected in school.

Whenever pupils are absent and parents/carers have not told the school the reason for the absence, the school must mark the pupil as unauthorised absence. The mark can be changed at a later date if the parents provide a satisfactory reason for the child’s absence.

### **Medical or Dental Appointments**

Parents are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

### **Persistent Absence**

Schools are now required to write to parents/carers of pupils whose attendance falls below 95%. This is regardless of whether the absence is due to an authorised holiday or illness. Should attendance fall below 88%, the parents/carers will be invited to meet with the Headteacher in order to introduce a strategy to improve the attendance of the pupil. If there is no subsequent improvement in attendance, the School is required to report the pupil to the Education Authority for further action.

### **Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices**

Schools have legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty orders to address poor attendance in school. A parenting contract is a formal written signed agreement between parents and the governing body of the school. Parenting orders are imposed by the court and the parents’ agreement is not required before an order is made. Penalty notices are fines of between £60 and £120 which are imposed on parents. These are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school.

