

28 September 2023

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Holidays and Avoidable Absences in Term Time

South Dartmoor Community College believes that in order for a student to fully benefit from their education, good attendance is crucial. It is the policy of the school to celebrate achievement and full attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career.

As a school we have a duty to ensure that all parents and carers are clear regarding the law around authorisation of absence from college. The information below is a reminder of the Local Authority's guidance on taking holiday during term time. This is standard guidance set by the Local Authority across all Devon schools. It is important to emphasise that South Dartmoor **do not play a role in setting** the guidance and/or actions outlined below.

Devon Local Authority guidance regarding holidays taken during term time

As of September 2013, an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came in to force and greater clarity was introduced to the issue of schools authorising absence requests. These changes reinforced the Government's view that every minute of every school day is vital and that pupils should only be granted authorised absences by the school in 'exceptional circumstances'.

A family holiday is not normally considered by the Government to be an 'exceptional circumstance' and therefore will not be authorised by South Dartmoor Community College. I must take this opportunity to remind you that, should you choose to take your child out of school without the authorisation of the school, then Parental Responsibility Measures could be instigated. This could mean receiving any of the following;

- A Penalty Notice
- A summons to the Magistrate Court which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment for up to 3 months.

Schools are required to notify the Local Authority if a pupil has a number of unauthorised absences. Unauthorised absences can be acquired when;

- 1) Leave has been requested, but the circumstances are such that the school is unable to authorise the leave and it is taken anyway.
- 2) Leave is not requested and/or the school has grounds to believe that the child has been taken out of school for an avoidable reason (example – a family holiday). Only the Head teacher can authorise an absence. This year there have been occasions when school has been notified that the pupil is sick, but the school later discovers and reasonably believes that the reason given for the absence is not genuine.
- 3) A child continually arrives late after the registration period has closed.

South Dartmoor has a duty to notify the Local Authority in all of the circumstances listed above. Should a Penalty Notice be issued as a result of unauthorised absence then one notice will be issued to each parent/carer for each child involved. Currently, each Penalty Notice is for £120, which is reduced to £60 if paid within the first 21 days. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days, then court proceedings will be initiated. **The Penalty Notice money does not come to the school.**

We understand the disappointment that the refusal of a leave request may cause but, as you can appreciate, this policy represents the school's responsibility and commitment towards providing your child's education and supporting their future life opportunities. We hope you will support us by ensuring that your son/daughter obtains the maximum benefit from their time at school by attending punctually for the 190 days each year that the law requires (unless prevented from doing so by an unavoidable circumstances).

Thank you for your continued support.

Mr D Vile

Assistant Headteacher, Culture

Truth Respect Equality Excellence