



# The STAR Multi-Academy Trust

## LEAVE IN TERM TIME POLICY

### Purpose:

To review and update the Leave in Term Time Policy to provide more detailed guidance for headteachers and parents/carers. (This was in relation to definitions of 'close family' and also possible guidance of length of time off balancing the HT's discretion and the focus on school attendance)

Approved by the Trust Board	19 July 2022
Reviewed:	June 2024
Approved by the Trusts' Curriculum & Standards Committee	18 June 2024

## 1. Principles of the Policy

The Trust's policy, in line with Government guidelines, is that parents should not take their children out of school during term time.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion and if a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. **However, any leave granted should be proportionate to the circumstances being considered and carefully balanced to minimise impact on education.** *As head teachers should only grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.*

Parents should not expect their child's school to agree to an absence for leave during term time unless exceptional circumstances have been established and agreed upon.

## 2. Definitions

Term time – The days that a school is in session as defined by its school calendar.

## 3. Aims

We are committed to giving every child within the STAR MAT the best education they can have and the very first step of this is keeping student attendance as high as possible. This policy supports this commitment and is written in line with our Trust Model Student Attendance Policy held at individual school level and hosted on each school website.

## 4. Applying Exceptional Circumstances

Absence may be granted with regard:

**Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad:** in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA).

**Attending an interview:** for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.

**Study leave:** for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.

**A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable:** where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable.

(For full details please see part-time timetable)

**Exceptional circumstances could include (evidence would be required in each case):**

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced that the individual would not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close family member.
- To attend the wedding or funeral of a close family member
- Other out of the ordinary, life changing or future career influencing events that affect the individual pupil in question or a close family member (such events to be decided upon at the discretion of the headteacher).

It is expected that the Headteacher will require evidence to substantiate applications of this nature.

**The definition of 'close family member' normally only encompasses parents/legal carers, siblings and**

grandparents only. Beyond this definition, the headteacher will be the arbiter of who qualifies as a 'close family member.' There is no appeal process related to this.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. *As head teachers should only grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purpose of a family holiday. DfE guidance also states: 'Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance'.* Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

If a request meets one or more of the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times within the academic calendar, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option, otherwise the application will be declined:

- The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
- Options time (applicable to secondary school pupils).
- At any time during an assessment period (an exam period will be defined by the headteacher and will not be subject to interpretation).
- At any other time specified by an individual school.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities of Staff**

Where it is not clear that a request outlines exceptional circumstance then the headteacher may consult with the STAR MAT CEO for advice. The Headteacher remains the final decision maker for all exceptional circumstance decisions.

Decisions relating to possible sanctions for unauthorised absence, including instruction to the Local Authority to issue a fine (or fines) are at the discretion of a school's headteacher, as per formal guidance. The Headteacher may wish to consult with governors, Trustees and/or the STAR MAT CEO but the authority to pursue a sanction will remain with the headteacher. In addition, the Local Authority can, in certain circumstances, implement a range of sanctions. This is normally done in consultation with schools. The formal guidance on this can be viewed using the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

## **6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The Trustees will review this policy every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout all STAR MAT schools.

## **7. Availability**

This policy will be available on a school's website, via the STAR MAT website and upon request.