



KEREM SCHOOL (INCLUDING KEREM EARLY YEARS UNIT)

Pupil Absence Policy (September 2016)

Introduction

1. This Policy concerns requests by parents for their children to be absent from school during term time.
2. The School seeks to structure its term dates to balance: (a) the need to have a sufficient number of teaching days to cover the curriculum, both secular and religious; (b) Chagim; and (c) ordinary school holidays. The school is closed over Pesach, but may be open or closed over Succot.
3. The most common reason for taking children out of school is to have longer foreign holidays (despite the fact that Kerem has longer holidays than state maintained schools) or to take advantage of cheaper holiday costs outside half-term or between terms.
4. There is a perception that this is not really a problem. That is wrong.
5. First, the absence during term-time of several pupils imposes a significant additional burden on teachers. On the assumption that parents will want their children to catch up with lost work, that involves either: (a) teachers having to repeat lessons in class, which is clearly unsatisfactory for all other children who have not missed lessons; or (b) teachers making the time outside class to help children to catch up.
6. The second reason that taking children out of school is a problem is that it is very difficult to reconcile with a proper culture of respect for the school. Indeed, parents not infrequently book holidays, and only then ask for permission; their unacceptable behaviour is then compounded by taking the holidays regardless of whether the Head Teacher has given permission for absence.
7. Very few if any private preparatory schools, and no state maintained schools, allow children to take time off for during term; and Government Regulations now mean that maintained schools no longer have any discretion to allow extra days for holidays in term time.

The Policy

8. The following Policy has been in effect since the Summer Term 2014, subject to minor amendments.
9. Under the Policy, a written request must be made to the Head Teacher, each time a parent wishes to take their child out of school during term dates. Requests should not be made to other members of staff.

10. Children will not be allowed to take time away from school during term time, save in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances mean just that. They do not include a desire to take a longer family holiday; nor will the fact that siblings in other schools have different term dates be an exceptional reason justifying absence from Kerem.
11. A simcha of a close family member may amount to exceptional circumstances, provided: (a) the additional time is genuinely to attend the simcha itself and is not extended to plan a holiday around the simcha; (b) in every case proof of the simcha (e.g. an invitation) is provided when the request is made to the Head Teacher, so that the School can keep a proper record of the reason for the absence.
12. In years when the School is open over Succot, the School will take into account a family's desire to spend the chag together, in a religious Jewish atmosphere, but that approach is limited to the chag itself and is not the basis for an extended holiday.
13. Parents who seek permission to take their children out of School for reasons that do not appear to be exceptional will be invited to meet the Head Teacher to explain their request, so that it can be considered further.
14. If parents take a child out of school without the Head Teacher's permission, that will be regarded as an "unauthorised absence" on the child's school record.
15. The School will continue to monitor compliance with the Policy. Governors have a range of potential options in the event that the system is abused by parents, including but not limited to: (a) introducing a system of financial sanctions for unauthorised absences, based on a sum per child per day, to be added to following term's bill; and (b) restricting the child's participation in after school or other extra-curricular activities. However, the Governors hope that no such measures will prove necessary.