

4th January 2011

Dear Parents,

Requests for family holidays in term-time

The government is putting new pressure on schools to reduce pupil absences during term-time, which has prompted Chew Valley's governing body to revise the school's official attendance policy.

This is an important issue which affects every family in the school trying to juggle work commitments, family events and holidays. We are all frustrated by the huge increases in the cost of holiday flights and accommodation during school holidays. At the same time, there is a clear correlation between pupils' attendance and their achievement at school. Term-time absences can be disruptive to a whole class, and create more work for staff. Most importantly it seriously disadvantages pupils who find it difficult if not impossible to catch up work and concepts they have missed.

Parents are often not aware of how absences may coincide with essential course-work, though students themselves are now being made more aware of the importance of full attendance, and are being commended for excellent attendance records. Recent changes at GCSE mean that classroom assessments and examination modules taken throughout Year 10 and Year 11 contribute to final grades.

Refusing parental requests for term-time absences is one of the most difficult parts of a headteacher's job, so Chew Valley's governors discussed the revised policy in detail in committee, and again at a full meeting of the board of governors, to ensure that the finalised policy is one which has our full support.

The law states that parents *do not* have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school and must apply in advance for permission. At Chew Valley, all such requests must be sent to the headteacher, at least two weeks in advance. The Local Authority now has the power to fine parents who take their children out of school without the headteacher's permission.

The governors of Chew Valley School have decided that the headteacher should only authorise an absence in **exceptional circumstances**. For all pupils there is a presumption that applications for leave of absence **will not be authorised**.

We hope that parents will understand the need for clear guidelines on this issue, and will continue to work with the school for the benefit of all our children.

The School Governors
Chew Valley School