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Background

'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (DFE 2022) supports schools, trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance. The document makes it clear improving attendance is everyone's business.

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Why it matters

Schools can expect to be asked by OFSTED for records and information related to attendance. In addition Ofsted will want to see a strong focus on attendance and relevant policies. Effective relationships with families and professional curiosity around absence is critical in safeguarding children. Good communication with families to support those who are nurturing children and young people within a faith tradition whilst supporting their decisions to minimise time off school is considered good practice.

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Other Circumstances where absence might be granted

- Exams
- Bereavement
- Flexi schooling
- T code- travelling for parents work - please see GRT document

Absence Requests



www.slough.gov.uk
Slough
 Borough Council

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Areas to consider

- What is on the school's website to make information clear to parents
- What is communicated to parents around processes and also harder to reach families
- Are processes such as penalty notices included in policies and clear on the school website?
- Who on SLT is responsible for tracking attendance?
- Medical appointments that can not be scheduled outside school hours - Do parents understand they do not need the whole day off?

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Holidays/Leave of Absence

Apart from under exceptional circumstances holidays should not be authorised by the Headteacher. Schools are best placed to know families and make decisions around exceptional circumstance. If leave of absence is granted the Headteacher determines the length of time if any.

Who is responsible?

- The Headteacher is ultimately responsible for making decisions about any absence request made by parents on a case-by-case basis.
- It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to make absence requests in a timely manner
- It is SBCs responsibility to support schools enforce penalty notices

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Religious Observance

Slough is a diverse borough and therefore families in a school may observe different religious days and this includes variation of days within one religion.

Only the day of religious observance/festival set by the religious body to which the the parents of the child are a member can be authorised. This means there **can be more than one R code per year** for different festivals e.g. if both Eids fall on school days.

Absence requests for a school day where the festival falls on the weekend should not be authorised.

Provision in school for prayer or fasting are thoughtful arrangements as this does not require an absence from school.

Dates for key religions can be found here:

<https://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/28480/religious-observance-absence-guidance-2020-2021>

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