

## Department of Children's Services

### Education Safeguarding

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Dear Parent / Carer,

Absence due to unauthorised leave taken during term time is a significant issue for all Bradford schools. Children in Bradford are twice more likely to be absent due to unauthorised leave during term time than the average child in England, with absence due to unauthorised leave during term time representing the third highest reason for absence behind illness and general unauthorised absence. In the 2021-2022 academic year, children missed almost 150,000 days of school in Bradford due to unauthorised leave taken during term time.

Absence due to unauthorised leave during term time covers a variety of reasons for absence, including holidays during term time and travel to other countries to visit family and attend celebrations and events. Currently schools submit data to Bradford Council which results in a penalty notice being issued for each child, and each parent, where unauthorised leave takes place. Despite this, absence due to unauthorised leave during term time continues to take place, with a significant number of families taking more than one period of absence during an academic year, or taking a period of leave of four weeks or more.

A decision has been made by Bradford Council to change their approach to situations where families take two or more periods of unauthorised leave, or one period of four or more weeks of continuous unauthorised leave during term time are taken. In these instances, Bradford Council will utilise the option to start legal proceedings via the magistrates' court, instead of issuing a penalty notice. This means that parents may be liable to receive a significantly higher fine (up to **£2,500 per child, per parent**) if found guilty, as well as receive a criminal record, which may be reportable to employers (for example, via a DBS Check). In rare circumstances, magistrates can consider a custodial sentence for up to 3 months. This change will come into force from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

Kind Regards.



**John Leese**  
Education Safeguarding Service Manager  
Attendance, Prosecutions and Child Licensing  
**City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council**