



**ST. MARGARET'S**  
*Church of England*  
*Primary School*

Crossgate Peth  
Durham City  
DH1 4QB  
Tel: 0191 384 7331  
Fax: 0191 384 1852  
DEE No: 840 3168

*Headteacher:*  
*Mrs. D. Mowbray-Pape B.Ed., M.A.*

July 2013

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **New Regulations for Leave of Absence in Term Time**

The Department for Education has made amendments to the regulations that previously allowed Head Teachers the discretion to grant holidays being taken in term time. The amendments make it clear that from September 2013, Head Teachers may only grant leave of absence, for any reason, in '**very exceptional circumstances**'. The references to, 'family holidays' and also to, 'absence of up to 10 school days', have been removed. Any unauthorised absence will be recorded as such on the school attendance register.

The regulations also stipulate that fixed penalty fines will be issued for, 'persistent unauthorised absences'. These will be £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days and due to equalities legislation will now be issued to all parents who have parental responsibility and who can be traced. This means that both Father and Mother will receive separate fines, and that each parent will incur a fine for each child. (Please note that the proceeds from fixed penalty fines do not go to the school and will be instigated by the Local Authority.)

I appreciate the strength of feeling this information may generate but schools have been told that sanctioning holidays except under, 'very exceptional circumstances', will lead to intense scrutiny by Ofsted and the Local Authority.

We already have information on our school website (under Attendance) about the type of circumstances we may consider appropriate in granting leave of absence and these will continue to be relevant. The information given about factors we consider for 'exceptional extended leave of absence' will now also apply to all requests and **evidence** of the 'very exceptional circumstances' will also need to be supplied.

Any leave of absence request that has already been authorised by school will be granted.

### **Attendance.**

May I also take this opportunity to remind parents that it is expected that pupils will have attendance rates of at least 95% (5% is 10 school days in an academic year). The Education Welfare Officer regularly checks our registers and asks for an explanation of individual pupil rates below this level. Unless there are very exceptional reasons, she will record and follow up any attendance below 90%.