



Ministry  
of Defence

**Directorate Children & Young  
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### **Ministry of Defence (MOD) Advice to Head Teachers Term Time Absence for Service children**

Since September 2013, by law, head teachers are only able to grant requests for leave during term time in “exceptional” circumstances.

Firstly, and most importantly, the MOD recognises that the educational needs of the Service child(ren) affected will always be a critical factor when determining whether term-time absence should be granted. The purpose of this advice note is to give additional guidance from the MOD to head teachers on when the operational needs of the Armed Forces may legitimately prevent Service families from taking leave during school holidays; and also, to explain how head teachers can seek further advice from the MOD when dealing with specific cases.

As well as operational tours overseas or afloat, there are many situations where the unusual and often unpredictable demands of life in the Armed Forces may prevent Service families taking holidays together outside term time. These demands may see Service personnel deployed for lengthy periods of time for training as well as on operational activities, and may also see individuals remaining in their Base location, but with full-time duties preventing them taking leave during normal holiday periods.

As with all children, the decision on whether to authorise term-time holidays for the children of Service personnel sits solely with the head teacher of their school. Separate advice is being provided to Service families explaining how they should present evidence when requesting absence during term-time, and reminding them firmly that the educational needs of their child(ren) will remain of great importance. Advice is also being provided to Unit Commanding Officers and their Welfare staff to ensure support is only given to those legitimate applications made by their personnel.

To assist head teachers in making their decisions on absence applications, Unit Commanding Officers and their Welfare staff will be able to provide advice, verification and endorsement as required. If head teachers are unsure how to make contact with the relevant Armed Forces unit they should contact the MOD's Directorate Children and Young People at [DCYP-DCYP-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DCYP-DCYP-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk).

Directorate Children & Young People

***DCYP Vision: All our children and young people flourish and achieve their full potential***