

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

20 January 2015

Dear Mr Powell

Petition: P-04-576 Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time

I am writing in response to your request for information on how attendance is considered within inspection.

Pupils' attendance is an area that all inspection teams consider. The Welsh Government provides Estyn with data about pupils' attendance through the All Wales Core Data sets. The Welsh Government is responsible for the definitions used for producing this data.

Prior to inspection the lead inspector analyses the attendance data and makes a decision about whether attendance should be a line of inquiry for the inspection team. The data is a starting point for the inspection team and inspectors judge each school on an individual basis, taking into account any contextual factors. However, if a school has been continuously in the lowest 50% of similar schools over the past few years and there is a weak trend of improvement, the team may come to the judgement that attendance is an area requiring significant improvement. If the team judges that attendance requires significant improvement, the overall judgement for wellbeing can be no higher than adequate.

The school's attendance figure is calculated in terms of pupils' actual attendance against possible attendance and is expressed as a percentage. Inspection teams also consider the percentage of attendance that is unauthorised. However, it is the school's overall attendance figure that is the most important. Where schools feel that there are significant factors that affect their overall attendance rate they have opportunities to present this to the inspection team both before and during the

inspection. Currently, headteachers have discretionary powers to authorise holidays, of up to ten school days in term time, in exceptional circumstances. However, many local authorities or regional consortia have instructed schools to record any holiday as unauthorised absence.

Estyn expects schools to be proactive in improving pupils' attendance rates and making parents aware of the importance of good attendance. Poor attendance, for whatever reason, can have a significant impact on pupils' attainment.

I hope this answers your query.

Yours sincerely



Ann Keane
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales