# Parents campaign for reform on school holiday fines amid rising travel costs



Parents in the UK are facing significant financial challenges when seeking to take holidays during school breaks, as recent estimates reveal that package holiday prices can soar by an average of 18% during these periods. Some popular destinations have even seen price increases of up to 28% per person, and in extreme instances, holiday costs can double compared to travel during off-peak times.

In response to the rising costs associated with school holiday travel, a campaign has emerged that aims to change existing laws regarding term-time absence. Currently, parents who take their children on holiday without the school’s consent may face fines imposed by local councils. These fines start at £80 if paid within 21 days and rise to £160 if settled within 28 days, having been increased by the previous Conservative government.

The campaign is spearheaded by parent Natalie Elliot, who has launched a petition on the Parliamentary website. The petition has garnered substantial support, with 73,530 people backing the initiative. In her comments, Elliot urged the government to “allow parents to take their children out of school for up to 10 days fine free.” She emphasised the need for reform, stating that the current policy disproportionately affects families already under financial strain, and suggested that penalising parents for taking holidays does not consider the children's best interests.

Elliot also raised concerns about the impact of existing regulations on children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), highlighting that some children may face discrimination due to the strict leave guidelines, which do not adequately account for their circumstances. She contended that many children with disabilities are protected under the Equality Act and called for urgent legislative reform in this area.

The Department for Education has acknowledged the concerns raised by the petition and expressed sympathy for parents facing attendance challenges. A spokesperson for the department commented that “absence is one of the biggest barriers to success for children and young people,” noting an increase in absence rates following the pandemic. The Department has indicated that a higher rate of absence correlates with lower academic performance; children who attend school regularly are reportedly twice as likely to achieve good GCSEs compared to peers who miss two weeks of school each year. The department stressed that while it understands some parents wish to avoid peak travel periods, the school calendar is designed to provide ample opportunities for holidays outside term-time, and schools have the discretion to schedule term dates to accommodate such needs.

The discussion around term-time holidays reflects broader concerns about family welfare and the increasing financial pressures experienced during school holidays. Parents and campaigners are calling for a reevaluation of policies that they argue do not recognise the complexities of modern family life.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.the-independent.com/travel/news-and-advice/summer-term-school-holidays-flights-air-fares-b2657335.html> - This article discusses the high cost of travel during school holidays and potential solutions, such as staggering holidays and changing flight slot rules, which aligns with the financial challenges faced by parents during these periods.
* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/advice/expensive-family-holiday/> - The article highlights the soaring prices of flights during peak school holiday periods, which supports the claim of significant price increases during these times.
* <https://www.financial-news.co.uk/call-to-address-high-travel-prices-during-school-holidays/> - This piece discusses concerns over high travel costs during school holidays and calls for government intervention, echoing the financial pressures and need for policy reform mentioned in the article.
* <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/your-petition> - Although the specific petition by Natalie Elliot is not directly linked here, the URL is for the UK Parliament's petition site where such initiatives are hosted, supporting the mention of a petition for reforming term-time absence policies.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education> - The Department for Education's official website provides context for their stance on school attendance and policies, which is relevant to the discussion around term-time holidays and their impact on children's education.
* <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> - This URL links to the Equality Act 2010, which is relevant to the concerns raised about children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) facing discrimination due to strict leave guidelines.