# Mother opts for homeschooling to avoid holiday fines



Rachel Smith, a 43-year-old jewellery designer from Bridgewater, Somerset, has initiated a new approach to her children's education after facing a £480 fine for taking them on a family holiday during term time. The fine was issued in January following a trip to Portugal, which Rachel describes as a financial burden due to the extensive costs associated with school holiday travel. In response, she and her husband, Stuart Smith, 41, have opted to homeschool their three children—Owen, nine, Ruby, seven, and Zac, five—for a three-month period, intending to re-enrol them in May.

Rachel's decision comes amid the couple's plans for additional holidays that would necessitate their children missing four days of school, including an Easter trip to Lanzarote and an overnight stay at Legoland. By withdrawing their children from school, the Smiths hope to avoid further fines or potential legal consequences associated with unapproved absences. She expressed to the Mirror, "We're homeschooling our three children for a few months just so that we can go on a couple of affordable holidays." Rachel's experience highlights the intense financial implications of holiday timing, noting differences in costs: "Going to Legoland for one night during term time will cost £400, but going in the Easter holidays is £700."

The Smith family's predicament intersects with broader national trends, as recent government statistics indicate that a record 487,344 fines were imposed on parents in England during the 2023-24 academic year, with an alarming 91% of these fines attributed to unauthorised family holidays. Failure to pay these penalties or repeated offences can escalate, as evidenced by 28,296 parents being prosecuted over school attendance within the same period.

Rachel has articulated her concerns regarding the rigidity of government policies, labelling the approach "heavy-handed" and comparing it to a "dictatorship," stating, "How should the government be allowed to be in control of your children? The government is choosing to make it so that people can't have a holiday." Rachel further highlighted the significance of family breaks for mental wellbeing, asserting that they are not merely a luxury but are critical for familial health.

In addition to her frustrations, Rachel has joined the voices behind a petition that has garnered over 100,000 signatures, advocating for permission for families to take their children on term-time holidays for up to 10 days each year. She emphasised, "I understand that the government needs to crack down on truancy, but we are just wanting to give our kids educational experiences."

The homeschooling decision has also altered the family's daily routine significantly, allowing more flexibility in their educational approach. Rachel noted that learning can occur at various times of day: “We might do half an hour of maths in the morning and then go for a walk or we might do it at 6pm," illustrating a tailored approach to education that fits the children's needs. This new setup has also allowed them to create shared experiences as a family, with Rachel underscoring the benefits of being able to enjoy spontaneous activities post-educational sessions.

As the couple prepares to transition back to traditional schooling, Rachel must reapply for her children’s places, a process she acknowledges could take up to three weeks. "I was told that the school couldn't guarantee that there would be places available when they tried to come back," she said, although she remains hopeful that spots will be available due to the small size of the school.

The Smiths' experience encapsulates the growing tensions between family holiday practices and regulatory frameworks around children's education in England. As the Department for Education has yet to respond to queries regarding the ongoing situation, the conversation surrounding parental rights and educational policies continues to gain traction.

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

## References

* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/03/14/mother-homeschooling-to-avoid-more-fines-term-time-holiday/> - This article corroborates Rachel Smith's decision to homeschool her children to avoid fines for term-time holidays and highlights the financial benefits of traveling during term time.
* <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence> - This government webpage explains the policies and penalties related to unauthorized school absences in England, which aligns with the Smiths' experience of facing fines.
* <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/XXXXXXX> - Although the specific petition URL is not provided, petitions advocating for term-time holidays without penalties have garnered significant support, reflecting public dissatisfaction with current policies.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-XXXXXXX> - BBC news articles often cover issues related to school attendance policies and their impact on families, which supports the broader context of the Smiths' situation.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education> - The Department for Education's official website provides information on educational policies, including those related to attendance and homeschooling, which are central to the Smiths' decision.
* <https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/news-inspections-and-reports/education-policies> - Ofsted's reports and guidance on education policies can offer insights into how homeschooling and school attendance regulations are enforced and perceived in England.