# Parents face fines as holiday prices soar during school breaks



Frustration surrounding inflated holiday prices during school breaks is escalating among parents in the UK, leading to increased instances of children being taken out of school for family vacations during term time. This issue has drawn the attention of Labour's Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, who is now seeking potential solutions in collaboration with Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander. Their focus comes in light of a rise in school absences attributed to disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Phillipson acknowledged the financial strain that families are enduring, asserting the necessity to examine "what the options are" to alleviate the burden of expensive holiday prices during school breaks. She articulated this concern during a conversation with the Mirror, underscoring the significance of family time but also expressing that such holidays should not coincide with term time.

The past year has seen a dramatic increase in fines issued to parents for unauthorised holidays, marking a record-high with 443,000 fines reported. This figure represents an astonishing 53% increase compared to pre-pandemic levels. Fines can start at £80 for an initial offence and escalate for repeat violations, yet some parents find it financially advantageous to weigh the cost of fines against exorbitant holiday prices during the school holidays.

The topic remains contentious, with many parents opting to take their children out of school for more affordable holiday options. Statistics show that approximately 20% of children experience habitual absences from school, which raises questions about whether government intervention is necessary to regulate holiday pricing by travel companies.

Research conducted by Go Compare highlighted the significant price differences for holidays, revealing that a trip to Greece could cost £748 during term time but skyrockets to £1,023 during the school holidays. Similarly, costs for a holiday to Spain increased from £925 to £1,179 during these periods. Reports also pointed out that flight prices from Heathrow to Santiago de Compostela surged from £101 in April to £197 in August, while fares to Paris jumped from £79 to £115 as the summer season wrapped up.

Parents like Rachel Smith, who has chosen to homeschool her children for three months to avoid the legal repercussions of taking holidays during term time, illustrate the lengths to which families are going. Smith faced a fine of £480 earlier this year for a term-time trip to Portugal but highlighted that flights during that period were only £20 per person, a stark contrast to holiday prices.

Another couple, Rebekah Richardson and Dale Wood, incurred a £2,000 fine for a similar decision but stated they had "no regrets," as their trip to Universal Studios in Florida saved them £5,000 in comparison to the prices during the October half-term.

Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the National Education Union, expressed support for Phillipson's initiative to tackle holiday pricing, suggesting that addressing these price hikes could significantly reduce the temptation for families to take children out of school.

In response to the criticisms, the Association of British Travel Agents acknowledged the realities of holiday pricing, attributing higher costs during school breaks to market demands. They emphasised their members' commitment to offering competitive prices and promotions while explaining that holiday pricing is influenced by supply and demand within a global market.

As the debate surrounding holiday pricing continues, discussions about potential regulatory measures for travel companies remain in consideration, with both parents and educational authorities monitoring the situation closely.

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

## References

* <https://www.expatica.com/uk/education/children-education/school-holidays-in-the-uk-214859/> - Corroborates school holiday dates in the UK, which are key to understanding when parents might take their children out for vacations, thus affecting school attendance.
* <https://www.holidayextras.com/uk-short-breaks/uk-school-holidays-2025.html> - Provides additional details on UK school holidays in 2025 across different regions, which supports the concept of peak prices during these periods.
* <https://www.parkdeanresorts.co.uk/offers/school-holidays/> - Highlights the financial impact of school holidays on family vacations, and how resorts offer deals during such times, reflecting the market dynamics that drive pricing.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/sep/13/school-absences-fines-rise-uk-parents-term-time> - Reports on the rise in fines issued to parents for unauthorized term-time holidays, echoing the challenges faced by families and the tension between affordability and attendance.
* <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/labour-plans-tackle-sky-high-28941930> - Details Labour's efforts to address the issue of high holiday prices during school breaks, reflecting the political attention and potential solutions being explored.