



Information for parents and guardians about the rules governing leave of absence from school and time spent abroad

Pupils attending preschool class, primary/secondary school, or special primary/secondary school.

Compulsory school attendance and the right to an education

The general rule is that children who live in Sweden are obliged to attend school between the age of six and the date on which their compulsory primary/secondary school or special primary/secondary school education comes to an end. Compulsory school attendance means that a pupil must take part in the education that is provided. All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to an education. A pupil can attend a school in their home area or in another area. The school can be run by a municipal authority or a private organisation.

- If your child is of compulsory school age, you are responsible as a parent or guardian for ensuring that they attend school.
- The fact that your child has a right to an education means that we have a duty as your local authority to guarantee that a school place is available to them.

Do both parents or guardians need to sign the application?

The National Agency for Education states the following:

The law presumes that the parents or guardians are in agreement, and it does not specify how a situation where they are not in agreement should be handled. The school must decide based on the reason given for taking leave of absence from school. If the parents or guardians are unable to agree on whether their child should be taken out of school, the school must remain neutral. Whilst it is not necessary that both parents or guardians consent to leave being taken, it is important that they both receive the same information from the school.

However, the rule in the municipality of Uddevalla is that when a pupil of compulsory school age is granted leave of absence during the school year, the consent of both parents or guardians is required from day 11 onwards, which is when specific reasons must be given for non-attendance.

Leave

Your child may need to be taken out of school for a variety of reasons. In that case, you must notify the school about why your child needs to take time off in order for the school to decide whether or not their absence should be authorised.

It is stipulated in the Education Act that a pupil may be granted a short period of absence for personal reasons, such as a dental appointment, to celebrate a special family occasion, or for travel purposes. 'Short periods of absence' are limited to 10 days per school year.

If your child has been absent for a total of 10 school days during the school year and you apply for further leave of absence, the Education Act stipulates that special reasons must be given for leave to be authorised. Schools are very restrictive when authorising this type of leave. A family holiday is not a special reason.

Regardless of whether or not a pupil has taken leave of absence previously, an application can be rejected if national examinations are due to take place during the time leave is requested. In that case it would not be appropriate for leave to be granted.

Time spent abroad

Sometimes families travel abroad for an extended period of time. It could be that a child attends school while they are abroad, although it could also be that the parents or guardians simply want to spend an extended period of time outside the country. It should be noted that the municipality of Uddevalla never makes payment (compensatory transfer payment) for pupils who are at school abroad.

As your child is obliged to attend school in Sweden, a great deal of information is required from you to ensure we have a sufficiently strong basis for deciding how the period of time spent abroad will be managed and what decision should be made.

We need documents showing why and for how long you will be abroad, as well as details of where you will be living. If the plan is for your child to attend school while you are abroad, you must submit confirmation from the school in question. If your child will not attend school, you must specify how you intend to satisfy their right to an education.

A decision will then be made based on the information and documents you have provided.

If we have information showing your child will be abroad for a continuous period of more than six months (school time – not including summer holidays and Christmas holidays) their obligation to attend school in Sweden ceases and they will be removed from the school register. On your return, you must apply for a new school place. We cannot guarantee that your child will continue at the same school or in the same class as before.

If the time spent abroad is less than six months, a pupil is still under an obligation to attend school in Sweden. In that case we will decide if the teaching the pupil will receive abroad complies with the authorisation rules.

The following requirements are set out in the Education Act:

- The education provided appears to be a satisfactory alternative to the education the pupil would otherwise receive in Sweden
- The need for insight into the education that is being provided can be satisfied
- There are particular reasons for allowing a pupil to meet their compulsory school attendance obligations in another way

If it is a question of an extended holiday trip, where the pupil will not receive any teaching, the leave of absence rules will apply.

Summary

Children who are registered in Sweden must attend school and they have a right to an education. The school must always take the following aspects into account when deciding whether or not a pupil will be granted leave of absence from school:

- Length of time spent away from school
- The pupil's learning situation
- Available ways to compensate for lost teaching
- How important is it for the pupil to be away from school?

What happens if a pupil is absent without authorisation?

Parents or guardians who fail to ensure their child attends school can be ordered to do so. The order can be combined with a penalty for non-compliance.

If your application has been rejected, and you still take your child out of school, we will as your local authority submit a notification of concern to social services. The reasons for doing so are that as a parent or guardian you would be failing in your duty to ensure your child complies with the school attendance rules and to uphold their right to an education and being absent could have a significant impact on their learning in the future. Their absence will also be noted as unauthorised.