

ABSENCE REGULATIONS



1. Compulsory School Attendance and Holidays

Because it is of the utmost importance that children attend school, attendance is compulsory here in the Netherlands. Agreements have been reached about education in this country.

One of these agreements is that pupils may *not* just stay away from school when they like. Only when there are 'extenuating circumstances' is it possible, sometimes, to make an exception to this rule.

If there are exceptional circumstances of any kind that lead you to think that your child cannot attend school, you must still adhere to the rules and regulations for these circumstances. This folder explains these exceptional and extenuating circumstances and the relevant rules and regulations.

2. Extra leave due to religious duties

When your child has obligations to fulfil that arise from their religion/personal philosophy, they have the right to special leave. The table below shows when and if this applies.

Obligation	no. of days
Chinese	
New Year	1
Hindustani	
Holi	1
Divali	1
Islamic	
Id al-adha	3
Id al-fitr	3
Jewish	
Easter	4
(Shavuot) Festival of Weeks	2
Jewish New Year	2
Day of Atonement	1
Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)	2
Shemini Atzeret (8th day)	1
Simchat Torah (Rejoicing)	1

For Sabbath and other Jewish feast days the rule is, only those days count where one is not permitted to work, carry or write at all.

There will be no dispensation granted (there is no right to it) for cultural gatherings or festivals.

3. Taking holidays during school term

The main rule is: it is not permitted to go on holiday during school term (so, outside of school holidays, it is forbidden). Haarlem is in 'regio noord'. Your child is therefore only free from school during the allocated school holidays for this region.

Deviations to this rule may only occur if your family was/is unable to travel during official school holidays because:

- One or both of the parents/guardians works in the hotel/catering industry or the agricultural sector of the community
- *AND* there is demonstrable proof of extra work needing done during the official summer holiday period. In such a case, the school head may grant your child ten consecutive school days off in one year to allow (the only) family holiday in that school year.

Request Your request must be accompanied by an employer's elucidation, noting the specific problems of summer peak period for your specific occupation.

You must also comply with the following conditions:

- Hand in any written request to the school head at least 8 weeks in advance. This gives time to handle any objections
- The actual holiday period may only encompass 10 consecutive school days and may not be spread over the school year.
- This holiday may not take place in the first two weeks of the school year.

Attention: There will be no dispensation given for mere organisational circumstances at your place of employment such as timetables and rosters in general. There is no such thing as a 'right' to ten days off school, in any shape or form.

The circumstances, once leave is given

If you have been granted extra leave but circumstances dictate that your child can only return later than is planned, it is of the utmost importance that you contact the school head – no longer than 2 days after any hindrance starting. This will help to prevent any possible misunderstandings.

The school head or the school attendance officer could possibly deem the absence as admissible. The request is then settled and the case closed. It could however happen that the absence is deemed inadmissible and in such a case, the school head is duty bound to report it to the relevant party. The school attendance officer will then decide if charges are made. In this case, read part 8.

Justifying absence

To properly judge an absence, the school head (or school attendance officer) requires evidence of said absence. For example, a garage invoice for a broken down car or flight tickets to prove overbooking by an airline.

Unfortunately, it can also occur that your child or other family member takes ill during a holiday, causing your child to return to school later than planned. In cases such as this, it is of the utmost import that you produce a letter from the (foreign) doctor stating the nature of the illness, the duration and the seriousness. This will help to prevent misunderstandings.

4. Leave taken due to 'important circumstances'

'Important' or 'exceptional' circumstances covers those situations that are beyond the control of parents/guardians and/or the child. You can request time off school when this sort of thing applies. Any request must be in writing to the school head - and do supply them with the necessary proofs and written reasons showing why you need it.

You may request time off school under the following circumstances:

- The whole family is moving house: maximum 1 school day.
- Attending the wedding of a blood relative/in-law (to the 3rd degree)
 - In the Netherlands: max. 2 school days
 - Abroad: Europe, max. 5 school days
 - Abroad: outside Europe: max. 10 school days
- Serious illness of a blood relative/in-law (to the 3rd degree) where speed is of the essence and you must immediately depart. There is no fixed maximum period for this. The absence will be discussed and judged in hindsight.
- Death of a blood relative/in-law
 - 1st degree, within NL – max. 4 school days
 - 2nd degree, within NL – max. 2 school days
 - 3rd and 4th degree, within NL – max. 1 school day
 - 1st-4th degree, abroad, within Europe – max. 5 school days
 - 1st-4th degree, abroad, outside Europe – max. 10 school days.
- Celebrating a silver, ruby or golden jubilee (work related) (25, 40, 50 years resp.) and 121/2, 25th, 40th, 50th or 60th wedding anniversary of parents/guardians or grandparents – max. 1 school day.

Explaining degrees of blood relation (or in-law)

(from the child's point of view)

- 1st degree: parent/guardian
- 2nd degree: sister or brother, grandparent
- 3rd degree: uncle or aunt (brother of sister of the parent/guardian), niece or nephew (a brother's/sister's child), great-grandparent
- 4th degree: cousin (parents' brother's/sister's child), great uncle/great aunt (siblings to a grandparent), great, great grandparent

The following circumstance will not be considered important

No importance will be given to the circumstances as listed here and your child has therefore no right to (extra) leave for:

- Family visits/reunions abroad;
- (Great) grandparents' birthdays;
- Meeting (great) grandparents for the first time or after a long period
- Time off school for a child because other children in the family are already, or are still, free;

- A very long absence, such as a world tour or a sabbatical;
- Cheaper tickets at times other than school holidays;
- When offered a paid holiday by any third party during other than official school holidays;
- A holiday you won that is to take place outside official school holidays;
- Leaving early (or later) to avoid the holiday rush;
- There being no other time to book than during school term;
- Problems due to the spread of school holidays in NL (NB: Haarlem is classed as 'regio noord');
- Timetables and rosters at your place of work whether transport company, taxi drivers, police, fire-brigade, etc
- Taking part during school time in trips organised by various sport clubs, music classes or dance schools... etc.
- A combination of all of the above.

These guidelines also apply to those requests for (up to) ten school days off where the school head will give permission (or not).

5. Asking for leave and decisions on same

If you wish to put in a request for extra leave, you will need the special request form. This is available from the school head. Each request for leave is of course different therefore each is judged individually on its merits by the school head or the school attendance officer.

Request for up to 10 days leave from school

Hand in the completed request form to the school head, 8 weeks before the date the leave is to commence. Add any paper evidence to the form that may support your request (something that in some way 'proves' the necessity).

The school head will contact you within 8 weeks of you handing in the request, with their decision. You will receive written confirmation of this decision, for or against.

Request for more than 10 days leave from school

Hand in the completed request form to the school attendance officer, 8 weeks before the date the leave is to commence. You will receive an invitation to discuss and elucidate your request. You will be required to produce evidence of the necessity of the leave requested (something that in some way 'proves' this necessity), so do always take them with you to the interview.

Following upon the interview, the school attendance officer will contact the school head to discuss it with them – this means they will require information from them too – and this information will be taken into account. The school attendance officer will contact you within 8 weeks of you handing in the request, with their decision.

6. Subsequent decisions on (extra) leave taken

There are circumstances that could demand your leaving a.s.a.p., or for instance that your child was unable to return to school on time because of said circumstances.

Such a case could mean that it was impossible for you to request leave in advance. This would then be subsequently decided upon, so 'in hindsight'. It is very important that you provide evidence for the necessity or your sudden departure or later return.

- If your child was absent for up to 10 days, the school head will assess the absence.
- If your child was absent for longer than 10 days, the school attendance officer will assess the absence. The school head or said school attendance officer may decide the following:

- The absence is permissible. In this case, you will receive a letter stating that there will be no further consequences for the extra absence and the case will be closed.
- The absence was not permissible. See part 7.

7. Unlawful absences

If you prevent your child from attending school without prior permission from the school head (or the school attendance officer), this will be classed as an unlawful, school absence. You are in fact breaking the law on school attendance and are punishable by law. The school head must report this to the school attendance officer.

The school attendance officer will invite you to attend a talk and will then decide if charges are to be made. If this is the case, you will be given the opportunity to explain, whereupon the school attendance officer will send the written charge sheet to the relevant public courts. There, they will decide how to proceed and you could be summonsed to appear before the public prosecutor, and/or perhaps fined.