



Education Services

Policy: School Leaving Dates

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1. Introduction	1
2. Leaving Dates.....	1
3. Entry To Employment	1
4. Early Entry To Further Education	2
5. Exemption From School Attendance	2

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 S.33 defines the summer leaving date as the last day of May and the winter leaving date as the first day of the Christmas vacation (see para 2)
- 1.2 S.14 and S.50 of the Act permit the authority to make special arrangements for the education of any pupil, e.g., allowing the pupil to take up a vocational course at college (para 4).
- 1.3 S.34 of the Act permits authorities to exempt fourteen year olds and over from the obligation to attend school in order to help at home (para 5).

2. Leaving Dates

2.1 Summer Leaving Date – 31 May

Pupils who are 16 years of age on or before 30 September in any year can leave school on 31 May of that year.

2.2 Winter Leaving Date – First Day of Christmas Vacation

Pupils who are 16 after 30 September but before the following 1 March can leave school at the Christmas vacation.

3. Entry To Employment

- 3.1 Pupils are free to enter full-time employment at their leaving date.
- 3.2 Under no circumstances can pupils be allowed to leave school to take up employment before their leaving date.
- 3.3 The only circumstances in which pupils may leave school early are given at 4 and 5.
- 3.4 Young people who are legally employed after reaching their school leaving date are covered by industrial injuries legislation. Liability for National Insurance contributions begins at age 16.
- 3.5 Child Benefit is payable until the September following a pupil's school leaving date and will continue to age 19 if he or she continues in full-time education at school or in non-advanced (up to but not including HNC level) further education.

4. Early Entry To Further Education

- 4.1 A special arrangement which the Authority can make to provide education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of a pupil, is to allow him or her to withdraw from school in order to attend a full-time course at a college of further education.
- 4.2 Each case must be considered in terms of the educational needs of the pupil who will normally have completed 4 years of secondary education.
- 4.3 The Head Teacher should ensure that prior, written agreement for the arrangement is reached with the pupil's parent and college management.
- 4.4 Pupils and their parents must be made aware that, in acceding to a request for early release from school attendance, the Authority will not normally assist with any of the costs of attendance at college.
- 4.5 Costs of West Lothian College bus travel are met by the Council's Strategic Services by arrangement with the College. Oatridge College bus travel is free. No other travel costs to any college will be met by the Council.
- 4.6 Education Welfare will, on authorisation from the Head Teacher, issue to the parent on behalf of the Authority, written permission for the student to continue in full-time further education until his or her school leaving date.

5. Exemption From School Attendance

- 5.1 Authorities have discretion to grant exemption from school attendance to a child over 14 years of age for the specific purpose of allowing the child to give assistance at home if exceptional hardship is proved.
- 5.2 Requests from parents for exemption of pupils over 14 should be referred to Education Welfare for investigation and subsequent report to the Area Attendance Advisory Group (AAAG), which is responsible for making decisions.
- 5.3 The period of any exemption will be determined by the AAAG in light of the circumstances of the request but cannot extend beyond the commencement of the following school session. The AAAG may renew the exemption after full consideration of the circumstances.