

School holidays and parent power

The Supreme Court upheld the law which states parents must send their children to school during term time unless they are ill or are being home educated to an agreed standard and programme.

Some think this is an unreasonable interference with parents who may have other ways to bring up their children. They believe children can learn outside school as well as in, and think that sometimes a child could benefit from travel during term time.

Others, including the Supreme Court, think children are best advised to follow the full courses offered by their schools. Missing a week or two in a busy term would mean the child has to catch up somehow on the lessons and exercises missed. Teachers do not welcome having to make special provision for children who missed the first explanation and the work on the new topics introduced when they were away. Of course they need to help children who have been off sick for a time period to catch up, but they usually do not want to increase the numbers and incidence of this remedial task. They point out that schools offer quite long holidays allowing families time off with their children.

The father who brought the case now says he has the money to send his child to a fee paying school, where he thinks he could get a better agreement with the Head teacher. He says he is bringing the case for all those who cannot afford this option. It is true that limiting families to travel in school holidays allows travel companies to charge more for these peak periods. In the case of the summer holiday in the UK the school time off also coincides with the better weather which would attract premium prices anyway.

Parliament intended the law to require parents to send their children to school in term time. The Court has upheld the will of Parliament. Do any of you think that wrong?