**Why I'm taking my child out of school for a holiday**

This half-term, my family and I are leaving the country for a much-needed break. To save around £800, I will be taking my child out of school before the term officially ends. I have not sought permission from the head teacher. Nor will I. In the light of the recent case of the [Sutherlands in Milton Keynes](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jan/16/parents-fined-taking-children-school-holiday-inflexible-rules), what would once have seemed a perfectly reasonable request has taken on a politicised significance, forcing me into the inconsiderate-parent-more-interested-in-a-sunny-holiday-than-my-child's-education camp. But that is to simplify a hugely complicated set of issues about what education should consist of, the role of the state in dictating family activities and the value of travel (abroad or at home).

Firstly, I genuinely don't feel my child (aged 4) will be disadvantaged by one or two days out of school. Second, and controversially, I don't feel the school will be disadvantaged either. I know how the argument goes – if everyone behaved like me we'd be in a sorry state with half-empty classrooms. But, really, would we? Aren't those who shout the loudest about the need for attendance the ones who are rich enough for term-time holidays never to be an issue?

I do feel guilty, but only for families who don't have the same financial resources as we do, so can't have a holiday at all, term time or not. I can't imagine any teacher devaluing the chance to learn a few words of a foreign language in situ, to see geology in action by playing on black sand, or start to understand basic engineering principles by looking at how planes fly. For us, the physical, intellectual and social advantages of travel would not be financially possible if we waited until the school holidays. Of course, I agree that attendance (most of the time) is vital but so is family harmony, unfrazzled parents, time to read or explore the world without the pressures of day-to-day life. Until travel companies offer more reasonable prices during school holidays, families like mine will continue to take their children out of school. Perhaps we should go easy on parents who value spending time with their children in a new and stimulating environment over Ofsted attendance targets.
**Anonymous**

**Why I'll never take my children out of school for a holiday**

As chief holiday-planner in our household of six, I could be a lot richer – and/or my children could have seen a lot more of the world – if I'd fished them out of school, or even just shaved a few days off the beginning or end of term here and there. Instead, over the last 16 years while we've had school-age kids, we've kept our holidays religiously within the vacation dates: and as my youngest child is still only 11, we've got another seven years of the same ahead.

It's irksome, because there are huge financial savings to be made. Also, who wants to be on the beach in August, when it's packed and baking hot, when June and September (which is when my husband and I always holidayed in those dim and distant days before our eldest was born) are so less crowded, and the temperature more agreeable?

So why not just flout the system? Well, it all comes down to respect. Like all parents, I have occasional issues with aspects of my children's education: but on the whole, I aim to support the primary and comprehensive schools where they are, and have been, pupils. And part of the way I show my respect and support is by following the rules: and rule number one is, make sure your child is in school when he or she should be there.

So many parents seem not to realise that the reason their kids don't work hard, or play truant, or get into trouble with their teachers, is connected to the fact that they have an a la carte attitude to rules themselves. If you want your child to stick two fingers up at their teachers, to think education doesn't matter, or to skimp on revising for an exam, then go ahead and take them out of school so you can jet off on an exciting holiday for a fortnight. What you are role-modelling by your behaviour is your belief that rules are for other people, not for you; and your kids will pick up on that very, very quickly.

And here's another thing. My eldest, post-uni, is currently saving up to go to Asia on a gap year. Because travel is for life; but school is only for childhood, and as holiday-loving parents we need to remember that.
**Joanna Moorhead**