

From: Air Commodore Dawn McCafferty RAFR  
Commandant Air Cadets



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Dear Headteacher,

#### **Pupil Request to Attend Air Cadet Activities**

I am writing this letter to accompany a request by one of your pupils for time away from school to attend Air Cadet Activities. I thought it would be helpful to provide you with a little background on our organisation and an explanation of why this experience will be of real benefit. I should make it clear up front that **time away from school for Air Cadet activity is not considered to be holiday or leave of absence from school by the Department for Education**. I feel it is necessary to clarify this point in light of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 which came into force on 01 September 2013.

*"The Department for Education do not view structured Air Cadet training activities either as holidays or as leave of absence from school. They should be considered by schools as approved educational activity off-site, or as educational visits or trips (Code B or Code V), just as a school would do for Duke of Edinburgh expeditions or outward bound residential courses. It is of course for Air Cadet units to convince schools of the educational merit but they should be absolutely clear that these are not holidays, so the exceptional circumstances consideration should not even come into question."*

(Independent Education and School Governance Division, Department for Education (DfE))

#### **Who Are The Air Cadets?**

The Air Cadet Organisation is the largest aviation-focussed uniformed youth organisation in the UK, comprising over 34,000 community-based cadets and over 9,000 cadets in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), supported by over 10,000 adult volunteers.



The mission of the Air Cadet Organisation is:

*To be a modern, dynamic, sustainable air-minded youth organisation of choice that offers fun and challenging opportunities to young people and adult volunteers alike and develops citizens with valuable skills for the future.*

### **What Will Your Pupil Be Doing?**

To be taking part in one of our activities your pupil will already be a member of the RAF Air Cadets, either attending one of our 900+ local units nationwide or parading as part of their school curriculum with the CCF. Our core activities cover air experience flying, gliding and aviation studies and we also provide many other training activities from sports to music, and camps to community volunteering.

All of our training courses are designed to stretch and develop our young people and provide them with new life skills. They are carried out by highly qualified instructors who are either employees of the Ministry of Defence or volunteers. The courses will invariably lead to useful additional internal and external qualifications for the Cadets. External qualifications include first aid, D of E and BTECs in aviation studies, public services and music.

### **Why Is The Activity In Term Time?**

We run our training courses throughout the year so that we can offer the experience to as many young people as possible. Inevitably this means that some of our activities are in term time. The importance of students keeping up to date with their studies is therefore always reinforced and indeed, where appropriate, time is provided to complete home work.

I do recognise that your curriculum will be packed and there is pressure on you and your staff to deliver results. Time spent with us is however not a holiday. For many this will be a life changing learning experience that can complement school activity and offer valuable skills, such as an understanding of citizenship and community values.

*“Schools with cadet units often tell us that the cadet experience is one of the most valuable extracurricular activities their young people enjoy. Around 140,000 young people across the country belong to a cadet force, but the Government’s Positive for Youth strategy highlighted its ambition for more opportunities for young people, from a wide range of backgrounds, to benefit from the cadet experience.”*

(Anne Jackson, Director System Reform Group, DfE, in a 2013 letter to schools with cadet units)

I do hope you will be able to grant the time away from school that is being requested by your pupil in order that he/she can take part in the chosen Air Cadet activity. You will find further information on the Air Cadets on our website ([www.aircadets.org](http://www.aircadets.org)) but if you have any further queries please contact the local Air Cadet Unit referenced on the accompanying letter in the first instance or me if this isn't clear, and we will be more than happy to assist.

Yours sincerely

**Dawn McCafferty**

Air Commodore  
Commandant Air Cadet Organisation

