

London parents most likely to lie to take children on holiday during term

Anthony Baxter and Anna Davis

PARENTS in London are more likely to lie about taking their children out of school during term-time than those elsewhere in the country, a study has revealed.

The survey found 62 per cent of Londoners had lied about why their child was absent from school compared with 50 per cent nationally.

Parents who pull their children out of school during term-time to take them on holiday risk a fine of up to £2,500 and a jail sentence of up to three months.

But the rising cost of summer breaks during the peak season means some parents are risking breaking the law to ensure their children get a holiday.

More than 70 per cent of parents surveyed by Travel Zoo said it was "deeply" unfair that parents with children at private schools were not sub-

LONDON LIVE Not The One Show 7pm today
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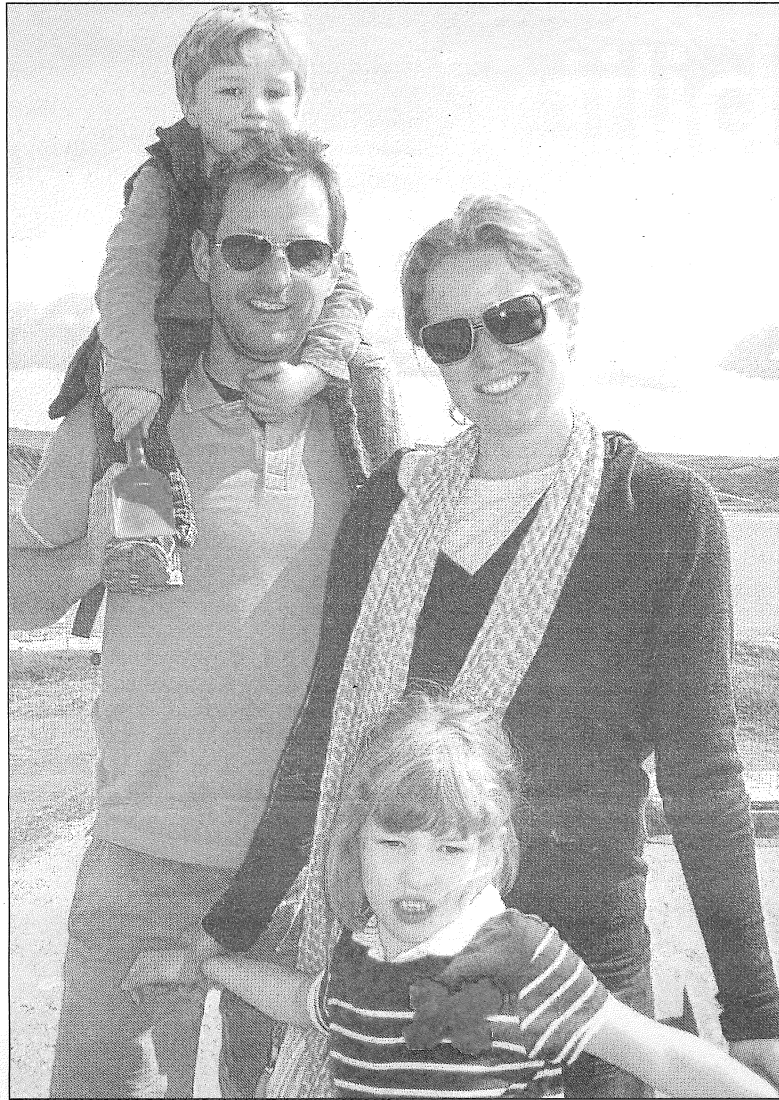
ject to the same government fines. The capital's highest earners are the most comfortable with lying to their child's school, the survey found – 76 per cent earning more than £65,000 a year have lied about their children's absence.

Those on lower incomes in the capital are also more likely to take their children out of school during term-time than those outside London.

About 64 per cent of Londoners who earn less than £15,000 said they would do so, compared with 53 per cent elsewhere in the UK.

The survey found the main reason for parents lying to schools was to avoid an awkward situation or confrontation. Other research has shown that, on average, families save £646 by taking a term-time foreign holiday.

The latest study comes after the chief



'I risked a fine to go on a break... this blanket ban treats us like we're kids'

A MOTHER who risked a fine for taking her children out of school for a holiday said the new rules meant parents were being treated like children.

Louise Hodges requested permission to keep Grace, eight, and Ben, six, out of school for two days after an Easter break in Mexico. When both their schools rejected her request she went ahead anyway, risking a £240 fine.

Mrs Hodges, who lives in Reigate, Surrey and works in central London, said: "A lot of parents have concealed reasons for absence to avoid an awkward conversation and a fine."

"As a parent it isn't a great lesson to

encourage your child to lie... I would feel embarrassed being caught out."

She said she had considered whether missing a day would affect their academic performance and decided "it was not going to have any impact".

Mrs Hodges wants the law fining parents for taking children out of school for holidays to be axed. She said: "Before, the school had the power to decide. They knew the child and the child's levels of attendance. Now it is a blanket ban. This is treating all parents like we are children and we don't know what's best for our own children."

Anna Dubuis

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constable of Humberside Police wrote to schools asking for children of officers to be given holiday leave during term-time. Headteachers are allowed to grant absence during school time only

in "exceptional circumstances". But the chief constable, Justine Curran, said the force had to restrict leave during summer and Christmas for operational reason.

'1,000 boys at illegal schools'

Miranda Bryant

UP TO 1,000 boys from north London are reportedly missing from the school system because their parents have sent them to illegal religious schools.

Government documents obtained by Channel 4's Dispatches and the Jewish Chronicle state that the schools, where English is not spoken, are operating "without the most basic health, safety and child welfare checks".

The documents claim that many boys in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Stamford Hill "will stop secular studies at the age of 13 or 14 and start attending 'yeshivas' where the curriculum is solely religious".

The Department for Education said it was "a long-standing issue" and some progress had been made to ensure the schools can be registered.

Faith Schools Undercover: No Clapping in Class is on Channel 4 at 8pm today.

From Hackney to Cambridge

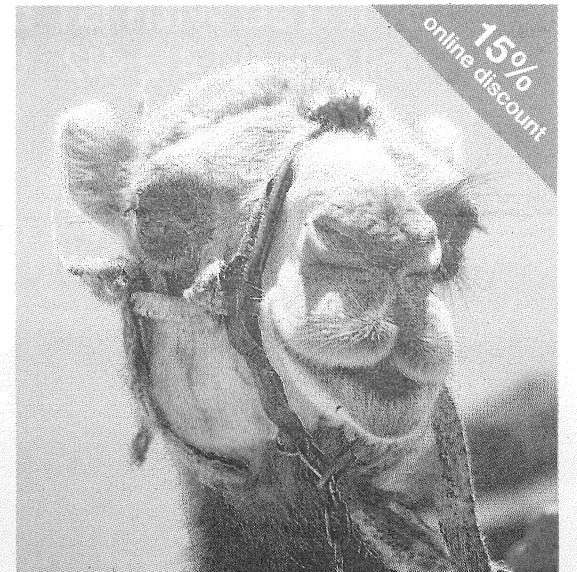
Kiran Randhawa

A STUDENT from a London school once regarded as the worst in England has received a prestigious award from his Cambridge college, and is on track to fulfil his dream of becoming a surgeon.

Michael Ha grew up on a Hackney estate with his parents, who were on benefits for much of his childhood, and four other siblings.

The 21-year-old was among the first students from Mossbourne Academy, which replaced failing Hackney Downs school, to take A-levels and go on to higher education.

He studied medicine at St John's College and has been presented with a Larmor Award, named after physicist Sir Joseph Larmor, which is given to high students who make an outstanding contribution.



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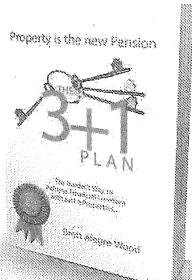
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