

The Law

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special needs. Most parents fulfill this obligation by registering their child in a school.

Should it be considered that as a parent you are unwilling or unable to ensure your child attends school regularly without good reason you could be:

- subject to a Penalty Notice fine;
- prosecuted in a Magistrates Court and fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisoned for up to 3 months;
- made the subject of a Parenting Order;

Your child may be made the subject of an Education Supervision Order in the Family Court

Should you wish to talk directly to an Education Welfare Officer please contact your school/college or District Team.

Compulsory school age:

From: 1 September, 1 January, 1 April following the child's fifth birthday

To: the last Friday in June in the school year in which the child is sixteen
(1 September to 31 August)

If you would like a copy of this leaflet on audio cassette or in Braille or other languages please contact your locality team

Is Your Child at School Today?



School Attendance

Information for Parents/Carers

September
2017

Introduction

Receiving a good full-time education will give your child the best possible start in life. Attending school regularly and punctually is essential if children are to make the most of the opportunities available to them.

Government research suggests that 17 missed school days a year = 1 GCSE grade DROP in achievement.

What you can do to help

- Make sure your child arrives at school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption. If your child arrives after the register has closed without a good reason, this will be recorded as an 'unauthorised' absence for that session.
- If your child has to miss school it is vital that you let the school know why, preferably on the first morning of the absence. (Your child's school will have an attendance policy explaining how this should be done).
- If you know or think that your child is having difficulties attending school you should contact the school. It is better to do this sooner rather than later, as most problems can be dealt with very quickly.

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Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

If your child is absent and school either does not receive an explanation from you, or considers the explanation unsatisfactory, it will record your child's absence as 'unauthorised', that is, as truancy.

Most absences for acceptable reasons will be authorised by your child's school:

- Sickness;
- Unavoidable medical or dental appointments (if possible, arrange these for after school or during school holidays);
- Days of religious observance;

Leave of Absence

Recent Government Guidance has removed the discretion on head teachers agreeing to term time holiday requests. Due to the disruptive effect on a child's education, you are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term-time. Parents do not have any right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term-time holiday.

Any leave of absence requests will be considered by the school in **exceptional circumstances** and will look at each request individually.

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What constitutes as exceptional circumstances has not been dictated by the Government. Individual head teachers will be making the final decision on whether to authorise the leave of absence or not.

Any unauthorised leave of absence could result in a Penalty Notice fine being issued. This is £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days. Non-payment of this fine may result in prosecution in the Magistrates Courts, without further warning being issued.

Education Welfare

Please note that not all Cambridgeshire Academies use a Local Authority Education Welfare Officer and will have their own arrangements to manage poor attendance.

If your child's attendance is unsatisfactory and not improving despite support from the school, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority. You may be invited to attend a PACE meeting (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) or may proceed straight to Penalty Notice fine or prosecution.

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