

## AVOIDABLE ABSENCE IN TERM-TIME

### Facts about irregular school attendance

#### Regular absences from school can affect:

- Attainment levels - the quality of school work, qualifications gained
- School routine - disrupting your child's learning and that of the other pupils
- The chances of children and young people being involved in anti-social behaviour a child or young person's general wellbeing and long term life opportunities
- improving regular attendance at school is therefore a key priority, both locally and nationally
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#### What does the law say about non-attendance?

- Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents or carers may be taken to court and prosecuted if their child does not attend school regularly and their absences are unauthorised (or in other words, the school cannot or has not given permission for them to be off school)
- In 2003, the Anti-Social Behaviour Act provided an alternative means of tackling non-attendance in schools. Under Section 23 of the Act, Local Education Authorities and other designated bodies were given the powers to issue Penalty Notices to parents or carers who are considered capable of, but unwilling to work towards improving their child's attendance.
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#### Before Penalty Notes are issued: the work of the Education Welfare Service and issuing of warnings

- Each primary and secondary school in Cheshire West and Chester Council has an Education Welfare Officer who works with school staff, children and young people and their parents and carers to improve and maintain regular school attendance and offer advice and support around issues such as bullying etc
- Education Welfare Officers will do their best to help you and your child to improve their attendance prior to taking any formal action
- Before Penalty Notices are issued, you will receive a written warning which will explain the extent of your child's non-attendance and the possibility of you receiving a Penalty Notice if their attendance does not improve in 15 days. During this period, your child must not have any further unauthorised absences from school
- There is no limit to the number of times a formal warning of a possible Penalty Notice issue may be made in any particular case
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#### Taking your children out of school may affect their education, for example:

- They may find it difficult to catch up on work they've missed - for example, if they need to complete any GCSE coursework or if they're due to take any exams or tests (SATs etc)
- Sometimes, if children already struggle with subjects such as Maths or English, they may find it even more difficult after they come back from holiday
- Young children may find it difficult to get back into their friendships groups after a break
- Missing time during the first year at a new school or the beginning of a term can lead to problems, for example, knowing what to bring to lessons, timetable mix-ups, making new friends etc