

## Improving Attendance = Improving Outcomes

Cheshire East is committed to providing all children with the best start in life and works hard to ensure that all children in Cheshire East attend school regularly.

Reducing absence from school is a key priority both for Cheshire East and the Government. The majority of parents in Cheshire East ensure that their children attend school regularly.



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### Contact us



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<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/school-attendance>



Our Attendance and Prosecution Team act on behalf of the council in enforcing a parent's duty to ensure regular school attendance.

Officers work closely with schools and families to resolve issues of poor attendance. They support children and families when pupils are experiencing difficulties in school or issues are disrupting a child's education.

The service also provides support and advice to schools in developing strategies to improve pupil attendance.



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# NOTICE TO IMPROVE AND PENALTY NOTICES

Information for Parents and Carers



## WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY ABOUT POOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?



Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers may be 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).

Cheshire East has the power to issue Penalty Notices as an alternative to taking legal action. Penalty Notices are issued to parents/carers who are considered capable of, but unwilling to work towards improving their child's attendance.

## WHEN WILL A PENALTY NOTICE BE ISSUED?



Cheshire East will always try to work with schools, parents/carers and pupils to improve pupil attendance, but will issue Penalty Notices where a pupil has missed 10 or more sessions (5 or more school days) due to unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-week period.

## WHAT IS A NOTICE TO IMPROVE?



Before a Penalty Notice is issued, you will receive a Notice to Improve letter which will explain the extent of your child's non-attendance and the possibility of you receiving a Penalty Notice. You may receive more than one Notice to Improve and Penalty Notice if you have more than one child with poor attendance.

During this period, your child must not have any further unauthorised absences from school or a Penalty Notice will be issued.

There is no limit to the number of times a Notice to Improve can be issued.

## WHAT IS A PENALTY NOTICE?



A Penalty Notice is a fine issued to parents/carers and is set at £160 per parent/carer, if payment is made within 28 days, and reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. If a second Penalty Notice is issued within a 3 year rolling period it is set at £160 with no option for a reduced early payment.

Penalty Notices are issued by first class post to your home and will explain how to make your payment.

**YOU MUST** pay the whole of the amount owing in one payment – you cannot pay in installments or just pay part.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T PAY?



If you don't pay the penalty in full within 28 days of issue, Cheshire East Council is required to start legal proceedings against you for the original offence of failing to ensure your child attends school regularly. This may lead to a fine of up to £1000 or legal proceedings under Section 444 (1a) can include a fine of up to £2500.

Payment of the Penalty Notice means that you can no longer be prosecuted for the period of time covered by the Penalty Notice. However, Cheshire East Council will consider prosecuting you should further unauthorised absences occur.

## I'VE RECEIVED A NOTICE TO IMPROVE AND I WANT TO AVOID A PENALTY NOTICE – what do I do?

- Make sure your child goes to school each day and arrives on time;
- If your child is ill contact the school on the first day of absence and explain the circumstances;
- If your child is away for other reasons let the school staff know, especially if you know in advance;
- Do not take holidays or leave in term time;
- Talk to your child's school about any problems with your child's attendance.

## WHY IS ATTENDANCE SO IMPORTANT?

Missing school has a huge impact on how well a pupil gets on at school. The more school a child misses, the harder it is for them to get into a routine of attending regularly and catch up on the work they have missed. Missing school can also leave a child more open to becoming involved in crime, either as an offender or as a victim.

Research also shows that a year 11 pupil who has missed 17 days during the school year will get one grade less than they would have achieved had they attended regularly. A few days of absence now could have a huge impact on a child's further opportunities.

**MOMENTS  
MATTER,  
ATTENDANCE  
COUNTS.**