|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Attendance & Children Out of school Team**  Delamere House  Floor 5  CW1 2BL |
| DATE: 05/10/2023  Dear Parent,  My name is Anna Rutter and I work for Cheshire East Borough Council in the Attendance and Children Out of School Team. I have over 20 years’ experience working with children and families and have a real passion for making a difference and helping children reach their true potential.  I am working alongside St John The Evangelist Primary to help remove barriers to school attendance and find ways to ensure every pupil accesses a full-time education. I will be in the school and the surrounding community doing home visits and meeting with pupils and their families where school attendance is a worry. Our aim is to ensure that you and your child(ren) have the right support and to support the school in following national guidance from the Department for Education.  As part of my work with school we will be looking at every child’s school attendance and I may contact you to discuss this. For example:  \*I may contact you if your child(ren) is late for school on more than one occasion. Or speak to you if you arrive late at the school gate.  \*I may contact you if your child has unauthorised absences as no acceptable reason for an absence has been communicated to school. Or if you have made a request for a holiday in term time which the school cannot authorise.  \*I may contact you if your child has been off school due to illness on more than one occasion.  Please be reassured that my and the school’s aim is to explore the reasons for any absences, see if you or your child needs any additional support and to work with you so that your child(ren) maintain positive school attendance.  My team within the Local Authority is the team that issue Penalty Notices for irregular school attendance and for unauthorised leave in term time. Below is a little more information about this. Again please be assured we wish to avoid having to ever issue a Penalty Notice and will work with you to avoid this.  Holiday’s during term time  The Department for Education only allows schools to authorise a leave of absence in ‘exceptional’ circumstances. Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking  permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is unavoidable. An application for leave of absence should not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstance of the case which justify the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher’s discretion. A school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence should not be granted.  The following are not usually accepted as exceptional circumstances:  \*Cheaper holidays  \*Restrictions by employers on when annual leave can be taken  \*Someone booked the wrong date  \*Differences in dates of school holidays at different schools  \*Parents birthdays    If a child is absent from school for a leave of absence which school are unable to authorise, the school is required to request that the Local Authority consider issuing a Penalty Notice. This is done if there are 5 days (10 school sessions) of unauthorised leave. Please note that this does not have to be all taken together. The table below shows the financial cost of a Penalty Notice:   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | PENALTIES FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE | | | | TIMELINE | ONE CHILD | TWO CHILDREN | | Paid within 21 days | £60 per parent/guardian | £60 per child = £120 per parent | | After 21 days and before 28 days | £120 per parent/guardian | £120 per child = £240 per parent | | After 28 days | You will receive a summons to appear in the Magistrates’ Court on the grounds that you have failed to secure you child’s regular attendance. | You will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates’ Court on the grounds that you have failed to secure your children’s regular attendance. |   Irregular school attendance  It is a parent/guardian’s legal duty (under section 7 of the Education Act 1996) to ensure that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly and on time. Parents/Guardians are also expected to communicate with school on every day of absence and explain the reasons for the absence. A school attendance register is a legal document and must be kept as accurately as possible. Therefore for example, a school requires a description of the nature of any illness rather than ‘unwell’ or ‘ill’.  When an acceptable reason for an absence has not been received by school, the child’s absence cannot be authorised, and school will enter an ‘O’ code (absent without authorisation) in the attendance register.  All pupils are expected into school by *8.45am* when the register opens and learning starts, otherwise they will receive a Late mark. If they arrive after the register has closed *9.15am* this will result in an unauthorised absence and the register will be marked with a ‘U’ code.  If a pupil has 10 unauthorised sessions (U code, O code or G code) within 2 half terms, school can apply to the Local Authority to issue you with a Penalty Notice warning period, which could result in each parent receiving a fine as per the table above. However, before this is considered you will receive a letter from school and either myself or a member of school staff will speak to you about the concerns.  I and the school want to offer support to you and address worries and concerns as early as possible so that your child(ren) has/have a positive experience at school and attend regularly so that they can achieve their full potential.  Kind regards  Anna Rutter  Education Family Support Worker  Attendance and Children Out of School | |