

to meet with you and your child at home or at school to discuss these difficulties. The Education Welfare Officer will then work with you to improve the situation.

Should you wish to talk to an Education Welfare Officer or if you would like further information on the work of the EWOs please contact your local school/college.

## THE LAW

Cambridgeshire County Council must, by law, ensure that every child of compulsory school age\* is provided with an education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special needs which he/she may have. Parents must either register their child at a school or make alternative arrangements approved by the Local Education Authority.

Should you fail to register your child at a school and not make suitable alternative arrangements to educate him/her, the Local Education Authority may issue a School Attendance Order requiring you to register your child at a named school.

Should your child not attend school regularly and you do not provide the school or the Education Welfare Officer with an acceptable explanation, you could be subject to a fixed penalty fine of £50 or you could be prosecuted in a Magistrates Court and fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisoned for up to 3 months. A Court may also consider making you the subject of a Parenting Order.

The Local Education Authority may also apply for an Education Supervision Order in the Family Proceedings Court where you and your child will be directed to co-operate with Local Education Authority plans to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

\*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 (September 1 to August 31).

# SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

## Information for Parents/Carers

January 2008

If you would like a copy of this leaflet on audio cassette or in Braille or other languages please contact your local Education Welfare Officer.

## 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 educational opportunities available to them. The law says that parents must ensure that their child regularly attends the school where he/she is registered.

This leaflet aims to explain some of the issues regarding school attendance and to inform you as a parent of your responsibilities and legal obligations.

## REGULAR ATTENDANCE

### Lateness

It is important that children arrive 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.

### Absence

If your child has to miss school it is vital that you let the school know why, preferably on the first morning of any absence. You must either explain all of your child's absences in writing, by telephone or by going to the school yourself. (Your child's school will have an attendance policy explaining how this should be done.)

If your child's school does not receive an explanation from you, it will record your child's absence as 'unauthorised', that is, as truancy. Absences may also be recorded as 'unauthorised' if it is considered that the explanation you have provided is unsatisfactory.

Most absences for acceptable reasons such as the following will generally be authorised by your child's school:

- Sickness;
- Unavoidable medical or dental appointments (you should try, if possible, to arrange these for after school or during school holidays);
- Days of religious observance;
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement;
- An interview with a prospective employer or college.

Your child's school will not generally authorise absence for the following reasons:

- Shopping during school hours;
- Day trips;
- Holidays which have not been agreed;
- Birthdays;
- Looking after brothers or sisters.

If you think that your child is going to be absent it is always helpful to contact the school in advance.

## HOLIDAYS DURING TERM-TIME AND EXTENDED VISITS OVERSEAS

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, and schools will not as a rule authorise leave for such holidays, although they do have the discretion in certain circumstances to authorise up to 10 days leave.

Schools will only authorise leave for term-time holidays in exceptional circumstances. Schools will

not generally authorise leave simply because a holiday booked in term time is cheaper. Schools will look at each request individually and it is extremely unlikely that leave will be authorised if a child's attendance for the previous year is less than 95%. Nor will schools authorise leave near or during exam or test times, if it coincides with the start of the school year or if the school otherwise believes that it may have a harmful effect on the child's education.

Very occasionally holidays of more than two weeks to visit family living overseas may be unavoidable. Parents should then discuss with the child's school the most appropriate time of year and point in the child's education for this visit to take place. This will help minimise disruption to the child's progress at school.

## WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP

If you know or think that your child is having difficulties attending school you should contact the school. The staff will do their best to help you. It is better to do this sooner rather than later, as most problems can be dealt with very quickly.

If the problems continue, either you or the school can ask for help from an Education Welfare Officer.

## EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICERS

Education Welfare Officers act on behalf the County Council which has a legal responsibility to monitor school attendance. Each school in Cambridgeshire has an Education Welfare Officer.

If your child is experiencing any attendance difficulties the Education Welfare Officer may write to you or ask