

EMMANUEL COLLEGE

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2020-2021



Introduction

At Emmanuel College, students should aim to be in College 100% of the time. There is a clear link between attendance and academic attainment. Research, released by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2016, showed that 'overall absence had a negative link to attainment, with every extra day missed associated with a lower chance of achieving 5 or more good GCSEs' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/just-one-day-off-can-hamper-childrens-life-chances>).

The recent school closure as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that not all children have been expected to attend school, however, from the start of the autumn term 2020 student attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- A parent's duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- The school's responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- The ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct¹

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so is an offence punishable by law.

It is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that all parents fulfil this responsibility. The local authority has the authority to issue penalty notices and to seek prosecution through the Magistrates Court where parents fail to fulfil this obligation.

Emmanuel College has both a legal right and a responsibility to ensure that students have excellent attendance and that absence is only approved in exceptional and unavoidable cases, as set out in guidance provided by the government. For this reason, the College parental agreement, which parents sign when their child joins Emmanuel, states:

Attendance is expected at every session of the College year except in the case of illness or when an absence has been authorised by the Principal. Our families must not miss College in order to take holidays. Our families therefore agree not to take holidays in term time in line with statutory guidance. College events such as the Carol Service, Sports Day and Summer Presentation Evening are part of the College year and attendance at these events is compulsory. Persistent absence (less than 90%) apart from medical grounds will result in substantial intervention by the College and may lead to legal action.

Categorisation of absence

(a) Categorisation of absence

Any student who is on roll but is not present in College must be recorded within one of these categories.

- **Unauthorised Absence** (No reason provided or absence deemed invalid) – this includes arriving in College late after registers have closed
- **Authorised Absence** (Absence deemed valid, such as illness)

- **Approved Educational Activity** (supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with College approval.)
This includes:
 - Work experience placements
 - Field trips and educational visits
 - Sporting activities
 - Other education activity authorised by the Principal

(b) **Absence to celebrate or commemorate a religious holiday or festival**

A letter requesting time off must be submitted to the Principal at least two days before the requested dates. The Principal has the final decision as to whether this absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. If the student is absent and submits the letter after the event, or if the student does not attend College despite the absence being unauthorised, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised or as parentally condoned truancy.

(c) **Truancy**

Truancy is an unauthorised absence from a particular class or for the entire College day. These absences do not have formal approval and are against the law.

Lesson specific truancy

If a student is found to be truanting from a lesson but is still on the College premises, he/she will be referred to the Head of School or a relevant Pastoral Lead. The reasons for truancy will be investigated by pastoral staff and appropriate follow up action taken.

Whole day truancy

If a student is found to be truanting from College, the student will be expected to make up the day that was missed by attending College for a day during the holidays. In certain cases, particularly when a student is already an attendance concern, this may lead to an immediate referral to the Legal Intervention Team (LIT). This may also be the case for unauthorised absences, such as holidays taken during term time.

(d) **Absence that is in relation to Covid-19**

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice relating to Covid-19, a new category of non-attendance has been introduced. This ensures that absences which fall into one of the categories below will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes and will, therefore, not affect a student's attendance record for the academic year 2020-21.

The following are examples in which 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' could apply:

- ***Students who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)***
 - If a student has symptoms of Covid-19 their parent/carer should inform the College by calling reception, the student should self-isolate and get a test.
 - If a student tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school.
 - If the student remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), their parent/carer should inform College of the reason for absence and this will then be categorised as absence due to illness.
 - If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone.
 - If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test.
 - If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school.

- If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue to self-isolate for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms.

Please note that in all cases of self-isolation, we ask parents/carers to inform us immediately about the outcome of a test. Schools should not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

- ***Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)***
 - Students may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19). Students should have been informed of this by the NHS if this is the case.
 - The NHS test and trace guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 14 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).
 - In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious. In this instance the College will communicate with parents and students to ensure where necessary self-isolation takes place.
 - If a student has been advised to self-isolate because they have been in close contact with someone who has symptoms or a confirmed case of Covid-19, parents should inform the College as soon as possible by ringing reception.
- ***Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine***
 - As usual, parents should plan their holidays outside of term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine and current government advice should be taken into account before planning a holiday, taking into account how this will affect their ability to return to school. If a student is required to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine, parents should inform College as soon as possible by ringing reception.

Students who have been categorized as clinically vulnerable and received shielding guidance, no longer need to shield and are able to return to school. This is because shielding advice for adults and children paused on the 1st August 2020. This also applies to students who have family members who are shielding. If in the event that there is a local lockdown and shielding advice is reinstated, parents should inform the College of this immediately by calling reception.

If a student is absent in relation to Covid-19, the College will provide access to remote education via ItsLearning.

Procedure if a student is absent

If a student is going to be unexpectedly absent for a day due to illness or for any other reason, their parent/guardian should telephone the College reception before 8:15am in order to notify the College. This needs to happen every day a student is absent where authorisation has not been agreed prior to the absence. Following an absence, parents/carers should write an absence note outlining the reasons for the absence, which should be handed to the tutor by the student on the day of their return.

Guidelines for taking students out of College during term time including term time holidays

1. Parents should make every effort to book medical (or other) appointments outside of College hours, at weekends or in holiday time.
2. Where a routine appointment must take place during College hours, it should be after 2:00pm. Students will not normally be allowed to leave College for routine appointments before 2:00pm. Tutors will be able to issue

exceeds for after 2:00pm, but any request for an appointment before this time will be referred by tutors to the Head of School who will most likely refuse to authorise the absence.

3. Orthodontist and hospital appointments, driving tests and music exams before 2:00pm can be authorised by the tutor as the College recognises that it is not usually possible to have influence over the timing of these appointments.
4. If there are exceptional circumstances that parents feel merit their child missing days in College, for reasons other than those outlined above, they must write to the respective Head of School at least a month in advance, requesting absence from College. Heads of School may authorise up to one day's absence from College. Any requests for absence of up to a week that are judged worthy of consideration, will be passed to a Vice Principal with any requests for absence for longer than a week being passed to the Principal.
5. Whether a request for an absence is authorised or not will depend on the nature of the event, the length of time requested, a child's overall attendance at College and any past authorised absences. However, it should be clear, as laid out above in the extract from the College Parental Agreement, that **holidays during the College year are not to happen and will not be authorised.**
6. If a parent chooses to take their child out of College for a period of unauthorised absence, then they will be invited into College to attend a meeting with the respective Head of School to discuss this issue. Furthermore, their child will normally be expected to make up the time they have been out of College at a rate of five hours per day missed. This time would normally be made up in study supports, after College homework support, during College holidays and staff inset days.
7. Any repeated unauthorised absences will result in meetings with a Vice Principal and then the Principal.
8. **The College reserves the right to refer any unauthorised absence to Gateshead Legal Intervention Team should the issue not be resolved in College. In particular, if a student is taken by the parent on an unauthorised family holiday during term time then it is possible, working alongside Gateshead LIT, to fine the parent via fixed penalty notice, in line with national legislation.**

Gateshead Council Guidelines for Holidays in Term Time can be found [here](#).

Details on Penalty Notices

Penalty notices were introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) as an alternative to prosecution. They do not require an appearance in court.

A penalty notice may be issued if:

- Parents fail to ensure their child regularly attends school;
- Parents take a child out of school during term time without permission;
- A child is persistently late for school after registration closes (9:30am);
- Penalty notices are £60 if paid within the first 21 days or £120 if payment is between 21 and 28 days.

Failure to pay a penalty notice will result in the local authority commencing proceedings in the Magistrate's Court.

The Attendance Improvement Process

The Attendance Improvement Structure – September 2017

Students	Initial Action	Follow-up
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<p>Students with attendance under 93% at the end of each term.</p>	<p>Sent a notification of attendance concern letter. This letter has the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College minimum attendance targets for students, reasons for this target and the importance of College attendance; • Asks parents for any information that could explain absence, so that College can support students in their attendance; • Support tutors and the pastoral team can undertake to improve attendance; • Explains how the Pastoral time-out area can be used as a place for students who are not feeling well to work in College; • Explains that should attendance not improve above 93% by the next monitoring point, then students will remain an attendance concern, and will be sent this letter again. 	<p>These students are now Attendance Concerns. Tutors are made aware and are asked to support, with the help of relevant Pastoral Lead, their tutee's attendance, through phone calls to parents in case of absence and one-to-one conversations offering support for attendance. The Student Welfare Officer (SWO) (attendance) can also help in this regard.</p> <p>In some cases, parental meetings with either the SWO (attendance) or the Head of School would be necessary.</p> <p>If students are sent two notification of concern letters in a row, then a meeting with SWO (attendance) and Head of School is likely to be necessary in order explore how student attendance could be improved yet further. In some cases, students might be placed on 'Fast-Track'.</p>
<p>Students with attendance at or under 90% at the end of each term (or under 85% at October half term).</p>	<p>Sent a persistent absence concern letter. This letter has the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of 'persistent absence' according to government guidelines; • College minimum attendance targets for students, reasons for this target and the importance of College attendance; • Asks parents for any information that could explain absence, so that College can support students in their attendance; • Explains how the Pastoral time-out area can be used as a place for students who are not feeling well to work in College; • Explains 'Fast-track' and how student will be placed on Fast-track', with risk of possible referral to LIT should attendance not improve by end of half term after letter has been sent. 	<p>These students are at risk of becoming Persistent Absentees (90% or under for the academic year) and are subject to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare phone calls and/or home visits following any absence of more than one day consecutively, or if a concerning pattern of absence is detected; • A formal parental meeting with Head of School and SWO as a precursor to being placed 'Fast-track to Improving Attendance' <i>should attendance not improve by end of the half term after letter is sent</i>. Being placed on 'Fast-track' is the decision of the Head of School in conjunction with the Vice Principal (students) and SWO. A failure to significantly improve attendance whilst on Fast-Track would involve a referral to Gateshead LIT; • Even if a student improves their attendance after receiving a letter, if their attendance is below 90% by the next monitoring point, they will still receive a persistent absence concern letter. This will require the students to improve their attendance further in the subsequent half term to avoid being placed on 'Fast-Track'.
<p><i>Caveats</i></p>	<p><i>All this is caveated by the fact that some students will have absences that are understandable and justifiable, either through serious medical/health issues, or because of authorised absences. It is the role of the SWO (attendance) and respective Head of School to ensure that letters are not sent out incorrectly to students who do not merit being an attendance concern.</i></p>	

Fast Track

What is Fast Track?

The 'Fast Track' process is an early intervention aimed at improving student attendance and punctuality and establishing a more effective exchange of information between College and parents. It is intended to involve parents, students and the school.

The government target for attendance for all students is at least 95%. 'Fast Track' aims to help students achieve this target by closely monitoring attendance over a 9-week period. At the end of this process a decision will be taken as how best to ensure that the student is supported to do this.

Where a student's attendance does not improve, College will refer the situation on to the local authority.

How does Fast Track work?

Phase 1 Week 1 - After a decision has been made to place a student on Fast-Track, the process begins with a letter from College expressing concern about a student's attendance and indicating why they are being placed on Fast-Track. The opportunity to meet with the SWO (attendance) and Head of School will be available at this point.

Week 3 - If there has been little or no improvement in the student's attendance then they will be asked to meet with the SWO (attendance) and a Pastoral Lead.

If there has been a noticeable improvement in attendance no meeting will be required. However, the student will continue to be monitored for the duration of the 'Fast Track' process.

Phase 2 Week 6 If there has been little or no improvement in the student's attendance at this stage parents will be asked to attend a meeting with the Head of School. This will be accompanied by a formal warning letter and a clear explanation of the work of the Gateshead Legal Intervention Team.

Phase 3 Week 9 If there has been an improvement in the student's attendance they will be taken off 'Fast-track; in some circumstances the monitoring period can be extended.

If there is no improvement in the child's attendance then parents will be asked to meet with the Vice Principal (students). The consequence of the meeting may be a referral to the local authority's Legal Intervention Team. This could result in the issuing of a penalty notice or prosecution in the magistrate's court

Supporting Good Punctuality

(a) Punctuality at the start of the College day

All students must be in College by 9:00am every school day. Staggered arrival and departure times have been introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Students are able to arrive on site from 8am based upon the arrival time that parents have chosen. Students will be able to enter College from 8:20am onwards and will go immediately to their tutor room.

Any student arriving after 9:00am must enter College at the main entrance and sign in the late book at Reception. There is a process of support and sanctions for students who are persistently late.

	Tutor Action	Pastoral Action	Support Process	Sanction
2 (<i>lates a term</i>)	Discussion of solution where necessary. Warn students of future sanctions.	Tutor emailed by SWO		Warning
3	Detention set – further discussion/reaffirmation of possible solutions if necessary.	Tutor emailed by SWO		Detention
4	Provide any information that may be of use to SWO (attendance) in anticipation of conversation with student.	SWO (attendance) to speak to student regarding recurring issue.		Second warning and letter home warning of support etc.
5		SWO (attendance) to send a letter home confirming start of Stage 1	Start Stage 1 Punctuality Concern	Letter to Parents
6		SWO (attendance) to send letter home confirming student will attend a Saturday/Holiday detention.		Saturday/Holiday Detention. Sanctions ‘reset.’
12		SWO (attendance) to refer to Head of School	Start Stage 2 Punctuality Concern	Referral to Head of School. Second Saturday detention.
18		Referral to Vice Principal (students)	Start Stage 3 Punctuality Concern	Parental Meeting, morning in Referral Room and further day in the holidays.
24		Referral to Principal	Start Stage 4 Punctuality Concern	Parental Meeting, day in Referral Room and further day in the holidays.

(b) Punctuality to lessons

It is expected that all students will arrive to lessons within 3 minutes of their start time. If a student arrives to a lesson after that time, then their teacher will mark the register as L (Late). Punctuality to lessons will be monitored by the Heads of School to ensure that students in their year groups are arriving to lessons on time.

Updates and Accountability

(a) Daily Updates

Daily, the SWO (attendance) will update the tracking sheet and identify any attendance concerns. They will log and record phone calls home and any home visits undertaken. The Heads of School and Vice Principal (Behaviour, Attitudes and Personal Development) will also identify students whose parents needs contacting, or home visits will need to be made.

Phone calls need to be made strictly according to the procedure set out above in the Attendance Improvement Structure where attendance is a concern over time The SWO (attendance) and Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that all necessary phone calls are made each day.

The daily sheet will be made into a weekly sheet, which would also contain a breakdown of attendance by year, sub-group and tutor group, with students who are causing a particular tutor group's attendance to drop highlighted. This tool could then be used by both Pastoral Leads and the respective Head of School to support the tutor further.

The SWO (attendance) will also identify where student absence is a concern in the short term. Where absence is unauthorised and/or contact has not been made by parents/carers the following actions will be taken in addition to daily contact made by the SWO (attendance):

- Day 3 absence: the HOS will be informed and will call parents to discuss absence
- Day 5 absence: the SWO will carry out a home visit to discuss absence
- Day 10 absence: after 10 consecutive days' absence where no contact has been made with the parents/carers, the College will inform the local authority. In some circumstances if there is a concern for the welfare of the student the police may also be informed in order to locate the student.

(b) Weekly Updates

On a weekly basis, whole school attendance data (cumulative and for the week just passed), along with year group totals and tutor group ranks will be published to the HOS/pastoral leaders and the Vice Principal's and Principal. Follow up sheets will be provided to tutors in order to chase up reasons for absence. Concerns to be flagged by tutors to the SWO (attendance).

(c) Fortnightly Meetings

The Vice Principal (Behaviour, attitudes and personal development) will have fortnightly meetings with the SWO (attendance) and all the Heads of School to discuss attendance concerns and to decide on actions that will support student attendance. Particular attention will be paid to concerning attendance in different 'sub-groups'. The SWO (attendance) will need to provide, prior to the meeting, updated attendance statistics and breakdowns.

All times, this fortnightly meeting would be substituted by the termly SMT sub-committee meeting on attendance. The VP (Behaviour, attitudes and personal development) will also report attendance data to the Principal during fortnightly meetings.

(d) Termly Analysis

As part of the termly MIR (Management Information Report), an attendance summary report will be prepared, providing comparative data against past years for different College year groups and sub-groups and analysing year group patterns, as well as summarising actions with individual students. Respective Heads of School would present the findings for their own year groups at SMT.

Children missing in education

If it is believed that a student has left the area, and this has not been confirmed by a parent carer through appropriate contact the student will be considered a child missing in education (CME). Any student, for whom no contact has been made between home and the Academy, for ten consecutive school days, will also be considered CME. Throughout the ten day absence the Academy will endeavour to contact parents/carers in a range of ways: text alert, phone call, home visits, calling cards left at the residence, speaking to neighbours of the family if the residence looks unoccupied etc. Where a child is absent from school for more than 10 consecutive days the Local authority (LA) will be informed, who may work in partnership with the police to locate the student.

Accountability 2020-20

- The Vice Principal (Behaviour, attitudes and personal development) is accountable to the Principal for overall College attendance, including 'gaps' within College attendance;
- Each Head of School is accountable to the Vice Principal (Behaviour, attitudes and personal development) for improving and monitoring attendance in their respective Key Stage;
- The SWO (attendance) is accountable to the Vice Principal (Behaviour, attitudes and personal development). Their role is to update and monitor the daily attendance spreadsheet, and undertake welfare phone calls and welfare home visits. They also need to work with the Head of Data Services in collating attendance data for fortnightly meetings and ensuring that attendance data, including all data on sub-group attendance, is available if there is an Ofsted Inspection. They also need to work with the Heads of School (lower and upper) to ensure the tracking of attendance is reported to them, the HOS may direct the SWO to follow attendance procedures for students in their respective year groups;
- Tutors are responsible for correctly registering their tutees and following up absence notes;
- Staff in charge of co-curricular activities (including music in assembly) are responsible for ensuring that students are registered correctly, should this be needed;
- Teachers are responsible for registering all students within the first 5 minutes of every lesson including morning registration.
- Reception and administrative staff are responsible for taking absence calls from parents/carers, logging absence on SchoolBase and recording when absence notes have been received.

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>