

EMMANUEL COLLEGE

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2021-22



Introduction

At Emmanuel College we strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment where each student feels safe, secure and has a real sense of belonging. For each student to achieve their true potential, a high level of attendance and punctuality is essential. We work to ensure that all students are able to achieve their personal best including maintaining excellent attendance and punctuality to college by working in partnership with students, families and external agencies.

Students should aim to attend college every day and to be punctual to all lessons including morning registration. 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>).

- 90% attendance means a student is missing the equivalent of ½ day of education every week
- A student with 80% attendance all the way through secondary school (5 academic years) is missing the equivalent of a whole year of education.
- Students with 100% attendance are 1.5 times more likely to achieve 5+ good GCSEs of equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ good GCSE's of equivalent than students with attendance between 80-85%.

Attendance to school is also an essential part of a student's character development and personal growth and as such the benefits of excellent attendance should be reinforced by school staff and families. Students with excellent attendance benefit greatly from the established routines, settle well into peer groups and form strong, positive relationships with other students.

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.

This policy outlines the responsibilities relating to school attendance; the procedures that the College has in place to monitor student attendance; improve student attendance and recognize when student attendance has improved or is exemplary.

Responsibilities

Student:

- Aim for 100% attendance
- Arrive at school in good time for registration at 8.25am (*students arriving to College after 8.25am will be awarded an L mark. 3 late marks in a term will result in a detention. Persistent lateness to College will result in a punctuality concern plan being put in place to improve punctuality*).
- Actively seek to arrange medical appointments outside of College hours (*see procedures for absence below*)

Parent/Carer:

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. To ensure that students have the best possible attendance to College we expect parents to:

- Inform College by telephone (0191 460 2099) or email (reception@emmanuelctc.org.uk) on the first morning of any absence before 8.15am and call every day of absence to provide an update.
- Inform the school of the anticipated return date due to absence and continue to contact school if this changes.
- Provide a medical note for absences longer than 5 days.
- Ensure that their child gets to school on time.
- Ensure that their child catches up on missed work to avoid 'gaps' in their knowledge.
- Not take family holidays during term time (see further guidance below).
- Attend all school meetings as requested or contact school to re-arrange.
- Avoid requesting leave of absence during term time.
- Attend any necessary meetings and respond as quickly as possible to any letters and information about their child's attendance.
- Support their child to meet their responsibilities outlined above by reading their study file each weekend and signing this. This will show their child's school attendance each week and will show if any late marks have been received.
- Ensure their child attends the following College events: Carol Service, Sports Day and Summer Presentation Evening.

College:

- Ensure that all students and parents understand the issues and procedures for attendance through clear policies and procedures for recording, supporting and improving student attendance.
- Contact parents on the first day if there is unexplained absence.
- Encourage punctuality and good attendance as part of safeguarding practice.
- Put in place support where a student's attendance needs to improve, working in partnership with parents. In serious cases of nonattendance this may mean issuing fixed penalty notices and starting the attendance improvement process (see below).
- Meet students in school to discuss any issues that may be negatively impacting upon their school attendance.
- Liaise with the Local Authority where necessary to students with poor attendance who may need additional support.
- Ensure that all staff including administrative, support and non-teaching staff as well as governors understand the issues and procedures for registration and attendance.
- Determine the correct absence code following Department for Education guidelines.

The Local Authority

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.

Procedure if a student is absent

(a) Illness

If a student is going to be unexpectedly absent for a day due to illness or for any other reason, their parent/carer 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.

(b) Appointments (including medical)

Parents should make every effort to book medical (or other) appointments outside of College hours, at weekends or in holiday time. 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 exeats for after 2:00pm, but any request for an appointment before this time will be referred by tutors to the Head of Year who will most likely refuse to authorise the absence.

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. In all cases evidence must be provided to support the request for an exeat and if the College has a concern regarding the validity of this request parents will be contacted before the student is permitted to leave the premises.

(c) 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.

(d) Request for leave of absence (including term time holidays)

If there are exceptional circumstances that parents feel merit their child missing days in College, for reasons other than those outlined above, they must complete the leave of absence request form (Appendix 1) at least two weeks in advance, requesting absence from College. Heads of Year may authorise up to one day's absence from College that are deemed to be appropriate. Any requests for absence of up to a week that are deemed appropriate will be passed to a Vice Principal with any requests for absence for longer than a week being passed to the Principal. However, it should be clear, as laid out above in the extract from the College Parental Agreement, that **holidays during the College year should not be taken and will not be authorised.**

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. 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 Year 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, after College or during College holidays and staff inset days.

Any repeated unauthorised absences will result in meetings with a Vice Principal and then the Principal.

The College reserves the right to refer any unauthorised absence to Gateshead Legal Intervention Team should the issue not be resolved in College. 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](#).

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 at 10.00am.
- **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
- **Truancy** is an unauthorised absence from a lesson or for the entire College day. These absences do not have formal approval and are against the law. If a student is found to be truanting from a lesson but is still on the College premises he/she will be referred to their Head of Year. The reasons for this will be investigated and appropriate action taken. If a student truant for a full school day or part of the school day the student will be expected to make up the time missed by attending College for a day in the school 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.

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.

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.

The Attendance Improvement Process

We recognise and promote good attendance at regular intervals throughout the Academic year in the following ways:

- Weekly tutor monitoring of attendance reviewing year to date and weekly attendance
- Merit recognition for students with weekly 100% attendance and punctuality
- Improved attendance flyers when student's attendance improves over a 6-week period
- Termly 100% attendance certificates
- Tutor group and House attendance league reviewed termly during the College celebration

When a student's attendance becomes a cause for concern the following actions will be taken to support the student and their family to improve attendance at the following stages:

- Stage 1 Students with attendance under 95% at the end of a half term**
- Notification of concern letter is sent to the parents
 - The student will meet with their Head of Year to discuss reasons for absence
- Stage 2 Students with attendance under 92% at the end of a half term**
- Notification of concern letter is sent to the parents
 - The student and parent will meet with their Head of Year to discuss reasons for absence
- Stage 3 Students with attendance under 90% at the end of a half term**
- Notification of concern letter is sent to the parents
 - The student and parent will meet with the Vice Principal
 - Parent contract will be initiated and a four-week monitoring process will begin, a letter summarizing the Stage 3 meeting will be sent to the parents
- Stage 4 Students with attendance under 85% at the end of the term**
- Notification of concern letter is sent to the parents
 - The student and parent will meet with the Principal
 - Parent contract will be reviewed and may lead to further monitoring or a referral to the Local Authority (penalty notice/prosecution)
- Stage 5 Local Authority instigates sanctions/proceedings**
- The college will continue to work with the family, maintaining regular contact and offering support.

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 Year to ensure that letters are not sent out incorrectly to students who do not merit being an attendance concern.