

# EMMANUEL COLLEGE

## ATTENDANCE POLICY 2023-24



### 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.

Students should aim to attend College every day and be punctual to all lessons including morning registration. Our expectation is that students have 100% attendance. While accepting that this is an aspirational expectation without this it enables absence to be too easily accepted and while there is some space provided before intervention starts, our message is always, to get the best out of education, you must be in college every day.

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' ([Just one day off can hamper children's life chances - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](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  $\frac{1}{2}$  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 or equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ good GCSEs or 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. We are therefore committed to ensuring that all students have good attendance and that instances of persistent or severe non-attendance are rare.

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 recognise when student attendance

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has improved or is exemplary. This policy also meets the requirements of the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) document published by the DfE and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance and parental responsibility measures](#). This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census which explains the persistent absence threshold.

### **Core 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. Students who are late to morning registration will be expected to sit an after-school detention the following evening (Monday-Thursday). 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).
- Sixth Form students should inform College by telephone before their timetabled arrival time on the first day of absence and each subsequent day of absence regardless of their timetabled arrival time.

#### **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:

- Provide College with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
- Inform College by telephone (0191 460 2099) or email ([reception@emmanuelctc.org.uk](mailto: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 (in the case of persistent absence further guidance on the support of catch-up work is outlined below).
- 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.
- Develop a whole-school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance including visual promotion around the college building.
- Monitor and analyse patterns of attendance to identify those who need support. Regular system of meetings to identify students and families most in need of support as well as to monitor the attendance of key focus sub-groups such as students in receipt of the Pupil Premium and SEND support where bespoke support plans may be required.
- 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 so that students who are becoming persistently absent or severely absent are focused upon.
- Share information and work collaboratively with others including 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.

For more detail on the specific responsibilities as they relate to members of staff in College, please see Appendix 2: Monitoring, accountability and responsibilities.

### **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 Head of School at least two days before the requested dates. The Head of School 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. The Assistant Vice Principal (Attendance) may authorise up to one day's absence from College that is deemed to be appropriate. Any requests for absence of up to a week that are deemed appropriate will be passed to the Vice Principal with any requests for absence for longer than a week being passed to the Head of School. 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. This may be in addition to a referral to the Gateshead Council for the issuing of a fixed penalty notice, in line with national legislation. Gateshead Council attendance regulations can be found [here](#).

Any repeated unauthorised absences will result in meetings with a Vice Principal and then the Head of School. 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 the absence will be referred to the Gateshead Legal Intervention Team

### **Categorisation of absence**

Any student who is on roll but is not present in College must be recorded within one of these categories. We will identify the correct attendance code to use and record the absence along with the reason for absence no later than 5 working days after the missed session.

- **Unauthorised Absence** (No reason provided, or absence deemed invalid) – this includes arriving in College late after registers have closed at 9.20am for the AM session and 2.30pm for the PM session.

- **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 on a Saturday for detention. 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 will 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 (10:00am);

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 Magistrates' 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 College, for ten consecutive school days, will also be considered CME. Throughout the ten-day absence the College 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**

Where attendance is good it will be recognised and celebrated on an individual level as well as with the wider college community. The ways that this will be done include, but are not exclusive to are:

- Weekly recording of personal attendance data
- Head of School pick and mix
- Half termly attendance raffle
- Half termly letters of recognition of good attendance (>96%) and outstanding attendance (100%).
- House competitions
- Regular slot on GME and Friday review to celebrate attendance
- 96% attendance required in Y11 to attend prom

Attendance is reported to parents regularly through weekly reporting of attendance in the study file, termly reports and current attendance can also be viewed at any time on the My Child at School App.

Where attendance falls below 96% the tiered attendance support package is introduced to support the student and their family to improve attendance at the following stages:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Attendance trigger</b>	<b>Actions</b>
1	<96% 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.  Weekly review.
2	<92% at the end of a half term, or students on stage 1 who have shown no improvement in attendance.	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. Meeting pro forma to be completed and attached to CPOMS.  Where deemed necessary the student may begin a period of academic catch-up support – Level 1.  6-week review.
3	<90% at the end of a half term (Persistent Absence), or students on stage 2 who have shown no improvement in attendance.	Notification of concern letter is sent to the parents.  The student and parent will meet with the Assistant Vice Principal, Attendance Officer or HoY.  Parent contract will be initiated, and a 6-week monitoring process will begin, a letter summarising the Stage 3 meeting will be sent to the parents. Meeting pro forma and agreed Attendance Improvement Contract to be completed and attached to CPOMS.  Where deemed necessary the student may begin a period of academic catch-up support – Level 2.  Review in line with parent contract.
4A	<80% at the end of term or students on stage 3 where the parent contract expectations have not been met.	Notification of concern letter is sent to the parents.  The student and parent will meet with the Assistant Vice Principal or Vice Principal.  Parent contract will be reviewed and may lead to further monitoring or initiating of Fast Track attendance procedures. Meeting pro forma to be completed and attached to CPOMS.  Academic catch-up support – Level 2.
4B	Students who after FAST TRACK have not shown	Notification of concern letter is sent to the parents.

	improvement and parental contract expectations have again not been met.	The student and parent will meet with the Head of School.  Parent contract will be reviewed and may lead to further monitoring or a referral to the Local Authority (penalty notice/prosecution).
5	Head of School referral	Local Authority instigates sanctions/proceedings.  The College will continue to work with the family, maintaining regular contact and offering support.

Where attendance concerns are pre-existing, identified as serious persistent or severe absence at the start of an academic year then staged support could be introduced sooner than outlined above.

### Academic catch up

Recognising the impact that poor attendance can have on academic achievement students who are on stage 2 attendance intervention or higher will be supported in varying levels with their academic catch up.

<b>Level 1</b>
Once student attendance drops below 92% and stage 2 support is initiated there will be an expectation that they attend Academic Catch Up support after school a minimum of one day a week until they have completed a 6-week period with attendance of over 96%. They will be expected to find out from staff the work they have missed and what they need to do to catch up. Staff will receive an email with a list of students who are on academic catch up each Monday so they can prepare to provide catch up work.
<b>Level 2</b>
Once a student attendance drops below 90% and stage 3 support is initiated there will be an expectation that they attend Academic Catch Up support after school up to three days a week until they have completed a 6-week period with attendance of over 96%. They will be expected to find out from staff the work they have missed and what they need to do to catch up. Staff will receive an email with a list of students who are on academic catch up each Monday so they can prepare to provide catch up work to.
<b>Level 3</b>
Where student attendance falls below 75% some aspect of home study may be required. This may be where medical evidence is provided and a student is unable to attend but can complete work at home, but also where no evidence is provided and the college are satisfied that a student can complete work from home. This work will be set in key subjects by HODs and HOY and will have clear deadlines by which work must be submitted. Failure to do so will result in an escalation through the attendance strategy utilising Fast Track and LIT if required.

## **Fast Track**

### **What is Fast Track?**

The 'Fast Track' process is an 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 96%. '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 Attendance Office and AVP Behaviour and Attendance 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 Attendance Office and AVP Attendance.

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 Vice Principal, Behaviour and Attitudes. 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 Head of School. 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

### **Welfare support**

Students will be placed on welfare attendance support when attendance drops below 90% and anxiety (diagnosed or undiagnosed) is the main cause of absence or the student is refusing to attend school. The Student Welfare Officer (Attendance) will design bespoke support packages and parental agreements for each student including regular parental and student reviews with the aim of improving attendance in school.

Welfare Attendance Support Plans (WASPs) are approved by AVP Behaviour and Attendance and AVP Student Welfare. Students on welfare support plans may be recommended for Fast Track procedures, especially where



anxiety is given as primary reason for absence but is undiagnosed or where there is little or no engagement with the WASP process.