



Attendance Policy and Procedures

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Agreed by... Full Governing Board

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Introduction

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring children's regular attendance at school is the parent/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, children and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this ECS will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in a regular school newsletter/Assembly;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.

School Attendance target:

Emmanuel Community School Attendance target is 96.5% and every child has an important part to play in meeting this.

Targets for the school will be displayed in the school.

The minimum threshold level for school attendance is below 90% and we will keep parents/carers updated regularly about progress to this level and how their child's attendance compares.

Through the school year absences and punctuality will be monitored to show where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter.

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE:

Authorised Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a legitimate reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes e.g. bereavement.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time.
- Parental/carer illness

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

REPORTING ABSENCE:

If a child is absent, parents/carers are expected to:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – parents must do this even if they have already telephoned the school;

Whenever possible, medical appointments should be made outside of school hours or in the holiday periods.

Time out of school to attend appointments should be kept to a minimum and Parents/Carers will be encouraged to bring their child to school both before and after the appointment time.

If a child is absent, the school will:

- Telephone or text the parents/carers on the first day of absence if they have not telephoned the school;
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Head Teacher if absences persist.
- When a child is absent unexpectedly and without an explanation, the absence is recorded in the class register.
- Run a report each day which identifies any child who is absent without the reason being known (identified as 'N' code).
- Update registers accordingly once the reason is known.

- At the end of each week send a letter to parents/carers where an absence has not been provided with an adequate reason or medical evidence, stating that the code will be changed to unauthorised ('O').

Emmanuel Community School will follow Waltham Forest Council's Policy of minimum unavoidable absence from school during term time and will grant the following **maximum number of day's absence from school for circumstances defined as 'exceptional'**.

These circumstances are:

- Bereavement/funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – **up to 5 days**
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction of domestic violence – **up to 5 days**
- Religious observance – **up to 3 days per academic year**
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts, or sport operating at a high standard of achievement – **up to 3 days**
- Time off related to child Entertainment Performances, which is subject to a licence being issued by the Education Welfare Service – **up to 3 days**

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL FOR HOLIDAYS OR TO VISIT RELATIVES DURING TERM TIME WILL NOT BE APPROVED.

Medical Absences

Medical Absences will be recorded and monitored as 'M' on a child's registration record. The duration of absences granted due to health conditions will follow Government health guidelines unless stipulated otherwise through doctor and other health professional guidance. Where a child's health condition is deemed to be affecting their school attendance without medical verification, the child and his/her parents/carers will be encouraged to meet with the School Nurse.

Long Term Absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over 10 days, the school will do all it can to send material home, to enable the children to keep up with their school work. If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside of school.

A support plan will be put in place for children with chronic illness

For children whose long-term absence is unauthorised, parents/carers will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and they are likely to receive a Fixed Penalty Fine. Where unauthorised absences exceed 4 weeks parents will be notified that their child's name will be taken off roll.

Repeated Unauthorised Absence

The school will monitor repeated unauthorised absences, with regular meetings between the Office Manager, CLOs and the Headteacher to identify areas for early intervention. Should a

pattern emerge and remain, the school will contact the parent/carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence, following the staged process below:

Stage 1: Warning letter 1 from Office Manager (sub-92% attendance)

Stage 2a: Letter from Headteacher acknowledging a positive upturn in attendance following the previous letter

Stage 2b: Warning letter 2 from Headteacher, if no upturn in attendance, requesting a meeting to respond to and bring an end to the persistent absences

Stage 3: Referral to the Education Welfare Officer, who will visit the home and seek to ensure the parents/carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

After a two week monitoring period where there has been no or insufficient improvement, a 'Parental notification' letter will be sent home, Where there is still no significant improvement, a School Attendance Panel (SAP) meeting will be held in school, inviting the parents/carers, and chaired by a senior court officer. A further two week monitoring period will be granted. Where no improvement has been made by this stage, the case will be referred to the local magistrate's court.

Legal action may be taken against any parents/carers who fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have contact numbers at all times. Parents are expected to make sure the school always has an up to date number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES (FPN)

Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Local Authorities are required to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to the parent/carer of a child who has irregular school attendance, where the absence is unauthorised by the school. Fixed Penalty Notices are an alternative to prosecution. They do not require the parent/carer to appear in court and no criminal record is incurred.

An Assessment of the circumstances will take place before a Fixed Penalty Notice is served. Parents will receive a warning letter that if any unauthorised absence occurs they will receive a Fixed Penalty Notice. However, the authorising officer (Educational Welfare Courts Officer or the Head of Services) has the discretion to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice for a first offence in exceptional circumstances.

A Fixed Penalty Notice imposes a fine of between £100-120 per child to each Parent/Carer reduced to £60 if paid within 28 days. If the fine is paid after 28 days but within 42 days of being issued, the fine is £120. If the fine is not paid within 42 days, the parent/carer will be prosecuted in a Magistrates court for the offence under S.444 of the Education Act 1996.

PUNCTUALITY

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and lose out on valuable time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving children disrupt lessons; this can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

Frequent lateness can often precede poor attendance and also present difficulties for the pupil in achieving fully at school. Persistent lateness does not constitute as full school attendance (Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996).

How we manage lateness:

The school opens at 8.00am for breakfast club.

At Emmanuel Community School, pupils can enter their class from the playground from 8.45am. Registers will be marked by 9.00am. Children arriving at or after 9.00am, but before 9.30am are expected to report to the 'Late gate' (In The Drive). They then receive an 'L' mark in their register.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. Children arriving from that time will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence ('U' code).

Persistent lateness will lead to formal procedures (letters and meetings) from the school and, if the situation does not improve, parents/carers will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Registers will be monitored fortnightly for lateness and parents/carers will receive letters home notifying parents and inviting them to meetings to discuss the adverse effects punctuality has on their child's learning as well as its social and emotional impact.

Pupils who have 12 'U' codes in any one term period without substantive reasons will be issued with a FPN and parents/carers may incur a fine.

Holidays in Term Time:

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and parents will be strongly discouraged from taking children away in school time. There is no automatic entitlement in law to take time off in school time to go on holiday.

Leave for holiday in term time will not be agreed to especially under the following circumstances – such as:

- When a child is just starting the school. This is very important as the child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods.
- When a child's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a child's attendance rate is already below (90%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised.

In line with the government and local authority recommendations, the governors have decided to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to parents for taking unauthorised leave of absence during term time.

Penalty notices will involve the recipient paying a fine, currently set at £60.00 if paid within 21 days or £120.00 if not paid within 28 days.

Where an authorized absence has been dealt with by way of penalty notice and the penalty notice has been paid, it is not possible for a parent to be prosecuted for the same period of unauthorized absence under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 or for the same instance'.

Absence Requests

At Emmanuel Community School we believe that children should be in school every day so that they can make as much progress as possible. Requests for absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances which are due to extenuating or compassionate reasons.

Parents/carers must apply for a child's term time absence in advance.

Permission will not be granted once the absence has been taken. All requests must be made using the designated form and the decision will be recorded. This form is known as 'LEAVE OF ABSENCE'. All leave requests received will initially be assessed by the Attendance Officer **but** the Head Teacher will record a decision on the form. The school will send this form back to the parent/carer clarifying exactly if and how many days leave have been granted and the possibility of incurring a 'Fixed Penalty Notice'.

Working in Partnership with Waltham Forest

All schools are allocated a designated member of the BACME team within the Local Authority. We will work in close partnership with the designated member of the team to promote better attendance and punctuality.

Those People Responsible for Attendance Matters in the School will be:

Attendance Officer (School Office Manager)
Attendance Champion (Head Teacher)

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are required to commit to working with parents and children as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Things Emmanuel Community School Staff will do to Improve Attendance

1. Make children and parents/guardians feel welcome. Welcome every child at the door. Make a point to say hello to every parent/carer, and/or child we see in the halls and outside. Make it our business to know their names.
2. Create an environment that helps children feel successful in something, no matter how small it may seem. Award academic achievement and attendance as we will do for athletics, sports, skills and behavioural improvement.

3. When children are absent, immediately talk to their parents/carers -- not simply their answering machines. Make a personal phone call in the evening, or call parents/carers at work during the day.
4. When children return following absence, we will immediately talk with them about why they were gone. Let them know we are aware, and that we care that they are at school.
5. Forge a relationship with local businesses where children may congregate when truant. Encourage and support business leaders to help us keep children in school during school hours. For example, create a poster for businesses that states, "...We support Children in school and will not serve anyone under 16 during school hours".
6. Forge a relationship with local law enforcement. Make them our allies in showing the community, families, and children that school is the place to be. Support and liaise with community police officers to return children to school.
7. Provide a wide range of activities for children during breaks and lunch.
8. Empower and expect adults to take action when they think a child may be truanting.
9. Reward and recognise good attendance, not just perfect attendance. Post large signs announcing the daily attendance for the day. Publicly reward individuals, classes and the whole school when children's attendance increases or meets set goals.
10. Make school a place where children feel safe and respected. Involve children in the planning and implementation of curriculum, as well as in the life of the school.