

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Mission statement

At Emmanuel School, broad opportunities are provided for individuals to develop their full potential and allow them to be healthy, happy and secure.

Building on our Christian ethos, and in partnership with the whole school community, we provide a stimulating and caring environment where individuals are valued and nurtured morally, spiritually and academically. We stress the fundamental principle;

“Always treat others as you would like them to treat you” Matthew 7:12

Introduction

We want to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education to maximise opportunities for everyone to realise their potential. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the school community to strive for excellence and enjoyment in education. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually.

At Emmanuel, our objectives are to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers, and the wider community the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Attendance target

Emmanuel intends to maintain its high levels of attendance each year. Our current target is 96%. The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling, and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the country. Throughout the school year, we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Term dates

School term dates are published in advance and can be found on the school website.

Whilst every effort is made for common term dates across the council, there are times that term dates may differ if you have children attending more than one school. Please check the term dates on each school website and do not assume each school will have the same term dates. They are also available from the school office and will be regularly highlighted in the school newsletter.

Staff training days (inset days) are included in the term dates schedule. Parents or carers will receive written notice of any changes in term dates. Those changes will also be published on the calendar on our website and on the weekly school newsletter.

Reviewed March 2022

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Why is regular attendance important?

1. Learning

We know from experience and from studies that regular absence and poor punctuality can have a detrimental effect on a child's learning. When a pupil is absent or arrives late, it disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning not only of that pupil, but also that of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a penalty notice or prosecution.

2. Safeguarding

At Emmanuel, we believe every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places your child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses:

Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

To allow us to safeguard the children in our care, it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least two other contact numbers in case of emergency.

It is also important for parents to let school know of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances. If you are uncertain about what would be considered a vulnerability, please contact inclusion@emmanuel.camden.sch.uk

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Promoting good attendance

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

To help us all focus on this we will:

- Provide parents / carers with details on attendance in the school newsletter.
- Report to parents on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment and progress.
- Every week in 'Celebration Worship' the attendance and punctuality figures for each class are shared. The school community celebrates those classes that have reached and exceeded the school's attendance target of 96% and those with zero or few lates.
- At the end of each term, children with 100% attendance are rewarded with a certificate in 'Celebration Worship'. Children with our school target of 96% and those with 100% attendance for the whole academic year are also rewarded at the end of year assembly.

The law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education act 1996 states that:

the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs he/she may have either at school or otherwise

Compulsory School Age: A child is compulsory school age from the beginning of the next term after their 5th birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16th birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

This policy is written in relation to the following acts of Parliament and guidance relating to attendance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- We will also take account of all new legislation and initiatives.

Types of 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.

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Authorised absence

An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence. Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical appointments (appointments should be made outside school times where possible)
- Unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable)
- Days of religious observance
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment

Unauthorised Absences

An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school. This includes:

- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a late mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Parents/Carers keeping children off school to assist with translation

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised, the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Pupil Attendance Service. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a Penalty Notice Fine or initiate court proceedings.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes it can be that they are reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, parents should not make up an excuse for their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse. We ask parents speak to us directly so that we can resolve any issues together.

Persistent absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is considered to be a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year (for whatever reason). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the full support of parents and co-operation to address this issue.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold, or is at risk of moving towards that level, is given priority and parents and carers will be informed.

If your child has, or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence, you will be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness, which can be in the form of prescription, medicine packaging or hospital letter. Where we have concerns about your child's health, we may ask for your permission to contact your GP.

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Legal sanctions and actions

The school will make every attempt to contact the parent or carer by telephone and in writing. In the first instance, we would invite them to discuss the problem with parents and carers. If this is unsuccessful, the school may give warning of referral to the LA. A referral may be made to the LA under the following circumstances:

- 10 days of continuous unauthorised absence
- More than 10 days of authorised leave
- A term-time holiday taken without permission
- A pupil who has been more than 10 minutes late (after the close of registers) on a minimum of eight occasions in a rolling eight-week period.
- 95% or less attendance and with 10% or more unauthorised absences

Penalty notices are issued to each parent or carer for each of their children for example two parents with three children would receive a total of six penalty notices, one parent with two children will receive a total of two penalty notices. Each penalty notice is £60 if paid in the first 21 days, from days 22 to 28 the fine doubles to £120 for each penalty notice. The Pupil Attendance Service has asked us to point out that it is not possible to pay these fines by instalments or lower the cost when they have increased, or to just fine one parent. Payment can be made online and instructions on how to pay are included on the penalty notice. Any problems with paying online should be discussed as early as possible with the Pupil Attendance Service by ringing 020 7974 7161.

If a penalty notice is not paid or the Pupil Attendance Service feels that the level of absence warrants court action, the local authority will arrange for a court hearing. There are a range of sentencing options available to the magistrate including the maximum penalty of a fine of up to £2500 per parent for each offence as well as the possibility of up to three months in prison.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent, you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and give an expected return date. You must explain clearly the reason they are off; it is not sufficient to say they are 'ill'.
- You need to call every day thereafter to advise school of your child's progress.
- Alternatively, you can call into school and report to reception, who may arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you as we operate a 'first day calling' procedure.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Headteacher if absences persist.
- Consult with the Pupil Attendance Service if attendance moves below 95% and at least 10% or more of the absences are unauthorised.

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Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they miss out on their learning and also on key information / instructions and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons for all the children in the class and it can be embarrassing for the child.

How we manage lateness

To help parents, we have a 'soft start' to the school day with the gate in the Omega Building (Years 1-6) opening at 8.45am and the gate in the Alpha Building (Nursery and Reception) opening at 8.55am.

Registers are taken at 8.55am in the Omega Building and 9.10am in the Alpha Building. If your child arrives after that time, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark that shows them to be on site but not counted as a present for statistical / legal purposes. This means that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

The school day ends at 3.20 pm in the Omega building and 3.15pm in the Alpha building (unless arrangements have been made for extended services). Where parents continually fail to make arrangements to pick up their children at the end of the school day, the school may have to consider referring the matter to Social Services, Early Help and/or Camden's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that s/he collect their children from school on time every day.

Exceptional Leave in Term Time

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any monetary savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. Previous good attendance or your child's education ability are not considered when the school makes the decision. If you have siblings at other schools you must seek permission from all the schools and it is possible that one school may grant it and another may not.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made **in advance** to the Headteacher and will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. In making a decision, the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

If exceptional leave is agreed you will receive a letter from the school. If you do not get a letter DO NOT, assume that permission has been granted. Only the Headteacher can decide if they will grant exceptional leave – no one else in school has permission to do so and leaving an application form is not permission to take leave.

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If leave has been granted and a child returns late outside of the agreed dates either before or after, the school will reserve the right to unauthorise the entire period of leave taken.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Your child's school place may be also be at risk.

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Appendix 1

Absence escalation percentage table

Percentage	Responsibility	Action
94% - 96%	School Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review attendance: <i>consider if absence authorised</i> <i>consider if it is one period of absence of several individual days - look for patterns</i> -If authorised may decide to monitor. -If unauthorised – write to parents advising them of attendance level and of concerns / expectations and possible next actions.
91% - 94%	School Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review attendance: <i>consider if authorised – is evidence being provided?</i> <i>If unauthorised has it reached the threshold for Penalty Notice Warning?</i> <i>Is a home visit / school attendance panel appropriate?</i>
90% or below	School Action + PAS / other agencies where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review attendance: <i>consider if absence is authorised – review reason and pattern.</i> -If child has a medical condition is a referral to Medical Needs Service appropriate? -If they are subject to CP plan or other safeguarding concerns raised, then discuss with Designated Safeguarding Lead / allocated Social Worker. -If low attendance is authorised due to exclusions, have all inclusion options been considered (primary may seek advice from the re-integration service. Home visits should be made to ensure vital information is not missed. -Consider absences using Emotional Based School Avoidance guidance.
		At less than 90% attendance, a child is a Persistent Absentee and absence requires further investigation and possible statutory intervention depending on reason for absence. Long term illness should have been referred to Medical Needs Team; exclusions to School Inclusion Service.

Schools must notify the Local Authority of children who are absent for 10 consecutive days without authorisation. Email pas@camden.gov.uk