

Attendance Policy

“If children are to get the full benefits of school, including the aspects that they value the most, such as face to face learning with teachers, any additional support they need, time with their friends and access to their favourite extra-curricular activities, then they need to attend school regularly.”¹

Dame Rachel de Souza, Children’s Commissioner

1. Statutory Framework

The legal framework governing school attendance is summarised in ‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance (September 2022)’, published by the Department for Education (DFE) and ‘Education (Pupil Registration England) Regulations 2006. The school also complies with guidance published by the Independent Schools’ Inspectorate (ISI) and Wandsworth Council (2018).

Every school is required by law to maintain two separate registers, an admission register (*known as the ‘School Roll’*) and an attendance register. School inspectors are required to check both registers and assure themselves that the requirements of the regulations are being met. Every entry in the school register must be preserved for a minimum period of three years since the date the entry was made.

The regulations covering school admission and attendance are very prescriptive reflecting the importance that successive governments have attached to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age attend school. The regulations specify the contents of both registers and the manner in which they are operated and maintained.

2. Policy Statement

For pupils to fully benefit from the educational opportunities provided at Emanuel, they must have high levels of attendance and punctuality sustained throughout the academic year. Emanuel aspires to high standards of attendance and has an expectation that all pupils will be striving for a culture of 100% attendance and 100% punctuality. The deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in Emanuel School.

The school recognises that the foundation of good attendance is that the school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. Academic attainment and wellbeing are strongly linked to high levels of school attendance.

Ineffective registration or poorly executed follow-up procedures can increase the risks of truancy and educational under-performance, which can negatively affect personal and social development among pupils. Emanuel School recognises that absence/children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation. Consequently, attendance and registration arrangements are hugely important and must be seen to be regarded as such by pupils, parents and staff. Where attendance becomes an issue for a pupil, the school will actively seek to work with the family to improve attendance. This may include working with the Local Authority to access sources of support that might assist the pupils and the family.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

Pupils are encouraged to take full advantage of their educational opportunities through maximum attendance and are expected to attend all prescribed lessons and activities. In addition to the morning and afternoon registration, the school completes lesson registration at the start of each lesson. Parents

¹ Foreword taken from the Children’s Commissioner’s [‘Guide for Attendance Officers \(September 2022\)’](#).

and teachers have a duty to ensure that pupils attend school for every school day except in the case of illness or if prior permission for absence has been granted.

This policy aims to provide a clear, consistent and cohesive framework which conforms with statutory requirements and promotes high levels of attendance and punctuality of pupils at the school. It is applied fairly and consistently considering the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance.

Parents will be provided with any initial information when their child joins the school and are reminded of it at the beginning of each school year and when it is updated.

3. Responsibilities for School Attendance

3.1 Responsibilities of Parents

Parents with a child of compulsory school age have a legal duty to make sure that their child receives effective full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and ability (and to any special education needs they may have). This is also a requirement under the school's *Terms and Conditions*.

Parents that registered their child at a school have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends the school regularly. It is important for parents to understand that, by law the school is required to keep accurate records of attendance and to have written records to support any absence.

The definition of '**authorised absence**': an absence is classified as authorised when the school has ascertained that a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from the parent or guardian.

It is also important for parents to know that by law, for the purposes of these records, only the school can authorise absence for a legitimate reason such as illness or for 'exceptional circumstances.'

Parents are responsible for informing the school on any occasion when their son/daughter has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness). Parents should send an email to absences@emanuel.org.uk and the form tutor explaining the reason for absence on the first day of a pupil's absence by 9am. Alternatively parents can call the school. Reception is staffed from 7.30am, and an answering machine facility is available before this time if parents wish to leave a message. Daily reporting of absence is required until the pupil returns to school. If the outlined procedure is not followed, the school will contact parents to find out why their child is absent to ensure safeguarding.

Where there is a planned absence for a medical appointment or a university visit, parents should provide the reason for non-attendance well in advance – normally at least 48 hours beforehand. This should be done by emailing the form tutor and absences@emanuel.org.uk so that the form tutor can issue an 'exeat' after consultation with the head of year.

Routine medical or dental appointments should ideally be arranged out of school time where possible.

Pupils cannot be excused from school for family holidays under any circumstances as school term dates are published at least a year in advance.

Parents wishing to take their son/daughter out of school for exceptional circumstances such as attending a funeral or religious observance, elective surgery, involvement in professional music or drama performances or involvement in a regional or national sports competition, must seek authorisation from the school. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short.' As leave of absences will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that they will be granted for the purpose of a family holiday or celebration.

Request for a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances should be sent well in advance (usually half a term) to the form tutor copying in the head of year, head of section and deputy head:

pupils/designated safeguarding lead. The school will consider each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead will make the final decision on whether any absence is authorised. A leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively.

The definition of **‘unauthorised absence’**: an absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without permission of both the school and a parent. The absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Parents are reminded that absence directly affects a pupil’s attainment and wider wellbeing and also impacts on other pupils’ learning when teachers need to spend time helping pupils catch up on what they have missed.

The school might challenge parents’ views where there is a misconception about what ‘good’ attendance looks like.

When parents are to be away from home overnight during term, they are required in the contract with the school to inform us of the name and contact number for a temporary guardian. This information should be provided to the tutor and copied to both absences@emanuel.org.uk and the relevant head of year.

Parents are committing an offence if they fail to ensure their child’s regular attendance at school.

Where parents need support to prevent their child from truanting or habitually arriving late, the school will meet with the parents and give advice. The school expects parents will comply with what is agreed in order to make the best use of this support.

3.2 Responsibilities of Pupils

Pupils have a responsibility to attend school when they are fit and well and to arrive at school in time for registration (morning and afternoon) each day during term time. If, for any reason, a pupil needs to leave the school site during the school day, he/she should first seek and receive an exeat from the relevant head of year. Exeats from the head of year are normally granted if a request has been made by a parent, ideally at least 48 hours in advance of the absence. No pupil may leave the site unless an exeat has been granted.

Failure to attend school regularly or punctually or failing to attend registration without good reason or leaving the school without an exeat constitute breaches of the school’s *Behaviour Policy* and may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Registration commences at 8.25am promptly each morning with school day finishing at 3.50pm every day. Pupils must remain on school premises from morning registration to the end of the last afternoon lesson unless they have permission to leave from the head of year / head of section / deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead.

Pupils in certain year groups may be granted study leave during periods of public and internal / mock examinations.

Inter-school fixtures take place on Saturday and during weekday evenings: pupils are required to play if selected to represent the school. The same applies if a school event takes place on Sunday. Requests to miss a fixture / event must be made two weeks prior to the fixture / event taking place.

Pupils who absent themselves from fixtures or other school events at which attendance is required will be regarded as having truanted and are likely to incur the same disciplinary sanction as they would for deliberately not attending assembly or a lesson.

3.3 Responsibilities of the School

The school understands its role in understanding barriers to attendance, identifying the children who need more support, and coordinating that support around the child.

The school has a legal responsibility for taking and maintaining an accurate attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion the school will record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Registers are legal records and the school must preserve every entry for three years from the date of entry. Likewise, a back-up copy of the attendance register will be retained for three years.

As the attendance register is a record of the pupils present at the time it was taken, the register will only routinely be amended where the reason for absence cannot be established at the time it was taken and it is subsequently necessary to correct the entry. Where amendments were made, the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name and title of the person who made the amendment.

3.3.1 Analysing Attendance and Absence Data

As poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial. Regular data analysis allows identification and provision of immediate additional support to pupils and pupil cohorts that need it. As required, the school also looks at historic and emerging patterns across the school to develop strategies to address them.

The school tracks attendance carefully throughout the year. Weekly attendance patterns and trends are monitored and analysed, and intervention and support are delivered in a targeted way to pupils and families. Weekly totals of pupils whose attendance fall below 95% are emailed to staff with pastoral responsibility so emerging concerns can be followed up and, where necessary, discussed with parents.

Beyond this, the school monitors attendance cohorts and groups (*including their punctuality*) across the school. As required, the school may also look further into patterns of attendance within a session to ensure all pupils are attending all timetabled lessons.

3.3.2 Working Together to Improve Attendance

When a pattern to poor attendance is spotted, the school will discuss this with pupils and parents to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Emanuel School will facilitate support by removing barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside the school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

3.3.2.1 Working Collaboratively with the Local Authority and Other Partners

Emanuel School works effectively with the local authority and other local partners to improve attendance and – where necessary - shares data on individual cases where it is of the benefit to the pupil.

The school understands its obligations with regard to *Children Missing in Education*. Where there is a safeguarding concern, the school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission, or if, for any pupil, unauthorised absences cause concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The threshold for this is normally when a pupil's attendance drops below 85% across an academic year.

The school will also inform the relevant local authority and/or Children's Social Care (CSC), as appropriate, immediately if:

- A single absence or repeated absences raise safeguarding or child protection concerns (see the *Children Missing Education Policy* and the *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*).
- A pupil has ten consecutive days of unauthorised absence (*other than for reasons of sickness or leave of absence*).
- A pupil of compulsory school age is to be deleted from the school register when the next school is not known, when the family is moving abroad or if the child is to be home-schooled. The school is required to report these circumstances as soon as possible after the grounds for deletion are met, to the local authority in which the pupil lives and in any event before the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, the school will work with the local partners together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure that support is also in place to enable families to respond.

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

The school may also work with other schools in the area when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

3.3.2.2 Working with Families to Remove Barriers to Attendance

The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, the best placed person in the school will work with and support the family.

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic the school will listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, the school will take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support.

The school is mindful that pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities may face greater barriers to attendance and will put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

4 Staff Responsibilities for Monitoring and Improving Attendance

The school understands its duty to follow up any absences in the following ways:

- Ascertaining the reason for absence (ill, medical appointment etc),
- Identifying whether this absence is approved or not,
- Ensuring that the appropriate documentation is received,
- Identifying the correct code to use before entering it on the school's iSAMS register,
- Ensuring that the appropriate safeguarding action is taken, where required.

Emanuel School keeps an accurate record of attendance and absence and has robust day to day processes to track and follow up absence and poor punctuality which are rigorously applied across the school. The processes developed meet the needs of our pupils and contexts.

4.1 Tutors/ Teaching Staff

Tutors/teaching staff should

- Rehearse and reinforce attendance and punctuality expectations continually.
- Emphasise the importance of attendance and its impact on attainment,

- Promote the next lesson and the sequence of the lesson to motivate pupils to be in the classroom,
- Promote rewards and celebrate progress but continue to outline sanctions,
- Apply rewards and sanctions consistently.

The tutors of pupils have primary responsibility for registering their tutees in the morning and afternoon and following up absenteeism and lateness. The registration procedure is described in section 5.

Tutors must keep a record of all correspondence relating to absences. Contact with parents may be made by email, telephone, note or otherwise and a record kept.

Each week tutors should look back over uncleared absences to date:

- Tutors should discuss each absence with the tutee and seek confirmation of clearance from parents or colleagues for the absence as necessary.
- Absence must not be cleared without contact with parents or colleagues to confirm the reason.
- Tutors must act to clear all absences and amend all Ns in the register within a week.
- Tutors should report any worrying patterns of absence to the head of year. This would include frequent absences, an extended period of absence (more than 5 days) and regular absences (e.g. many Tuesdays).

Tutors should monitor lateness in their form group and report any worrying patterns to the head of year. This would include frequent late marks or regular late marks (e.g. late every Thursday). Tutors are expected to contact home when a pupil has reached three late marks in a term, and to speak to the pupil about strategies for addressing this. The pupil will be put on 'early registration' by the head of year, signing in at 8.15am for a week if repeatedly late.

4.2 The Pastoral PA

The Pastoral PA will:

- Monitor the absences@emanuel.org.uk mailbox,
- Maintain the school's absence and lateness records accurately,
- Delegate the task of contacting parents/carers to the resource officer when the reason for absence is unknown. The Pastoral PA will update the attendance register on EMA accordingly.
- Print registers for fire evacuation purposes.

4.3 Heads of Year

The heads of year will:

- Investigate and follow up any apparent patterns of absence or persistent or unauthorised absence and lateness. Take appropriate action (including sanctions and contact with home) and report any ongoing concerns to the relevant head of section.
- Assist in seeking clarification with the parents and/or medical professionals where reasons for absence need further explanation.
- Refer requests for absence in exceptional circumstances to the deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead.
- Follow up with tutor's absences not cleared after a week.
- Organise Early Registration sanctions and meetings with parents relating to absences and lates as required.

4.4 Heads of Section

Heads of section will:

- Review lates and absences with head of year on a regular basis.
- Alert the DSL and head of safeguarding of any concerns regarding pupil absence.
- Organise headmaster's detentions for repeated lates and unauthorised absences and organise meetings with parents relating to these issues as required.

4.5 Deputy Head: Pupils/Designated Safeguarding Lead

The deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead will:

- Follow up with teachers and/or tutors who occasionally fail to complete registers.
- Consider requests for leave of absence or holiday absence in exceptional circumstances.
- Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services which are working with families.
- Monitor the impact of any intervention, making adjustments if necessary and using findings to inform future strategy,
- Make sure staff receive professional development and support to deploy attendance systems effectively,
- Provide governors with an accurate view of school attendance,
- Engage governors in escalation procedures where appropriate.
- Establish and monitor implementation of rewards for attendance and punctuality and sanctions for absence and lateness.

5 Registration Procedure

- Tutors should aim to be in the form room between 8.20am and 8.35am in the morning for registration.
- Tutors should log onto EMA no later than 8.25am.
- For AM registration any pupil arriving after 8.25am should be recorded as late.
- If a pupil arrives at school after 8.23am they will be registered as late at the security gate.
- PM registration should be completed by the period 9 subject teacher prior to the start of the lesson. By completing the period 9 register the PM register will be completed automatically.
- For PM registration any pupil arriving after 2.30pm should be recorded as late.
- During registration tutors must complete the register on EMA using the correct codes.
- Form tutors should check on the reason for absence where a pupil was present at AM registration but absent at PM registration without prior permission. Form tutors should inform the head of year, head of section and DSL of unexplained absences.
- If tutors are unable to log on to EMA, the pastoral PA should be emailed a list of absentees or a paper register should be sent to the Pastoral PA in the general office so that EMA can be updated.
- Pupils should remain in form rooms for the duration of registration.
- It is important for the form tutor to be punctual both to set a good example, to develop the form tutor/pupil relationship and complete the necessary administration and uniform, planner and card checks.

Tutors must identify the code to be entered in the attendance register (EMA). The options are as follows:

- / Present (AM)
- \ Present (PM)
- N No reason yet provided for absence (*Code N is not allowed to remain indefinitely.*)

| | |
|-------|--|
| M - * | Missing from lesson (for lesson registration only) |
| I | Illness |
| E | Exeat |
| L | Late |
| A | Approved school activity off site |
| F | Family event (authorised) |
| G | Family event (unauthorised) |
| R | Religious observance |
| C | Other authorised circumstances |
| Q | Pupil withdrawn from normal lessons |
| X | Excluded |
| S | Study leave |
| W | Work experience |
| O | Unauthorised absence |
| # | School closed to pupils |
| Z | Pupil not on roll |
| Y | Exceptional circumstances |

5.1 Games Registration

- For afternoon games session, all pupils register with the teacher who is responsible for their games option that term.
- This information will be collated and entered into the register by the person responsible for attendance at games.
- Pupils off games must complete this process as usual and then follow the advice of that teacher about where they should spend the session.

5.2 Class Registration

For class registration, the teacher must complete the registration using the correct codes at the start of the lesson. In addition to the codes above, the following should be used where appropriate in lessons:

M – Missing from lesson
 K – Music Lesson
 P – Pastoral absence
 H – Learning Support

- The blue 'i' icon will bring up additional information about known absences.
- In the event of a pupil missing an arranged counselling session (when registered in a previous registration), the counsellor will inform the head of year, head of section and deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead.
- Where a pupil is scheduled to attend a music lesson but does not arrive (*and the pupil is registered as being present within school*), the visiting music teacher will inform the music administrator. The music administrator will then inform head of year and head of section.
- When the lesson is a double period, the second period will be automatically registered.

5.3 Early Registration

Pupils are expected to be in morning registration by 8.25am. For those pupils who are persistently late the sanction of Early Registration is implemented and detentions are issued.

Late attendance incurs the following sanctions over a half term:

| | |
|----------|--|
| 3 lates | Form tutor contacts home |
| 6 lates | Head of Year detention + letter home from head of year and pupil is put on Early Registration |
| 9 lates | Headmaster's detention + letter home from head of section and pupil is put on early registration |
| 12 lates | Referral to member of senior management team |

5.4 Exeat Procedure

- Form tutors issue exeats on receipt of communication from parents about a planned absence, by recording the exeat on EMA.
- Where the school nurse sends a pupil home, she will record the permission on EMA.
- When a pupil leaves school, he/she must report to the security gate where their permission will be checked on EMA before they are allowed to leave the site.
- If the pupil is not recorded in the system they must find their form tutor, head of year or head of section to request that permission is recorded in EMA. This will only be agreed with parental authorisation.
- Pupils returning from an exeat should be registered on arrival at the gate

5.5 Registration during Examination Periods

- During internal examinations, pupils are registered in their examination rooms.
- Candidates sitting public examinations at GCSE or A-Level, are registered at the gate and are also registered in their examination room.
- Pupils who arrive or leave the site after the start of school or before the end of the school day will be required to sign in or out at the gatehouse.

5.6 Recording Attendance during an Emergency

During an emergency, the school will continue to record pupil absence in the register in line with the DfE guidance using the most appropriate code.

5.7 Recording Attendance during Remote Education

Where a pupil is absent but is receiving remote education, the school will record this in the attendance register using the most appropriate code.

6 Policy Review and Approval

As the barriers to attendance evolve quickly, the policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary but at least annually. In doing so, the school might seek views of pupils (school council) and/or parents.

Following Cabinet approval, the policy will be presented to the governors' pastoral committee for approval.

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|-------------------------------|---|
| Policy Owner | Deputy Head: Pupils/Designated Safeguarding Lead |
| Cabinet | The policy was reviewed and approved on 4 th May 2023. |
| Governor's Pastoral Committee | The policy was approved on 10 th May 2023. |
| Date of next review | Spring/Summer 2024 |

Table of Key Changes

| Date | Change |
|--------------------|---|
| August 2023 | Role update from deputy head: pastoral to deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead throughout the document. |
| November 2023 (V4) | Appendix 1 (Missing Pupil Procedure) was updated and linked to the <i>Children Missing Education Policy</i> . |

7 Related Documents and Policies

- Admission Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Children's Commissioner 'Guide for Attendance Officers (September 2022)'
- DfE Children Missing Education (September 2016)
- DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)
- DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (September 2022)
- Fire Evacuation Procedure
- Learning Support and SEND Policy
- Pupil Voice Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Supervision of Pupils Policy
- Terms & Conditions
- The Role of the Form Tutor

Appendix 1: Missing Pupil Procedure

This procedure concerns pupils going missing during the school day. A pupil may be identified as missing:

- after an absence from a lesson that is not confirmed in the register or by the general office,
- following investigation of a report of a missing child by a fellow pupil, a parent or a member of staff.

Following a concern for a missing child that has not been authorised, the responsible teacher will contact the relevant head of year, deputy head of section, head of section and the deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead to make the necessary checks to assess whether the absence is expected or recorded. Checks will include:

- contact with the pupil's teachers (including form tutor),
- the medical room and medical records for the day,
- the music administrator,
- the school counsellor,
- the pupil's peer group (where appropriate)
- all lists of trips out of school (stored on EMA),
- changes to timetable including scheduled meetings or events,
- the absence log (both phone and email), and
- list of exeats on EMA.

If the pupil is still found to be missing, the deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead, who will, as appropriate:

- initiate and oversee a search of the school buildings,
- co-ordinate a search over the school grounds,

If the site and ground search fail:

- contact the pupil's parents,
- contact the police (or any other external agencies),
- the headmaster will be informed, and in some cases a search of local roads will be made on foot, or by car, by available staff and parents as appropriate,
- the headmaster/ deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead will inform the police,
- following a meeting with the police, all involved parties will decide on the most suitable course of action, and
- advise all teachers due to teach or tutor the pupil later that day that they must immediately inform him if the pupil appears, and

If a pupil goes missing during an off-site activity:

- The deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead should be telephoned immediately.
- The deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead will advise on the next steps to be taken and refer to the rest of the missing pupil policy as appropriate.

If the pupil is found:

- those directly involved in the search will be informed,
- the deputy head: pupils/designated safeguarding lead will review the full matter and a record of events will be kept; and

- safeguarding concerns will be considered. Any event of a missing pupil will be considered as a possible safeguarding matter.