

# Attendance Policy

2011-12



**EARL MORTIMER**  
C O L L E G E

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building achievement and  
excellence in our community

# Attendance Policy: One-page summary

## Is Your Son or Daughter in College Today?

Every child or young person is entitled to an education. Parents and Carers who do not ensure their children receive an appropriate education put their whole future at risk. Being absent from College means a lost learning opportunity.

## The Law

All children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) are required to receive an education. As Parents/Carers you are responsible for ensuring your child receives an education. You risk criminal prosecution if your child fails to attend regularly, and punctually, at the College where s/he is registered. Prosecutions may result in fines of up to £2,500 and/or the possibility of a three months imprisonment. Courts may at their discretion impose a parenting order or direct the LA to apply for an Education Supervision Order which puts a child of compulsory school age, who is not being properly educated under Local Education Authority supervision. Remember children rely on adults for guidance, even teenagers and young adults!

## Good Habits

Regular attendance including punctuality helps your child become reliable and organised - two qualities valued by employers. All schools and colleges are responsible for keeping accurate records of attendance. College staff will contact you with any concerns they have regarding your child's attendance. The Education Welfare Service works closely with staff, parents, and when necessary, other agencies to help you and your child overcome any attendance problems.

## Communication

If your child is absent you should contact the College the same day with the reason for the absence. The College will inform you if your child's absence or lateness causes concern and will work with you to find a way of improving your child's attendance. Late arrivals will be placed in a morning break detention.

## Authorised or unauthorised absences

Absences can only be authorised by the College. Legitimate reasons for absence, including the following, may be authorised:

- Sickness
- Medical or dental appointments (Wherever possible these should be arranged outside of College hours).
- Days of religious observance.
- Exceptional family circumstances e.g. bereavement.

The following absences will not be authorised:

- Looking after the house
- Looking after brothers and sisters or sick relatives
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Translating
- Family holidays during term time are strongly discouraged



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## **Introduction:**

Earl Mortimer College is a successful secondary school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at College, on time, every day the College is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

## **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

**Learning:-** Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at College is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from College without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

**Safeguarding:-** Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend College regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this College, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this College on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

## **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

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

## **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter, EMC News;
- Report to you several times a year on how your child is performing in College, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through competitions, certificates and rewards.
- Run promotional events when parents, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the College.

### **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 by regular attendance at school or otherwise'*

### **The Law relating to safeguarding**

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.

### **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from College has to be classified by the College (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 College for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in College time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.*

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

- Parents/carers keeping children away from College unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the College day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at College too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be away from College because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the College, the parents and the child. If your 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.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the College year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA students and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or a key worker, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

## Absence Procedures:

### If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us 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 – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into College and report to Reception, where a member of staff will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

### If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Learning Managers or Assistant Principal if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves towards 85%.

## Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

## The College Attendance Staff:

Parents are expected to contact College at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the College may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorized absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at College are available from the College. Alternatively, parents or students may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the College and will give impartial advice.

## Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

### How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8:45am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **8:50am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. They will also receive a Morning Break detention.

Shortly after, the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they 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**. Any student with ten late arrivals

will trigger an automatic referral to Education Welfare Services, possibly leading to a Penalty Notice Warning and then a Penalty Notice.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Learning Manager and/or other Attendance Staff to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to College on time.

### **Holidays In Term Time:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not to take children away in term time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in term time are offset by the cost to your child's education. It sends a clear message to your children that "school is not important". There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school or college time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made in advance. In making a decision the College will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the College, but it is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- When a student is just starting the College. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods, GCSE or any other public examinations.
- When a student's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a student's attendance rate is already below 95% 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 College, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

The College has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the College and for classes are displayed in the College and you should take time to study them.

The minimum level of attendance for this College is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful education and we believe our students can be amongst the best in the county.

Through the College year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in EMC News and we ask for your full support.

### **Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

**Learning Managers (Mr Wharam, Mrs Morris, Mrs Howells and Mr Maddock)**

**Deputy Learning Managers (Mr Johnstone, Miss Harris, Mr Bescoby, Mr Perkins and Mr Hunt)**

**Home-School Liaison Officer (Mr Lewis)**

**Attendance Officer (Mrs Taylor)**

**Summary:**

Earl Mortimer College 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 College staff are committed to working with parents and students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

**Date of Policy / Review:**

Summer 2011

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I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the Attendance Policy at Earl Mortimer College.

Parents and Carers' signatures:

Student's signature:

Child's Name:

Tutor Group: