



ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

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1. The EMLM Compass Approach

At Education My Life Matters (EMLM), our work with learners is underpinned by the EMLM Compass Approach. This provides a consistent, trauma-informed and relational framework for responding to safeguarding concerns, behaviour, attendance, wellbeing, bullying, medical needs and all matters relating to the safety, welfare and inclusion of our learners.

-  **NOTICE** – Identify concerns early through professional curiosity
-  **LISTEN** – Respond to disclosures in a safe, respectful and trauma-informed way
-  **PROTECT** – Take immediate safeguarding action where needed
-  **RESPOND** – Investigate, intervene and restore harm appropriately
-  **RECORD** – Record concerns accurately on CPOMS within 24 hours
-  **REVIEW** – Monitor outcomes and learn from incidents to improve practice

The Compass Approach applies to all forms of concern including bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, discrimination, child-on-child abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual violence and wider safeguarding concerns.

It ensures consistency, professional accountability and a clear safeguarding pathway across the organisation.

2. Aims and Objectives

This policy has been developed in accordance with the Education Act 1996, the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, the Department for Education statutory guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance updated July 2026*, *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*, the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and the Equality Act 2010.

At Education My Life Matters (EMLM), we recognise that regular attendance and punctuality are fundamental to every learner's safety, wellbeing, educational achievement and future life chances. We believe that every day in school matters and that positive attendance is built through strong relationships, a sense of belonging, high expectations and effective partnership with families.

Many of our learners have experienced disrupted education, exclusion, trauma, unmet special educational needs, anxiety or other significant barriers to engagement. We therefore recognise that improving attendance requires understanding the reasons behind absence and providing timely, compassionate and targeted support, rather than relying solely on sanctions.

Our approach is based upon identifying and addressing the root causes of absence, removing barriers to attendance and working collaboratively with learners, families, local authorities and partner agencies to ensure every learner receives their full educational entitlement.

At EMLM we aim to:

- Create a culture where regular attendance and punctuality are expected, celebrated and valued by learners, families, staff and governors

- Provide a safe, welcoming, inclusive and nurturing environment where learners feel respected, understood and motivated to attend
- Promote attendance through positive relationships, restorative practice and a relational approach rather than blame or judgement
- Ensure every learner has equitable access to a full-time education that meets their individual needs
- Achieve attendance of at least 95% wherever possible, whilst recognising that some learners with complex medical conditions or exceptional circumstances may require individualised support and reasonable adjustments
- Identify barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity and provide appropriate support before absence becomes entrenched
- Reduce absence, persistent absence and severe absence through early intervention, partnership working and graduated support
- Work collaboratively with parents, carers, social workers, local authorities and other agencies to improve attendance outcomes
- Promote clear, timely and supportive communication with learners and families regarding attendance, punctuality and emerging concerns
- Ensure attendance support is proportionate, personalised and based upon the individual circumstances of each learner
- Ensure attendance is viewed as everyone's responsibility, with all staff promoting positive attendance through daily interactions and high-quality relationships
- Monitor attendance rigorously, using data to identify trends, evaluate interventions and recognise improvements as well as excellent attendance
- Ensure attendance procedures are consistent, fair, inclusive and compliant with statutory guidance
- Consider safeguarding, SEND, mental health, medical needs, family circumstances and other vulnerabilities when responding to attendance concerns
- Support learners successfully through key transitions into, within and beyond EMLM, preparing them for further education, employment, apprenticeships and adult life

Why good attendance matters:

Regular attendance enables learners to:

- Achieve better educational outcomes and make sustained academic progress
- Develop positive relationships with peers and trusted adults
- Establish routines, resilience, independence and positive habits for adulthood
- Access therapeutic, pastoral and specialist SEND support consistently
- Improve their emotional wellbeing, confidence and sense of belonging
- Participate fully in enrichment activities, careers education, work experience and wider school life
- Prepare successfully for examinations, further education, apprenticeships and employment

Research consistently demonstrates a strong relationship between high attendance and improved educational outcomes. Learners who attend regularly are more likely

to achieve academically, develop socially and emotionally, maintain positive friendships and successfully transition into adulthood.

EMLM promotes good attendance through:

- Maintaining a culture where attendance is everyone's responsibility
- Building positive, trusting relationships with learners and families from the point of admission
- Promoting attendance through encouragement, recognition and celebration of progress and achievement
- Ensuring learners feel safe, valued, included and supported within school
- Identifying emerging attendance concerns promptly and responding through supportive early intervention
- Maintaining effective communication with parents, carers, learners, staff, Board Members and external agencies
- Implementing robust procedures for monitoring attendance, punctuality and patterns of absence
- Using attendance data proactively to identify trends and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Working collaboratively with families to understand and overcome barriers to attendance
- Providing appropriate pastoral, SEND, safeguarding and wellbeing support where attendance is affected by additional needs or vulnerabilities
- Making reasonable adjustments where appropriate to support learners with SEND, medical conditions or mental health needs
- Fulfilling statutory attendance duties, including partnership working with the local authority and other relevant agencies where necessary

3. Creating the Conditions for Good Attendance

At EMLM, we recognise that improving attendance is about creating the right conditions for every learner to attend, engage and achieve. For many of our learners, attendance is influenced by a range of educational, emotional, social and family factors. We therefore take a holistic approach, seeking to understand and address the barriers that may prevent regular attendance.

3.1 Academic Achievement and Wellbeing

Academic success and emotional wellbeing are closely connected. Learners are more likely to attend regularly when they feel successful, supported and able to access learning that meets their individual needs.

We provide a range of pastoral, therapeutic and educational support to promote engagement, including adaptive teaching, personalised learning, mental health and wellbeing support, opportunities for physical activity, and access to enrichment and vocational experiences. Where learners are struggling academically or emotionally, staff work collaboratively with learners, families and external professionals to identify barriers and implement appropriate interventions at the earliest opportunity.

Our curriculum is designed to be meaningful, relevant and aspirational, enabling learners to experience success, develop confidence and prepare positively for adulthood.

3.2 Building Positive Relationships

Positive relationships are at the heart of our attendance strategy. We know that learners are more likely to attend when they feel safe, valued, respected and that they belong.

Every learner should know that they matter to someone at EMLM—someone who notices when they are absent, checks on their wellbeing and genuinely welcomes them back. Staff take time to build trusting relationships with learners and families, recognising that consistency, empathy and positive communication are fundamental to improving attendance.

We actively foster strong relationships between learners, staff, families, governors and external agencies. Learning mentors, restorative practice, personalised pastoral support, peer relationships, enrichment opportunities, leadership experiences and community-based learning all contribute to strengthening learners' sense of belonging and connection with school.

3.3 Using Attendance Data Effectively

Accurate attendance information enables us to identify emerging concerns quickly and respond before patterns of absence become established.

EMLM collects, analyses and monitors attendance and punctuality data daily to identify trends, patterns and individual barriers to attendance. Attendance data is considered alongside safeguarding, SEND, wellbeing and attainment information to ensure that support is targeted appropriately and proportionately.

Attendance information is regularly reviewed by senior leaders and shared with Board Members as part of the school's monitoring and quality assurance processes. This enables the school to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, celebrate improvements and ensure that learners and families receive timely, appropriate support.

Our use of attendance data is always underpinned by a relational and supportive approach, recognising that data informs professional conversations and intervention rather than simply measuring compliance.

4.Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Parents and carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and arrives punctually unless they are too unwell to attend
- Notify the school on the first day of absence and each subsequent day unless otherwise agreed
- Provide medical evidence where requested for prolonged or frequent illness
- Arrange routine appointments outside school hours wherever possible
- Work in partnership with the school to remove barriers to attendance

- Keep emergency contact details up to date
- Engage with attendance meetings, agreed support plans and support offered by the school and partner agencies to improve attendance where appropriate

4.2 Attendance Lead and Head of School

The Attendance Lead, supported by the Head of School, is responsible for:

- Leading the school's attendance strategy
- Promoting a positive culture where attendance is valued
- Monitoring attendance, punctuality and emerging trends
- Ensure attendance data is analysed regularly to evaluate the effectiveness of attendance strategies and interventions
- Ensure statutory attendance registers are completed accurately by 9.10am and 1.10pm
- Identifying learners at risk of persistent or severe absence
- Working with families to understand and remove barriers
- Coordinating attendance plans and reintegration support
- Ensuring reasonable adjustments are implemented where appropriate
- Working with safeguarding, SEND and external agencies
- Making referrals to the Local Authority where required
- Reporting attendance to senior leaders and governors
- Ensuring the school complies with statutory attendance guidance

4.3 Administration Staff

Administration staff are responsible for:

- Recording attendance information accurately
- Receiving and recording absence notifications
- Contacting families regarding unexplained absence
- Maintaining attendance records and correspondence
- Notifying relevant professionals where appropriate, including the Virtual School in relation to Children looked after and previously looked-after children
- Providing attendance reports to leaders and partner agencies

4.4 All Staff

Every member of staff has a responsibility to:

- Promote excellent attendance through positive relationships
- Identify and report attendance concerns promptly
- Reinforce the importance of attendance and punctuality
- Work with families to overcome barriers
- Contribute to attendance meetings and support plans where appropriate
- Celebrate good and improving attendance.

4.5 Roles of the Class Teacher & Learning Mentors

Teachers and Learning Mentors are expected to:

- Provide a welcoming, inclusive learning environment
- Complete attendance registers accurately and on time (by 9.10am and 1.10pm)
- Monitor attendance patterns within their classes
- Welcome learners following absence
- Discuss attendance concerns with families where appropriate
- Liaise with the Attendance Lead regarding concerns
- Provide pastoral and outreach support to encourage regular attendance

5. Communication with Parents/Carers

EMLM is committed to maintaining open, honest and supportive communication with parents and carers regarding attendance. Families will be informed promptly of attendance concerns and will be involved in discussions, planning and reviews to identify and remove barriers to attendance. The school recognises that successful attendance is achieved through strong partnerships with families and will seek to work collaboratively before considering formal intervention.

6. Attendance Procedures

Attendance is monitored throughout each school day to ensure learners are safe and accounted for. The following procedures are followed:

6.1 Daily Attendance Procedures

- Attendance registers are taken twice daily
- Parents and carers are expected to notify the school on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day, unless otherwise agreed
- First day absence contact will be made by 9.30am where a learner is absent without explanation
- Medical evidence may be requested where absence due to illness is frequent, prolonged or otherwise causing concern
- Home visits may be conducted by Learning Mentors or other authorised staff where appropriate
- Recording authorised and unauthorised absence
- All absences will be recorded using the appropriate authorised or unauthorised absence code
- Where amendments to attendance codes are made by the Department for Education, EMLM will implement these in accordance with statutory guidance

6.2 Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Absence for religious observance will be recorded in accordance with the statutory attendance codes and does not require consideration as exceptional leave.

Authorised	Unauthorised
Illness Medical or dental appointment that cannot reasonably be arranged outside school hours	Holiday No explanation Unsatisfactory explanation

Approved interview for further education, employment or an apprenticeship	Truancy
Approved sporting activity	Unauthorised leave
Exceptional leave authorised by Head of School	Arriving after the close of registers (without acceptable reason)

7. Leave of absence during term time

Regular attendance is essential to learners' educational progress and wellbeing. parents and carers should avoid requesting leave during term time wherever possible.

The Head of School may only authorise leave of absence during term time where exceptional circumstances apply. All requests must be submitted in writing in advance and will be considered on an individual basis.

Holidays during term time will not normally be authorised.

Examples of circumstances that may be considered include:

- Bereavement of a close family member
- Exceptional family emergencies
- Recognised religious observance
- Attendance at interviews for further education, employment or apprenticeships
- Participation in approved sporting, musical, artistic or performance activities where evidence has been provided and the absence has been agreed in advance
- Other exceptional circumstances determined by the Head of School

Requests that do not meet the threshold for exceptional circumstances will normally be recorded as unauthorised absence.

8. Attendance Support and Intervention

8.1 Early intervention

Where attendance begins to decline, EMLM will adopt a graduated response which may include:

- Early conversations with learners and families
- Attendance monitoring
- Personalised attendance plans
- Pastoral, SEND or safeguarding support
- Reasonable adjustments where appropriate
- Multi-agency meetings
- Referrals to the Local Authority Attendance Team or other professionals where necessary

Learners whose attendance falls below the national persistent absence threshold (currently 90%) will receive targeted support in line with statutory guidance.

8.2 Removing Barriers to Attendance

At EMLM, we recognise that attendance difficulties often arise from a combination of educational, emotional, social, medical or family circumstances. We are committed to understanding the reasons behind absence and working collaboratively with learners, families and partner agencies to remove barriers to regular attendance wherever possible.

We recognise that some learners may require a graduated and flexible approach to reintegration following periods of prolonged absence. Any adaptations will be carefully planned, time-limited where appropriate, regularly reviewed and focused on supporting the learner's successful return to full-time education.

Any temporary part-time or reduced timetable will be agreed with parents or carers, have a clear purpose and end date, be reviewed regularly and remain focused on the learner's return to full-time education as soon as possible.

Support will always be tailored to the individual needs of the learner and may include:

- Personalised attendance and support plans
- Temporary, personalised or reduced timetables where appropriate and in accordance with statutory guidance
- Phased reintegration following prolonged absence
- Reasonable adjustments for learners with SEND or medical needs
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing support
- Pastoral support from Learning Mentors and trusted adults
- Support to reduce anxiety-based school avoidance
- Outreach support and home visits where appropriate
- Support with transport or other practical barriers where identified
- Referrals to external agencies, including health professionals, Children's Services, Early Help, the Local Authority Attendance Team or the Virtual School where appropriate

The impact of all interventions will be reviewed regularly to ensure that support remains effective and responsive to the learner's changing needs. Top of Form

Bottom of Form

9. Persistent and Severe Absence

EMLM monitors attendance daily to identify learners whose attendance is causing concern. Attendance data is reviewed alongside safeguarding, SEND, wellbeing and attainment information to ensure appropriate support is provided at the earliest opportunity.

Learners who **miss 10% or more of their possible school sessions** are classified by the Department for Education as **persistently absent**. This is broadly equivalent to attendance of 90% or below.

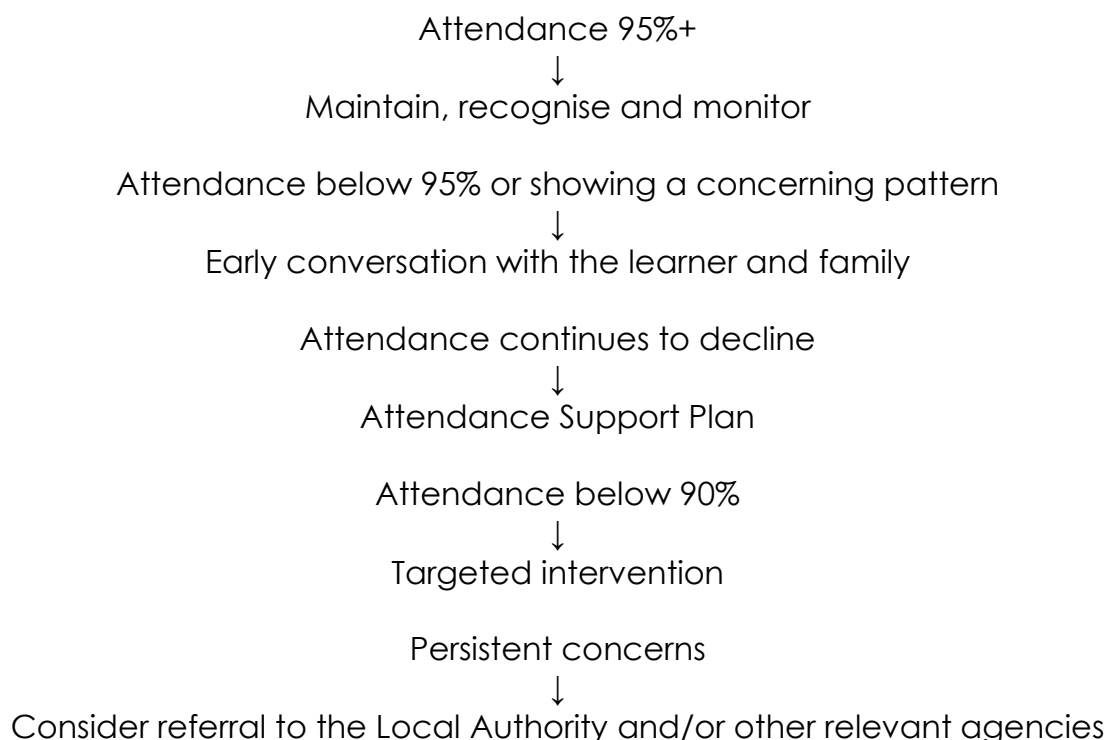
A learner who misses **50%** or more of their possible school session is regarded as **severely absent**. These learners are at significantly greater risk of poor educational outcomes, social isolation and safeguarding concerns and therefore require intensive, multi-agency support.

Where attendance reaches persistent or severe absence levels, EMLM will:

- Meet with learners and parents/carers to understand the barriers to attendance;
- Review existing support and reasonable adjustments;
- Implement or review an Attendance Support Plan;
- Involve safeguarding, SEND and pastoral staff where appropriate;
- Work collaboratively with the Local Authority, Virtual School, Children's Services and other professionals where necessary;
- Regularly review progress and adapt support as required.

EMLM recognises that persistent absence is rarely resolved through enforcement alone. Our priority is always to work collaboratively with families to understand the underlying causes of absence and provide timely, personalised support.

Attendance Intervention Pathway



10. Penalty Notices (Fixed Penalty Notices) and Legal Intervention

EMLM adopts a support-first approach to improving attendance and will always seek to work positively with learners and families before considering legal intervention.

Where attendance concerns persist despite appropriate support, or where there is unauthorised leave during term time, the school may refer the matter to the Local Authority in accordance with statutory guidance.

The Local Authority may consider issuing a Penalty Notice (Fixed Penalty Notice) where the legal threshold has been met. The national threshold is generally met where a learner has **accumulated 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks**. These sessions may arise from any combination of unauthorised absence, including unauthorised leave during term time. Meeting the threshold does not automatically result in a Penalty Notice; the individual circumstances, support provided and Local Authority arrangements will also be considered.

Currently:

- The first Penalty Notice is £80 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £160 if paid within 28 days;
- A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period is charged at £160;
- A third offence within the three-year period cannot normally be dealt with by a further Penalty Notice and may result in prosecution or other legal intervention

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent with responsibility for the learner and remain the decision of the Local Authority.

EMLM will always seek to avoid legal intervention by working collaboratively with families to improve attendance through early support, appropriate intervention and multi-agency working wherever possible.

11. Children Missing in Education (CME)

EMLM recognises that learners who are absent from education or whose whereabouts are unknown may be at increased risk of harm, exploitation, neglect or abuse. Where a learner has an extended unexplained absence and the school is unable to establish their whereabouts despite reasonable enquiries, the school will follow its safeguarding and absence procedures and liaise with the learner's home Local Authority. Where the statutory criteria are met, a Children Missing Education (CME) referral will be made in accordance with local and national guidance.

The school will work closely with Children's Services, the Local Authority, Virtual School and any other relevant agencies to ensure the learner's welfare remains paramount.

12. Punctuality

At EMLM, punctuality is recognised as an important part of good attendance and helps learners develop the routines, responsibility and time-management skills that will support them throughout their education and into adulthood.

Learners are expected to arrive at school on time each day, ready to learn.

The school day begins at 9.00am, and attendance registers are completed by 9.10am.

Persistent lateness will be monitored and addressed through early conversations with learners and families to understand and remove any barriers. Where appropriate, supportive interventions and attendance plans will be implemented to improve punctuality. All late arrivals are recorded in accordance with statutory attendance guidance.

13. Recognition and Celebration of Attendance

EMLM believes that recognising positive attendance encourages learners to develop good habits and reinforces the importance of regular school attendance. We recognise regular attendance, improved attendance, effort and commitment through praise, certificates, positive communication with families and other appropriate recognition throughout the academic year. We also recognise that for some learners, significant progress in attendance represents considerable personal achievement. Our approach focuses on celebrating effort, improvement and commitment whilst ensuring that learners with genuine medical conditions or other exceptional circumstances are not disadvantaged.

14. Monitoring, Reporting and Review

Attendance is monitored daily by the Attendance Lead and reviewed regularly by senior leaders to identify trends, evaluate the impact of interventions and ensure that appropriate support is provided promptly.

Attendance data and concerns are considered alongside safeguarding, SEND, wellbeing and attainment information to identify learners who may require additional support. Where appropriate, attendance concerns may form part of multi-agency safeguarding planning.

Attendance is reviewed by Board Members as part of the school's quality assurance and governance arrangements. Board Members provide strategic oversight and challenge and seek assurance that attendance arrangements are effective, statutory duties are fulfilled and appropriate support is provided to learners at risk of persistent or severe absence. Attendance information is shared with the Local Authority, the Department for Education and other relevant agencies where required.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes.

15. Links to other Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following school policies and procedures:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Relational Behaviour Policy
- SEND and Inclusion Policy
- Supporting Learners with Medical Conditions Policy
- First Aid Policy

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Accessibility Policy and Plan
- Educational Visits Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Data Protection (UK GDPR) Policy