



METHODIST COLLEGE BELFAST

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) POLICY

Methodist College is committed to helping pupils to apply for and receive EMA payments as set out by the Department for Employment and Learning. Pupils who decide to stay on at school, may be able to get the Education Maintenance Allowance. EMA is a weekly award of £30 which is paid fortnightly to eligible students. It is paid directly to young people who fall within the household's income thresholds and who stay on in education after they reach statutory leaving age which is after the end of their compulsory schooling. They have very specific guidance which the College has to adhere to.

Aims

This policy sets out the Local Policy framework within which all EMA applications will be administered.

- The College follows the Department for Employment and Learning guidelines for the management of EMA.
- EMA provides financial support for 16 to 19 year olds from low income households who are **attending** full-time education at the College. The aim is to increase participation and retention in post-compulsory education for this group of people.

Policy Statement

- Methodist College Belfast will endeavour to provide students with EMA support under qualifying conditions.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department for Employment and Learning Educational Maintenance Allowances and the **College Pupil Attendance Policy and Positive Behaviour Policy**.
- The EMA Learning Agreement is between the pupil and the College. **We can only discuss payment issues with the pupil concerned and not with a third party.**

Responsibilities

- The College Rolls and Records process the payments of EMA.
- The Head of Senior School is responsible for the effective operation of this policy.
- The Head of Senior School is responsible for ensuring that all enrolled students receiving EMA have a signed Learning Agreement.
- The Head of Senior School is responsible for ensuring that student attendance information is passed to Rolls and Records for recording on the College EMA Portal system to satisfy the conditions of the EMA award.
- It is the responsibility of the student to manage their attendance and their entitlement to EMA and to follow up initially with their Tutor regarding absences which may have affected their payments. The second point of contact to verify reasons of non-payment is with Rolls and Records and finally to speak directly with the Head of Senior School to discuss any unresolved issues.
- It is the responsibility of students to inform the College of changes to their circumstances.
- Form Staff are responsible for advising the Head of Senior School of students not meeting the attendance requirements and being considered for disciplinary action.

Criteria for Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

- EMA provides financial support for 16 to 19 year olds from low-income families who undertake a full time course at college.
- The EMA is a weekly allowance payable during term time.
- EMA is paid directly to young people on a fortnightly basis, into their bank account.
- The weekly allowance rate for eligible students currently is £30.00.
- ***The EMA is only paid for full weeks of attendance within term time. It will only be paid when 100% weekly attendance has been achieved by the young person. No payment will be made for part attendance.***
- EMA payments are not made during school holidays.
- The applicant must have a current signed Learning Agreement and must adhere to the conditions of that Learning Agreement.
- Students will be interviewed at the time of signing a Learning Agreement to ensure that the College Policy and all objectives are understood.

Student Absence Procedure

- The College expects 100% attendance from students. Students' attendance is monitored on a daily/weekly basis. An EMA bonus payment is made twice yearly and is based on meeting the objectives as set out in the Learning Agreement.
- All absences will be treated in accordance with the College Attendance Policy.
- **Lates after 10.00 am** and **holidays in term-time** are deemed as unauthorised absence for EMA purposes.
- Where a student is not complying with the school's discipline policy, EMA can be suspended or stopped.
- Notes for unexplained absences must be submitted within two weeks of an absence to avoid a student missing a payment. Students will miss a payment if the note is produced after the cut off deadline. Please note that payment dates are set by EMA. If a note has not been submitted by the Friday morning prior to the date when a payment is due to be received then EMA cannot be paid. Unexplained absences that remain beyond a **2 week period** will not be paid unless there has been an administrative error.
- Students who are off school due to illness for a period of exceeding two weeks must provide a medical note from their GP if the EMA payment is to be continued at the discretion of the College.
- Students who are absent without permission from timetabled classes (including study periods) will not be paid for that week. If a student arrives late to a class, they should ask the teacher to make note of this on the class register to ensure that attendance at class has been recorded.
- Students must make sure that they are registered for **every timetabled class** to get their payments. If an error occurs, the student needs to ensure that it is corrected by speaking to the teacher concerned and by informing Rolls and Records. It is the **student's responsibility** to ensure that all attendance records are accurate and up-to-date. If an issue remains unresolved beyond the 2 week cut off date payment may not be made unless Rolls & Records receive an indication from a teacher that a 'class register' amendment has been made.
- EMA payments are paid into students' bank accounts on a fortnightly basis, subject to confirmation of attendance criteria being satisfied.

Right of appeal

- Appeals against Entitlement must be made directly to the Department for Employment and Learning and cannot be considered by the College.

- Appeals in respect of the funding of EMA non-payment should be made in writing within 5 days addressed in the first instance the Head of Senior School. Appeals will only be considered if they relate to Special Circumstances which may result in some type of discretionary entitlement related to the process.
- The letter of appeal should state clearly the reason for the appeal, the basis for the appeal and the acceptable outcome.

Recovery of Funds

- Prior to the authorisation of payments to students, they are required to sign a learning agreement/acknowledgement of funding form confirming that they undertake to repay on demand, any overpayments which may, for any reason be made to them.