

# **Cleeve School Sixth Form**

A student guide to the  
Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)  
September 2004

## What is an EMA?

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), available from September 2004 is designed to give young people from lower income households the chance to stay on in further education. EMA pays up to £30 a week directly into your bank account if you stay on in education at school or college after your GCSEs.

The money can be spent on items such as travel costs, books or equipment. It's your money, so you decide how to spend it. If you are entitled, you'll receive your EMA payment every week of your course, providing you attend registration, tutor time, assembly and all timetabled classes. You also have to achieve your learning goals and behave in an acceptable manner. The achievement goals you are expected to reach are to meet or exceed your ALIS target for every A level subject, and gain at least a C or above in your effort grades in the autumn and spring assessment profile. Your formal report might also influence the decision.

This booklet will provide you with the information you need to know to ensure you receive your payment without any problems.

### What will you have to do to receive your payment?

You will need to bring in to school on the first day of term, the Contract Part 1, sent to you by the Application and Payment Body (APB) to confirm that you are eligible for an EMA. Give this document to Mrs. Morison as soon as possible.

At the start of your course, you will be asked to agree your learning goals. You will be given a time-table of your classes, tutorials and any other activities, which are part of your course. This will be set out in the Cleeve Sixth Form Student Learning Agreement which you, your parents and tutor will sign.

You will have to attend **all** your classes and achieve the goals set out in your Learning Agreement.

### What do we mean by attendance?

To receive the weekly payments you will have to attend all of your classes - 100% attendance is needed. This includes attendance for tutorials and Core Studies classes, which form part of your Learning Agreement.

Any absence falls into two categories, authorised and unauthorised and these are detailed below. If the school deems an absence to be authorised, payment will be given as long as there are no unauthorised absences within the same week.

### It is Your Responsibility to:

- ◆ Attend all classes including tutorials, assembly, PE, Core Studies and subject lessons on time. Failure to attend any of the above during the week will mean no payment will be made for that week.

- ◆ Where possible, seek authorised absence permission at least 1 week in advance from the school. Do this via your tutor.
- ◆ Whenever possible, notify the school in advance of planned absence.
- ◆ Notify the school of unplanned absence, including reasons for absence, between 8.30 and 11.30am on the day of absence using the school designated telephone number which can be found in your planner. You will be asked for your name and tutor group and the reason for absence. This information will be recorded. You are advised to keep a note of when you telephoned school.

### School Responsibilities

It is the school's responsibility to:

- ◆ Record your attendance, authorised and unauthorised absences.
- ◆ Notify the Application and Payment Body (APB) of your attendance on a weekly basis.
- ◆ Notify you if your payment has been stopped, including a reason for stoppage.
- ◆ Review your progress against goals set in your Learning Agreement on a regular basis and make decisions regarding any Learning Progress bonuses.
- ◆ Please note that Cleeve School does not handle any EMA funds and therefore cannot issue the money direct to students. Making payments is the responsibility of the APB.

## Absences

You will be paid only if you have attended all sessions for which you have been timetabled, plus tutor time and assembly. If you have missed any of your classes, unless the absence was previously authorised by the College, you will not receive your EMA payment for that week.

The school will presume that any absence is unauthorised, unless there is a valid reason otherwise. This means the school does not have to justify a decision not to authorise an absence.

Where the reason for absence could not reasonably have been foreseen, or there are special circumstances, the school will take account of all evidence in making its decision regarding payment of the EMA. If the claimed reason for the absence could have been foreseen, advanced notice should have been given. If advanced notice was not given, this will be counted as an unauthorised absence and therefore no payment will be awarded. The decision of the school is final.

An absence which has not been notified in advance should be notified to the school on the day in question between 8.30 and 11.30am.

Isolated periods of genuine sickness, i.e. no more than two per term, may not preclude payment of the EMA, but there will be no payment if you are away for the whole week. Clearly, an emerging pattern of non-attendance due to sickness without explanation would be unacceptable.

It is your responsibility to notify the school of absences within the required time and in the correct manner. Please inform your tutor who can then enter the correct absence code into the register. Failure to do so will result in an unauthorised absence being recorded resulting in a non-payment.

Examples of authorised absences, which can be foreseen in advance, include:

- a. *A medical appointment which cannot be arranged outside school or college hours. Please bring in your appointment card to show your tutor.*
- b. *A particular need to look after a family member or another person for whom you have caring responsibilities. However, the school will not regularly authorise absences for this reason. Where such responsibilities are regularly interrupting attendance patterns, the school will explore solutions with you.*
- c. *A religious holiday.*
- d. *A visit to a University either to attend an open day or for interview; or a career related interview.*
- e. *An appointment with a Connexions Advisor (although these should normally be scheduled to avoid disruption to your studies).*
- f. *A work experience placement which is an integral part of a course, and for which you do not receive a wage.*
- g. *Participating in a significant extra-curricular activity, such as drama, music, sport or volunteering. Authorised absence will only be granted where the activity reflects a significant level of personal achievement (for example, taking part in a regional or national event), or for some other one-off event. Where a pattern of frequent participation in such activities is proposed, the school will explore solutions with you.*
- h. *Attendance at a probation meeting.*
- i. *Attendance at the funeral of a relative or close friend.*

- j. Severe and ongoing disruption to your mode of transport and you have no other way of travelling to school..*
- k. A driving test.(not lesson)*
- l. A school representatives' meeting (e.g Council Meeting)*

This list is not exhaustive. The school will also take into account the number of absences, repetitions of the same reason and whether there is sufficient evidence in making a decision regarding payment of the EMA

Examples of reasons for absence, which would not normally be acceptable, include:

- a. Holidays.*
- b. Part or full time work which is not part of your programme of study.*
- c. Leisure activities.*
- d. Birthdays or similar celebrations.*
- e. Babysitting younger siblings.*
- f. Shopping.*
- g. Driving lessons.*

Examples of reasons for unforeseen absence, which may be acceptable, if notified to the College on the day, include:

- a. An emergency situation involving a family member or another person for whom you have caring responsibilities, e.g. sudden severe illness.*

- b. *Transport problems, where these were not known about in advance and where there is no alternative means to hand.*

The school reserves the right to request evidence to support the reasons for absence, for example a doctor's note.

### Achievement

To receive your EMA payment, it is essential that you fulfil the obligations that have been agreed between you and the school and achieve your learning goals.

In addition to your weekly payment, you could also be entitled to bonus payments. The purpose of these bonuses is to reward your learning progress against learning goals. At the commencement of your course, you will be asked to sign a Learning Agreement which is a contract listing your learning goals. The contract will explain that for you to receive bonus payments, you will need to achieve satisfactory completion of your learning goals.

### Appeals

There may be many reasons why your EMA payment has been withheld. The school will explain the reasons to you. If you are not happy with the decision you have the right to appeal.

If a payment has been withheld because of an error, the decision to withhold payment will be reviewed immediately and, if appropriate, the payment will be authorised without delay.

If a payment is withheld for other reasons, you have the right to an explanation as to why the decision has been taken. To turn an unauthorised absence into an authorised absence, the burden of proof lies with you. If a decision is to be challenged,

again the burden of proof lies with you. If you remain dissatisfied with the decision, you have a right to appeal.

You must appeal in writing, stating the case for dissatisfaction with a decision. The appeal meeting will normally be held within two weeks of the receipt of a written appeal.

The appeal where you will have the opportunity to present your case, will be chaired by a senior member of staff. The decision reached by the senior member of staff will be final. Written records will be kept of the appeal and the decision reached.

When considering an appeal you should remember that all absences are in the first instance unauthorised; the burden of proof that they should be authorised lies with you.

### Payments

Making payments is responsibility of the APB. Cleeve School does not handle any EMA funds and therefore cannot issue the money directly to students.

If a payment has been withheld because of an error, this will be rectified and payment made without delay. Occasionally this may result in you receiving two payments in one week.

If the school authorises a payment in error, which is noted after you have received the money, the APB will stop the next payment. You will be advised if this is to happen in advance.