



# Whole School Attendance Policy & Procedures

*'Knowing the best that has been thought  
and said and knowing that we are loved by God'*

**Approved by:** Jim Connolly

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**Last reviewed on:** May 2019

**Next review due by:** May 2021

## The Law

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School attendance is a legal requirement and this information about our attendance expectations is in line with the 2013 Department for Education expectations as well as subject to requirements contained in The Education Act 1996.

***The legal duty is on parents/carers to ensure that their children are educated, either at school or 'otherwise'.***

Education is therefore compulsory. In terms of 'otherwise' children may be educated by their parents/carers at home, by a private tutor or in establishments other than schools, i.e. – FE colleges from the age of 14, special units, hospitals or in alternative educational programmes or work experience.

The law does allow parents/carers to choose the alternative options, provided they can demonstrate to the Local Authority that the education is full-time and 'suitable' to the child's education needs, up until the relevant leaving-date for all young people.

The Government expects schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled to. Therefore, at Saint Martin's, we act early to address patterns of absence.

The Local Authority expectation on attendance is 95%. At Saint Martin's Academy, we have an aspirational attendance target of at least 96% to support outstanding progress for all of our students. A student will fall below 96% if they miss as little as half a day over a 2-week period.

Parents/carers are expected to perform their **legal duty** by ensuring their children, of compulsory school age, who are registered at Saint Martin's Catholic Academy, attend regularly and arrive to school on time.

It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student, that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

## The Context

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Saint Martin's Academy places a high priority on achieving excellent levels of attendance and punctuality enabling all students to achieve their maximum potential by taking full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. There is a proven link between high Academy attendance and academic success; therefore, it is essential that Saint Martin's Academy, parents/carers and students, consistently work together in order to achieve this. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind.

It is the expectation of the school that all students will achieve at least 96% attendance.

Each year a school calendar is sent out via the school website which clearly indicates the days when your child is expected to be in school. If your child tells you that school is to be closed on a day not indicated on the school calendar, please check by telephoning the school and speaking to one of the office staff- 01455212386.

Attendance figures can be viewed by parents/carers through their school reports, Go4Schools software. This allows parents/carers to be regularly informed of both their child's attendance and punctuality. Parents are also informed about their child's attendance in the annual full report, at parent's evenings and in Progress Review meetings.

## Parent / Carer Expectations

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It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure the following:

- Ensure the child attends Saint Martin's Academy daily and is punctual.
- Contact Saint Martin's Academy on each day of absence, by 9:00 at the latest.
- Arrange medical or dental appointments over the lunchtime period or outside of Academy hours
- Inform Saint Martin's Academy of any future appointments in advance
- Provide medical evidence by way of appointment cards or appointment letters or prescriptions of medications
- Attend meetings if requested with regards to attendance or lateness as appropriate

## Monitoring

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The following codes are to be used for absences on the register:

### Code L: Late to school

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School will mark a child as L if they arrive at school after 9:00am but before 10:00. If your child arrives late, they must sign in at the main reception.

### Code U: Late

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If your child arrives after 9:59am, they must sign in at main reception and will be given unauthorised late (U) which is counted as an absence by law.

### Code I: Illness

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Schools can request medical evidence from parents / carers if they feel the authenticity of an illness is in doubt.

### Code M: Medical or dental appointments

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Parents / Carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.

### Code C: Other circumstances

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This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, ie – family funeral.

### Code D: Dual Registered

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This code will be used if a student is registered at two schools.

### Code J: Interview

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This code will be used when it has been agreed that the student can miss school to attend an interview or entrance.

### Code P: Approved sporting activity

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This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, ie – training sessions, trials and sporting events, only at the discretion of the school.

### Code R: Religious Observation

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This code is used to cover major religious festivals during term-time. The school will only authorise one-day absence for religious events.

### Code V: Educational visits and trips

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### Code G: Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence and the parents/carers still take the child on holiday, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents/carers did not apply for the leave of absence in advance the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

### Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

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Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence.

### Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

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If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

We closely monitor your child's attendance. For the majority of students this will be monitored on a weekly basis. For small groups of children, attendance is monitored more regularly to ensure that parents/carers can be supported by the school to get their child to engage in school life.

Saint Martin's will alert you if we feel there is a cause for concern. The school undertakes a wide range of measures to support students where attendance at school is a concern. Where there may be an issue and we fail to see an improvement it may be necessary to take the next steps. For instance, we may make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the student receives the support required.

### **Absence from school**

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Regular attendance at school is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the 1996 Education Act parents/carers commit an offence if the child does not attend school regularly. If your child cannot come to school because of illness, only the parent/carer must advise the school on the first day of absence by Parentmail (in the first instance) or telephone. This must be done for each individual day of absence.

Telephone messages must be left by parent / carer only, and stating the following details:

- -Parent / Carers name
- -Child's name and year group
- -Reason for absence

### **Categories of Authorised Absence**

- Treatment for illness
- If your child is unwell and sent home from Saint Martin's Academy
- Hospital, CAMHS or Orthodontic Appointments *supported* by appointment letters or cards.
- Unavoidable emergency GP or dental appointments *supported* by cards or slips.
- Advance notice of days of religious observance.
- A student excluded for a fixed period while remaining on roll with Saint Martin's Academy
- Work / college interviews

The school will determine if the absence is to be *authorised* or *unauthorised*. The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. The school will request medical evidence

- medical appointment card with one appointment entered,
- letter from a professional, doctor's note,
- medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription,
- print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence.

The school will not authorise medical absence after the third consecutive day without this evidence.

## **Categories of Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. These are an offence by the parent/carer. Such circumstances include but are not limited to:

- Truancy through the school day
- Parents or carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- No reason for absence given
- Students who arrive at St Martin's after registration has closed
- Holidays and day trips in term time
- A student not attending school as it is his/her birthday or the birthday of a family member
- A student not attending school due to attending a hospital appointment for another family member
- A student not attending school due to the fact the family returned late in the previous evening from a family holiday
- A student not attending school as they are looking after younger siblings
- A student not attending due to an alternative school timetable day
- A student attends a medical appointment in the morning but then fails to return to school for afternoon lessons

If no message is received, we will assume that your child is absent without your permission. We will then make every effort to contact you. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' visit.

## **Leave of Absence in term time**

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Under the DFE 'Advice on School Attendance' parents/carers can no longer expect schools to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday.

In addition, if the student does not return within 14 days of the agreed return date the school has the right to remove the student from the school register without parental consent. This would mean the student would lose their place at school.

## Safeguarding

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Under the 1989 Children Act the Local Authority has the power to issue an Education Supervision Order (ESO) and place a child under their supervision on the grounds that the child is not being 'properly educated' and is in danger of 'significant harm'. The Local Authority can issue an order if the child is persistently absent from school. The Local Authority appointed 'Supervisor' can give 'directions' to the parents/carers on how the child should be educated and work with the parent to ensure the child attends school regularly. The Local Authority may use an ESO as an interim measure before moving directly to prosecution.

Under the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act, if a student continues to have attendance issues after a parent has been convicted, the courts can also issue a Parenting Order. This legally requires the parents to participate in a programme of parenting support and counselling. If unauthorised absence continues, a new case will be brought against the parent/s but previous parental failure to engage with the school and local authority can be cited.

If a Penalty Notice Fine is issued by the court, the school will be required to continue to monitor the student's attendance and begin the intervention process again if the student has a further 20 sessions (10 days) unauthorised absence from the date the fine was issued by the court. This may result in further legal action taken against the parent if the student continues to have periods of unauthorised absence from school.

The school reserves the right to invite parents/carers into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns, i.e. – female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, emotional abuse, neglect, domestic violence, forced marriage, radicalisation. In addition, if the school suspects that a student may be at potential risk as a result of their absence from school the safeguarding team reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies, i.e. – social care, police. The school will inform parents / carers if a referral is to be made. However, this may not be appropriate in every circumstance depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern and a referral may be made without informing the parent / carer.

The school recognises that when a child goes missing from school it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, i.e. – sexual abuse or exploitation. The school follows section 8h of the Education Regulations Act (2006) the school will make 'reasonable' enquiries into the location of pupils with 10 days continuous unauthorised absence or for those who fail to return from leave of absence granted during term time. A referral will be made to the Local Authority and police where appropriate.

The school reserves the right, however, to contact relevant agencies to seek advice (Children's Social Care, Police)

If any child is absent from school for *more* than five days without confirmation from parents/carers. Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents/carers to ensure the child is safe and well, including home visits.

The school will contact relevant agencies after three consecutive days' absence without consent from parents / carers if the child is subject to a 'Child in Need' plan or considered vulnerable in other ways.

## Home Education

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If a parent/carer wishes to withdraw a child from the school, the child will be known as 'Electively Home-Educated'. Any parent/carer wishing to withdraw their child from the school will be required to confirm this in writing to the Principal (Mr Wright), indicating the date of which the Home Schooling began.

The school will forward this letter to the Local Authority and the child will be removed from the Admission register at Saint Martin's Catholic Academy once we receive LA confirmation to do so. The Local Authority will then determine whether or not to accept this new arrangement or challenge it and the child's education will then be assessed by the Local Authority on an annual basis. However, parents/carers are unable to withdraw their child from school if they are subject to a 'School Attendance Order'.

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE 92% OR BELOW PROCEDURE

<b>Pre Phase</b>	Form tutor intervention	Refer to weekly spreadsheet to identify which pupils the Form Tutor is to verbally liaise with. Form Tutor to use student's attendance doc to highlight %, patterns, and to discuss ways to improve or identify concerns.
<b>Close monitoring. If no improvement after 2 weeks → Phase 1</b>		
<b>Phase 1</b>	HOY intervention	Refer to weekly spreadsheet for %. Contact home to be made by named person, usually H of Y or SENDCO. Can be telephone call or request CWH sends letter 1 and logs on SIMS.
<b>Close monitoring. If no improvement after 2 weeks → Phase 2</b>		
<b>Phase 2</b>	Attendance Letter 2 and also inviting Parent/Carers to meet with HoY / SENDCO.	Refer to weekly spreadsheet for %. HoY / SENDCO to liaise with Attendance Officer and instruct required action. HoY / SENDCO to request CWH sends letter 2 and logs on SIMS.
<b>Close monitoring. If no improvement after 2 weeks → Phase 3</b>		
<b>Phase 3</b>	Attendance Letter 3 and inviting Parent/Carers to meet with SLT and HoY / SENDCO.	Refer to weekly spreadsheet for %. SLT / HoY / SENDCO to liaise with Attendance Officer and instruct required action. SLT / HoY / SENDCO to request CWH sends letter 3 and logs on SIMS.
<b>Close monitoring. If no improvement after 2 weeks → Phase 4</b>		
<b>Phase 4</b>	Attendance letter 4 And inviting Parent/Carers to meet with Vice Principal and HoY / SENDCO.	Refer to weekly spreadsheet for %. SLT / HoY / SENDCO to liaise with Attendance Officer and instruct required action VP / HoY / SENDCO to request CWH sends letter 4 and logs on SIMS. If attendance continues to decline/Parent/Carer refuses to attend meetings or communicate with the school then Phase 5
<b>Close monitoring. If no improvement after 2 weeks → Phase 5</b>		
<b>Phase 5</b>	Attendance letter 5 Parents / Carers to meet with Vice Principal and HoY / SENDCO.	Refer to weekly spreadsheet for %. <b>Vice Principal to liaise with CWH to make a referral to Education Welfare Services via the Single Point of Access (SPA)</b> <b>CWH to log on SIMS.</b>

Dear parent / carer

Saint Martin's Academy places a high priority on achieving excellent levels of attendance and punctuality. This enables all students to achieve their maximum potential by taking full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. There is a proven link between high Academy attendance and academic success; therefore, it is essential that Saint Martin's Academy, parents/carers and students, consistently work together in order to achieve this.

It is the expectation of the school that all students will achieve at the very least 96% attendance.

We would like to formally recognise and congratulate your child as one of the 151 students who have maintained 100% attendance this term; this is testimony to the dedication of your child, and your family who support them.

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and look forward to seeing the 100% attendance continue into next term.

To support you in supporting your child, our school calendar features on our school website which indicates the days when your child is expected to be in school.