



# St Martin's Catholic Primary school



## Attendance Strategy

St Martin's Catholic Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her full potential.

The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and the challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives, the school will establish an effective and efficient system for monitoring attendance and lateness. It will also establish a system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual support and advice.

**For the academic year 2025-2026 they are:**

**Aim 1:**

**To improve the overall percentage of attendance and improve pupils' punctuality at school.**

The school aims to improve attendance to ensure that it is at least 96% full attendance each year.

**The target for 2025 - 2026 is 97.0%.**

This will be done by monitoring attendance regularly. Where there appears to be a problem the Attendance Lead contact parents initially (Appendix A.). If the parent doesn't respond or the problem persists the Attendance Lead informs the Head teacher. The Head teacher calls the parents into school to discuss the matter. The Attendance team then monitors the pupil's attendance daily. This will be recorded and reported to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and if the situation doesn't improve the EWO will issue targets. The school will also ensure that the quality of teaching and learning are of high quality. The school will also ensure the provision of a good curriculum that is relevant to the learner's needs. All the pupil's needs will be considered when the decision is made to contact parents. The class teacher and the Headteacher will consider the pupil's pastoral, social and cultural needs.

Good attendance is celebrated. The school makes it known to the pupils, parents and governors that it appreciates good attendance. Attendance is a feature of a school assembly once a week when the class who has more than 96% attendance receives a puzzle piece. When a class completes their puzzle they receive a reward. At the end of each half term and at the year-end certificates and rewards are presented to those children who have achieved 97%+, 98% + and 100% attendance. Bronze badges are awarded for 1 term of 100% attendance, silver badges for 2 terms and gold badges for 3 terms.

## Aim 2:

**To make attendance and punctuality a high priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, staff and governors.**

The Headteacher will report on the termly attendance figures to the governing body.

Attendance is reported to all parents each term to highlight the need to ensure good attendance and punctuality. Attendance is also included in the weekly newsletter and there is a termly parent attendance newsletter.

Attendance is discussed with the pupils at least weekly in assembly and as part of PSHE lessons.

Pupil voice will be conducted regularly to seek pupils attitudes to attendance and the importance of being in school. Staff will fulfil their duties as set out in the roles and responsibilities document.

Following working together to improve school attendance 2024, the school will no longer authorise any holidays taken during term time. Any holidays taken will be classed as unauthorised.

- If a child has more than 10 unauthorised absences (5 whole days) in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, then a fine of £160 will be issued, this will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- Only two fines will be issued in a three year period before prosecution will be considered.

We will follow Halton local authority policies. This has no financial benefit to the school, but is a requirement, set by government, to support good attendance and therefore boost learning.

## Aim 3:

**To utilise a systematic approach of analysing attendance and punctuality to address PA at the earliest opportunity.**

The school uses an electronic registration system (Arbor). The Headteacher and staff are able to access detailed information about any individual or group within the school. The Attendance Lead shares this information with the EWO. The attendance team receives daily information of each class' attendance, which triggers telephone calls/ home visits to see why the child is absent.

Additionally, the Head teacher receives specific data weekly.

The school uses the prescribed registration format and system for completing registers.

Children who arrive late are recorded as late. Children who arrive after 0920 hrs are recorded as U. Persistent lateness (more than 15%) will trigger a parent meeting. Lateness is reported to parents termly as number of minutes of learning lost due to lateness. Targets are set after week 3 of the school year and monitored closely in line with national guidance (unless a PA in previous academic year where these targets are set immediately). Teacher meetings take place to discuss cause for concern and what we as a school can do to support the families and a class action plan is completed. Where attendance is causing concern school follows a graduated approach and children will be placed on an attendance response pathway.

**Promoting attendance is everyone's responsibility.**

## **Removal from Roll**

From the 1st September 2016 changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to:

- Inform the LA in every circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register
- Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school.
- Provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school.

If your child is leaving our school parents are asked to:

- Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.
- If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

## **Attendance rewards system**

### **Individual pupil rewards**

Monthly

Children with above 97% will be entered into a draw for event tickets

Every term

100% attendance certificates and bronze, silver, gold pins

Most improved attendance – small prize

Every year

100% Perfect attendance award, badge and prize

98%+ Excellent attendance award



### **Class rewards**

Each week the class with attendance over 96% gets a puzzle piece

Class with less than 5 lates gets a puzzle piece

When a class completes their puzzle they get a class reward such as school trip or event e.g. class breakfast/shopping trip

Every time a class has 100% attendance they receive an attendance star – when they have 10 they get a class reward such as own clothes day or movie afternoon

Class with best overall attendance each child given a small prize at the end of the academic year

### **Parent rewards**

Parents who help achieve 98% + attendance will be entered into a raffle for a shopping voucher each term.

## Attendance Expectations and Absence Procedures

A child not attending school is considered to be a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is required.

### Expectations of Parent/Carer

We believe every child has the right to access a high quality education so they can 'Love to Learn and Learn to Love'. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law. Parents are expected to support The School's attendance policy by positively encouraging children to attend school on time every day

- Ensure your child arrives for school on time.
- Telephone school if your child is to be late.
- For routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments please ensure they are made outside of school hours.
- Contact school preferably by 8:40am on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend through illness, giving an indication of the expected duration and return date to school.
- If a text message/phone call is received as a result of your child's absence it is important that you respond to this text to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact the Family Support worker if the reason for absence requires a more personal contact.
- **In case of emergency** we need up to date contact numbers at all times so please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers. (As a school we request a minimum of **three** emergency contact details be provided)
- Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing to the Headteacher and can only be authorised by the Headteacher. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school, include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays.

### If a pupil is absent, we will

- Telephone and text the parent/carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 9am.
- If no response is received and the absence is unauthorised a member of school staff will conduct a home visit. If there are safeguarding concerns, contact will be made with the family as soon as possible.
- If a pupil's absences are increasing and we are not aware of a good reason the parent/carer will be invited to meet with the head teacher.
- If absences persist the head teacher will discuss actions with the Education Welfare Officer.

### Understanding types of Absence

Schools must record every absence that a pupil takes from school and this is why it is important that parents/carers advise school about the cause of any absence, preferably by calling the school on the first day of absence and in writing on the pupil's return.

### Authorised Absence

Authorised Absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the Headteacher, not parents who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

## Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised Absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes but is not exclusive to:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- Absences which have not been explained.
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get their mark.

This type of absence may lead to the use of Penalty Notices or other sanctions from the Local Authority. St Martin's Catholic school will issue warning letters to parents where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any 10 week period. The warning period will cover a period of 20 school days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time the school will refer to case to the local authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued.

## Persistent Absence

Pupils are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DFE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DFE expects schools to intervene well before pupils reach a level of persistent absence.

Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school as soon as possible to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.

Parent/Carers are asked to contact the school in the first instance. Children may not be allowed to attend residential trips if their attendance is below 90%.

## Why Regular Attendance is very important

Our vision is for all children to flourish in our school and experience 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect pupils' learning.

Pupils who have time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

90% attendance is equivalent to a pupil missing one half day per week or missing 4 whole weeks over the year - approximately 120 lessons per year missed.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

## The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The Education Welfare Officer – provides support for parents/carer and advice on problems relating to attendance and encourages good communications between home and school.

The EWO will always try to resolve the situation by agreement with the family but, if a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists the EWO will be required to give consideration to the instigation of legal proceedings which include; Penalty Notices, Parental Prosecution and Education Supervision Orders. Details regarding attendance law, penalty fines and legal interventions are available from the Local Authority.

## **Types of absence**

### **Medical and Dental Appointments:**

We expect parents to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays whenever possible. If this is not possible then authorisation will be given where confirmation of the appointment is received via one of the methods already listed.

Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents expected to return their children to the school following the appointment whenever possible. Work with us by arranging these appointments during break or lunchtime or as late in the school day as possible to reduce the amount of learning missed.

### **Procedure for taking a child out of school during the school day:**

Parents/carers report to the office. The child is collected from class by the office staff. The absence is recorded on the iPad with the reason, time and whether the child is returning to school.

### **Special Occasions:**

A request to attend a special occasion during school time e.g. family wedding, must be made in advance and the head teacher will make the decision as to whether to authorise the absence. If a child has good attendance the head teacher will try to accommodate this wherever possible. Parents will be notified of the head's decision.

### **Bereavement:**

The school is sensitive to family requests for a child's attendance at funerals or associated events. The head teacher will offer the family advice over absence in this instance.

### **Days of Religious Observance:**

Attendance at a religious observance held by a religious body will be granted authorised absence. The head teacher should be consulted in advance of the event. A maximum of two days' absence during any academic year will be granted for religious observance.

### **Lateness:**

Parents are expected to bring their children punctually by 8.50am for the start of the school day. Children arriving after this must be signed in by their parents using the iPad in reception. They will receive a late mark in their class register. Children arriving after 9.20 am without an adequate explanation from their parents will be given an unauthorised absence for the session. Families who regularly arrive late regularly will be contacted by the head teacher.

**Where permission has been given for a leave of absence and it is later found that the child has spent the time at home or on holiday this will then be counted as an unauthorised absence.**

## Absence Response

Action	Who?
All late arrivals recorded on iPad and details added to Arbor to complete the morning register, no later than 15 minutes after the class start time	OFFICE STAFF/AO/ TEACHERS
All messages regarding pupil absence entered into Arbor by 9.30am at the latest	AO
Attendance officer to list all absent children with “n” code and begin first response calls. Priority given to vulnerable children and PA children.	AO
First response call made to priority 1 contact on child’s list. Reason for absence recorded on Arbor.	AO
If no response from primary contact, telephone calls made to all contacts on list.	AO
Safeguarding officer to review identified absent children and establish if any further response is required	AO/DSL/FSW
Vulnerable list children identified and social worker/relevant lead professional notified.	DSL
Home visit made by 2 members of staff – attendance/ safeguarding team member plus another. If reason for absence is established, update records and reminder to carer of duty to inform school.	AO/DSL/ FSW/SENCo
If child is still unaccounted for, given all range of hard and soft data available regarding the family (CPOMS, Arbor, etc.), police welfare check requested via 101 if deemed necessary.	DSL
Cases identified for discussion/ referral to attendance officer, local authority	AO/DSL