St Martin's CE (Aided) Primary School

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Attendance Policy

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Signed:

Position:

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St Martin's CE (Aided) Primary School

Our School Vision

An inclusive, caring, Christian community, which inspires happy, confident and independent children who embrace lifelong learning, with the ambition and determination to achieve their potential. Learners develop the skills, knowledge and self-belief necessary to thrive, today and tomorrow, as global citizens, who strive to make our world a better place.

Attendance Policy

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this Attendance Policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council.

This attendance policy is consistent with the following school policies and documents:
*Admissions
*Child Protection
*Home-School Agreement
*Safeguarding
*Special Educational Needs
*Teaching and Learning
*Behaviour (including exclusion)

Our expectations of attendance and punctuality for all our pupils is included in our school's Home School Agreement, which parents and carers must sign following their child's admission to a school (statutory). It is very important, therefore, that parents and carers make sure their child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. This policy is available to all members of the school community via the school website and paper copies are available from the School Office.

The Attendance Policy at St Martin's CE (Aided) Primary School has been reviewed in line with a comprehensive range of Department for Education (DfE) and Hampshire County Council guidance on promoting regular attendance in schools. The programme aims to improve pupil attendance and at St Martin's CE (Aided) Primary School we aim to develop a consistent approach, building on best current practice.

In order to achieve and maintain high levels of attendance, this policy has been written as a reference point for the day-to-day management of attendance matters and as a key means of accountability. The aim of the policy is to promote good attendance in a document that can be shared, communicated and understood by everyone.

There is a strong statistical link between attendance below 95% and under achievement. St Martin's CE (Aided) Primary School recognises the most effective way of minimising the adverse effect that absence has on a child's attainment is to prevent all unnecessary absence. However, we will support children and families on a case-by-case basis where absence is unavoidable.

Aims

We recognise that regular and punctual attendance is an essential pre-requisite to effective learning and we aim to work closely with parents and the Local Authority to:
*promote and safeguard children's welfare;
*ensure every pupil has access to the education to which they are entitled;
*ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school;
*ensure, through the foundations that we lay, that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

Section 1: Rationale/statement of intent

For a child to reach their full educational potential a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that all children are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop

around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because research has shown that children with good attendance and punctuality:
*make better progress with their learning;
*find school routines and school work easier to cope with;
*find making and keeping friends easier;
*find learning more enjoyable;
*find it easier to transfer to secondary school.

Section 2: Operating the policy

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement contains details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

Roles and responsibilities

The staff of St Martin's CE (Aided) Primary School will:
*comply with all national and local regulations, advice and guidance, including use of Hampshire's Locality Team Absence Checklist and Response to Absence Flow Chart;
*monitor the attendance and punctuality of all children. This will ensure that attendance issues are consistently identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties;
*adopt a positive and pro-active approach towards attendance matters. We will encourage parents to take an active role in the education of their children and play a major role in improving levels of attendance and punctuality to reduce absenteeism;
*ensure the Attendance Policy is communicated to parents at the start of each autumn term and provide updates via newsletters as required. All in-year admissions and the in-coming intake will be provided with the information prior to starting;
*make provision for first-day of absence contact (see Parental Responsibility);
*ensure reasonable steps are taken before a referral is made to the Attendance Legal Panel or the Local Authority's Early Help Hub.

The pupils of St Martin's CE (Aided) primary School will:
*attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence;
*arrive in school on time.

The parents/carers of St Martin's CE (Aided) Primary School will:
*inform the school on the first day of absence;
*apply for leave of absence to the Headteacher for any planned absences well in advance;
*support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year;
*make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for on the first and subsequent days of absence;
*avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments;
*only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance;
*ensure that their children arrive on time, are appropriately dressed and are in a physical and emotional state conducive to learning;
*instil in their children a respect for education and for those delivering it.

Ensuring a 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.

Section 3: Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 9:00am, and again for the afternoon session at 1:00pm.

Lateness/punctuality

It is important that children are in school and ready to learn on time every day. Each teacher has routines in place first thing in the morning that help ensure that the rest of the day runs smoothly, they also share important messages during this time. The teachers and LSAs also use this time to work with individuals or small groups of children to follow up work from the previous day. Late arrival to school can cause disruption to the learning of others and it can be embarrassing for a child, leading to possible further absence.

The register is taken:

- **at 9:00am (doors open at 8:40 for Cherry Class, Silver Birch Class and Sycamore Class and at 8:45am for Maple Class and Willow Class).**

The school day begins at 9:00am and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**.

Morning registration closes 30 minutes after the start of school. Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U* in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary. If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*. Please be advised that, where possible, doctor and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see Section 6 for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's *Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* (See Section 6 of this policy for further detail).

What to do if my child is absent?

First day absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If a child is absent the parent must contact the School Office as soon as possible on the first day of absence and each subsequent day of absence.
This can be done by:
*leaving a message on the answer phone at the School Office 01635 597796;
*calling into the School Office and reporting the absence to the Admin Team.

If a child is absent we will:
*telephone or text the parent on the first day of absence if we have not heard from him/her – this is because we have a duty to ensure all children's safety as well as their regular school attendance;
*invite parents in to discuss the situation with a member of the Senior Leadership Team if absences persist;
*refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Third day absence

Please note: if a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start *child missing in education* procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family or visiting the home.

Ten days' absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is *at risk of missing*. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or ongoing absence

If a child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and we are concerned about their attendance and/or punctuality we will contact you to discuss this.

Children should be collected promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. If a space is available, the school may place a child into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

Section 4: Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the Admin Office) in advance and before making any travel arrangements. If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

All requests for leave of absence are considered on a case-by-case basis. In order to ensure decisions taken by the Headteacher are fair and based on accurate, valid evidence, every request for Leave of Absence must be submitted with original documentation to back-up the request.

The school will respond to all requests for leave of absence. In some instances the Headteacher may request a meeting with a parent or carer to better understand and validate the reasons a request for leave has been made.

Please note the school will not set work for children to undertake during a period of leave unless there are exceptional circumstances and a request has been made to the Headteacher.

Section 5: Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

*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;

*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:
- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Section 6: Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:
*the child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance;
*the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:
*parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings;
*parenting orders;
*Penalty Notices;
*Education Supervision Orders;
*prosecution.

For national guidance refer to*: Parental responsibility measures for behaviour and attendance*, which covers legal measures for non-attendance:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-andattendance.

For Hampshire County Council guidance refer to: *Guidance for schools on support and procedures for pursuing legal action for non-attendance*, May 2015:
www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's *Code of Conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The *Code of Conduct* is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties.

The *Code of Conduct* states that schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:
*absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive;
*persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed;
*persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met;
*absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance;
*absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance, unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:
*10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period;
*one or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:
*non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or,
*a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parents/carers** for each child. **NB:** This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: if you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order. For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Council's website at: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/possible-penalties.

Section 7

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Contact the school immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Leavers

If a child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school), parents are asked to give the School Office comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and new address and telephone numbers, the child's new school and the start date when known.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then the 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 the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as *C*, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

The regulations related to children participating in public performances are separate to those around authorising leave of absence. Headteachers can authorise this absence.

For further advice and guidance on child employment and performance licenses visit Hantsweb at: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment.

For national advice see: www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the *T* code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

For further advice and guidance on attendance and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families, see Hampshire County Council guidance at: http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrensservices/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf.

Please note pupils must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12-month period to be able to request leave for work purposes.

Further support and guidance is available from Hampshire County Council's Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS).

Section 8: Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.

Monitoring

Person responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy: Headteacher

Person responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy: Governors will monitor the impact of this policy through:
*presentation of attendance data in termly Headteacher's written report to the governing body;
*termly monitoring by the Curriculum Committee.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the governing body's planned programme of policy review. It will be reviewed at least every 2 years or when circumstances necessitate a more regular review e.g. change in legislation or trends in attendance data.