

St Martin-in-the-Fields High School for Girls

A CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY
CO-ED SIXTH FORM



ATTENDANCE POLICY

APPROVED: November 2018
DATE TO BE REVIEWED: November 2021

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Christ is at the centre of our Church of England school community where we live, love and learn together within an inclusive and equalities framework, and where students of all faiths and none are welcomed into our Anglican Christian community. In all that we do, we seek to show God's care for our students. We value, respect and celebrate all faiths and cultures because we are inspired by a welcoming, inclusive and loving God, seen in Jesus Christ and lived out through the Holy Spirit alive in every person.

Our vision is to create a safe, caring, happy and inclusive community underpinned by our HEROIC values of Hopeful, Enquiring, Respectful, Organised, Independent and Collaborative and our motto CARITATE ET DISCIPLINA - WITH LOVE AND LEARNING which come from the story of St Martin of Tours. Central to this is our school Bible verse from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.
1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Introduction

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education. The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's Home School Agreement, which parents must sign following their child's admission to the school and on a yearly basis. (Appendix 1)

The person responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy is Debbie Pieroulli, Assistant Headteacher and School Leader in charge of Attendance.

This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Safeguarding and Child protection
- Behaviour for Learning
- SEND
- Teaching and Learning

This policy will be annually published in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via the school website.

1. Rationale

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and students all play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the

education to which she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that your child is 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:

- statistics show a direct link between underachievement and absence below 95%.
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between school, and higher education, employment or training.

2. Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain 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.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular newsletter and on our school website
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events
- set targets for the school and for classes for attendance and display these in the school

3. Roles and responsibilities:

Progress Leaders, Form Tutors and all members of staff are responsible for regular liaison with the member of the school senior team responsible for Attendance and the School Attendance Officer responsible for attendance.

Responsibilities of the Form Tutor:

- Completing the register accurately, on time and monitoring pupils' attendance in an attempt to identify irregular patterns of attendance between
- The general identification and monitoring of all pupil registration and attendance
- The monitoring and registration of pupils at form time and assemblies
- Discussing with pupils any unexplained incidence of absence or lateness
- Informing the Progress Leader when unexplained absences occur
- Monitor attendance of known truants carefully including the signing of attendance reports

- Taking ownership of the tutor group; monitoring, praising and rewarding and encouraging good attendance

Responsibilities of the Progress Leader:

- Overseeing Form Tutors in their year group with regard to pupil attendance
- Developing strategies where a regular pattern of poor attendance has been identified
- Identifying with the form tutor failing attendance and rewarding positive attendance
- Organising with Form Tutor, contact with parent/carer/guardian and issuing attendance reports where appropriate
- Discussing with students incidents of absence, truancy or regular lateness
- Organising support for pupils where long absence is authorised to assist reintegration to school

Responsibilities of the Attendance Officer:

- Identifying and monitoring Persistent Absence (PA)
- Arranging School Attendance Panels and Medical Panels for identified pupils
- Initiation of CAF (Common Framework Assessment)
- Monitor and report pupil attendance to School Attendance Leader and Progress Leaders.
- Undertake home visits
- Preparation for court cases
- Liaison with social services and external agencies
- Attendance at TAC meetings/ Core Group meetings/ CP Conferences

Responsibilities of the school's attendance leader:

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. They will be responsible for day to day implementation of this policy and specifically:

- Have weekly oversight of whole school attendance statistics for monitoring and comparison to local and national targets.
- Set attendance targets with the Lambeth Education and producing attendance data for reports to governors
- Monitor attendance figures below 90% closely with a view to identifying pupils where attendance is deteriorating
- Meet regularly with the Progress Leaders to discuss attendance
- Meet regularly with the Attendance Officer to discuss attendance statistics and individual student attendance

Responsibilities of staff

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of students

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time
- Take responsibility for registering at Student Services if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours

Responsibilities of parents/carers:

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/carers will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the Form Tutor/Progress Leader 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 by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable or they do not have access to email.
- 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. This does not include weddings or family holidays

4. Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 8.30am by the Form Tutor, and again for the afternoon session at 1:20pm by the period 5 class teacher.

Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is vital to set the expectations for learning and to immediately engage your child in their learning. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher, miss getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can lead to cycles of possible further absence.

The school day begins at 8:25am and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration is at 8:30am and it closes at 8:40am.

All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary. Arrival after the close of registration (8:50am) will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence. If a student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

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

5. What to do if your 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 your child is absent you must:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence by calling 020 8674 5594
- send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us or you can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. This will be done by our truancy call system and will be either a text message on your mobile phone or a voice message on your home telephone.

Third day absence

Please note: If your 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. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family and the Attendance Officer may undertake a home visit if necessary.

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 missing from education. 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.

6. Continued or ongoing absence

If your 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 her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absences thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

Interventions for persistent absence

- Truancy call sent home
- Phone call home by attendance officer
- Contact home by Form Tutor and Progress Leader
- Absence letter sent
- Follow-up phone call made by Attendance officer and further communication by letter if necessary

- Meeting arranged with Progress Leader and Attendance Officer and Attendance Support Plan completed
- CAF form completed
- Meeting with the Education Welfare Office and Attendance Officer
- Parents and students attend School Attendance Panel or Medical Panel (including our school nurse) where poor attendance may be linked to chronic or repeated incidences of illness

Attendance Support Plans and Common Assessment Frameworks (CAF) will be used to support students identified as having problems with school attendance which may lead to the involvement of other agencies and external resources.

Not attending in circumstances related to Covid-19

If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, or has had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should self-isolate and get a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

If your child tests negative and if they feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If they remain unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they will be recorded as code I (illness). Code X will only be used up until the time of the negative test result.

If your child tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance. Code X will be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

If persistent absence continues and falls below 90%:

If attendance falls below 90% the school will follow Lambeth's procedures

- The school office will telephone or text the parents/carers on the first day of absence if the family has not made contact
- The school will continue to call every day until the fifth day of absence
- On the fifth day of absence the school will send a first school warning letter requesting the parents to respond to give a reason for absence and when their child will return to school
- If the warning letter is not responded to after three days, the parent will then be sent a second school warning letter
- The Home School Liaison Officer will contact home and arrange a home visit and or a School Attendance Panel (SAP) meeting
- If no response has been received and no meeting has taken place with parents/carers and students, then a first court warning letter will be sent at the end of the second week
- If the situation persists (for a further two weeks) where there is no adequate response from phone calls, home visits and 'failure to attend' letters, then a second court warning letter will be sent
- The school will continue to monitor via phone calls, home visits and invitations to attend a SAP
- If after a further 14 sessions there has been no contact with the family a second home visit will be conducted

Referral to the Local Authority (LA) for Legal Action

If the situation persists despite letters, phone calls and failed visits then the following will apply:

- Referral to court proceedings (school and LA)
- Letter sent to home and to court's officer
- Court panel is arranged/court action
- Dependent on response, file is referred back to court's officer
- Summons to attend court as necessary.
- Penalty Notices applied

Reintegration

If there are ongoing issues the school may consider one or more of the following alternative provision:

- A phased reintegration back to school
- An amended timetable – personalised learning programme in the Support for Learning Faculty
- External support and counseling for the family

7. 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 Head Teachers 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 should write to the Head teacher 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 fixed-penalty fine or other legal action may be taken in accordance with our attendance policy.

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

8. 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 or 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.

9. Penalty notices

The Education Regulations 2007, which came into effect on 1st September 2007, set out the framework for the operation of the penalty notice scheme (PN) in respect of unauthorised absence from school and the whereabouts of excluded pupils in the first 5 days of absence.

Specifically, a PN may be issued as an early alternative to prosecution or other forms of intervention as follows depending on the individual circumstances.

- Where a pupil has at least 10 days unauthorised absence during any given continuous 3 month period (school time only) and the parent(s) are not cooperating with the LA and/or school to resolve the problem
- The parent has received a formal warning of the possibility of a PN being issued and given a minimum of 15 school days to effect an improvement
- Where a pupil is required to attend alternative education provision at a named site, school or pupil referral unit and fails to attend on or after the first day

In addition, in the following exceptional circumstances, a PN may be issued without written notification to the parent depending on the individual circumstances:

- Where a parent has taken the pupil on holiday during term-time without the school's authorisation or (in cases where the school has authorised absence for a holiday) has failed to return the pupil to school on the date agreed with the school
- Where a pupil and parent(s) have been stopped by a truancy sweep, and parent(s) cannot provide an acceptable reason for absence
- Where a child is excluded from school and is seen in a public place during normal school hours on the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion
- Consideration will be given to whether there is reasonable justification of the pupil to be in a public place. This will depend on individual circumstances. Justifiable reasons could be: the child having a pre-arranged medical appointment, a medical emergency which requires immediate attention, a pressing need for the parents to seek medical help and may feel it inappropriate to leave their child alone at home and unable to make alternative arrangements for the supervision of the child

Payment and collection of fines

All penalties will be paid to the Local Authority (LA) which will retain the revenue to cover the costs of issuing or enforcing notices, or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay. The penalty is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of invoice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days.

Prosecution for non-payment fines

The parent cannot be prosecuted for the particular offence for which the notice was issued until after the final deadline for payment has passed (42 days after the receipt of the invoice) and cannot be convicted of that offence if they pay a penalty in accordance with the notice.

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 42 day period the LA must either:

- Prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies; or
- Withdraw the notice (limited circumstance)

10. Study leave

We believe that students' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period, therefore, and students will be expected to attend school in the usual way. Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 students during the time of the GCSE examination period. Should any students wish to attend school (or should their parents wish them to) on the days and at times when they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so. The school will work within the legal requirements, ie: study leave should only be granted to students in Years 11, 12 and 13 and never to those in other year groups. It should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, i.e. not before the beginning of that period. It should be used sparingly, taking account of an individual student's ability to manage and benefit from unsupervised study.

10. Teenage pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a student in school and, wherever possible, her return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

11. Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years.

Associated Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Students with Medical Conditions
- Medicines in School Policy

Appendix 1 - Home-School Agreement

St Martin-in-the-Fields High School for Girls

Home School agreement

It is the responsibility of the school:

- To provide a Christian environment in which students will develop the spiritual and our HEROIC values
- To provide a safe and secure environment in which students can fulfil their full academic, sporting, moral and cultural potential
- To establish effective partnership and communication with parents
- To enable students and staff to uphold the four expectations of the school

Signed: _____ (Headteacher)

It is my responsibility as a parent/carer:

- To support the spiritual and moral development of my child
- To ensure my child attends the academy in full uniform and is properly equipped for the day
- To support the academy in upholding the four school expectations
- To take an active role in my child's education by supporting them at home in their studies and by attending parents' evenings and other relevant activities
- To ensure that I am fully aware of the academies policies and latest news by referring to the school website
- To work in cooperation with staff to resolve any issues that may arise and let the school know of any issues that may affect my child's work, behaviour or attendance

Signed: _____ (Parent/Carer)

It is my responsibility as a student:

- To respect and support the Christian values of the school
- To be ready to learn
- To treat everyone with respect
- To be proud of my school
- To choose to do the right thing
- To strive for 100% attendance and punctuality

Signed: _____ (Student)