

### Introduction and Rational

St Martin's Academy recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of learning and relationships within school. Good attendance helps a child to realise their potential. Everyone associated with the school including teachers, children, governors and parents are encouraged to work in partnership to create a culture which promotes and values good attendance. Good attendance is promoted via our policy and prospectus, and is recognised and rewarded as an achievement. The school monitors attendance and ensures quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. **A child must attend school on each and everyday that they are required to do so unless an exceptional circumstance arises.**

The Attendance & Punctuality Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

### Legislation

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable ... to [their] age, ability and aptitude, and ...to any special educational needs [they] may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise"*.

Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a parent to fail to secure their child's attendance at the school at which they are registered, where that absence is not authorised by the school.

Therefore regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement, as well as being essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainments and opportunities. For the purposes of Education Law the definition 'parental responsibility' lies with whomever the child resides. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

### Procedure

Children are expected to attend school regularly, unless there is good reason for absence.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves a pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence)

The school has a duty to safeguard all of its pupils therefore if a child is absent, parents/carers should inform the school on the first day of absence, and each day of absence thereafter, stating the reason. The school office will make telephone contact with home when a child is absent and the parent/carer has **not** notified the school of the absence. If no contact can be achieved or the reason for absence is not accepted the absence will be unauthorised. At this point, the school may refer to the procedures in the Missing Child Policy if there is a concern about the welfare or wellbeing of the child.

#### 1. Punctuality

The school opens for all pupils at 8.30am. **Registration opens for all pupils at 8.50am and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at that time.**

#### 2. Lateness

The school registers are closed at 9.00am each morning. These are legal documents and are marked twice daily. All latecomers will be given a "late after register closed" mark (L) if arriving at school after registration has closed at 9am with the number of minutes late recorded. Any child arriving after registration has closed, is to report to the main office and be signed in using the digital signing screen by their accompanying parent or guardian. Any late arrivals after 9.20am will be recorded on the register as **U** which is an unauthorised absence. If the school has been advised that a child will arrive late due to a dental/medical appointment, an attendance mark will be given on arrival. Children who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other children. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, further action may be taken which may include referral to external agencies.

### **3. Appointments**

The school operates a signing out system for appointments and other periods of absence. Pupils leaving school, for any reason whatsoever, will be signed out, and if appropriate, back in again. This enables the school to monitor absence levels for appointments, and for health and safety reasons should the school need to be evacuated. Parents and Guardians should avoid appointments within the school day, where possible, and inform the school where this is not possible in advance of the appointment. Copies of appointments cards may be requested by the school to help verify the absence.

### **4. Medical Absence**

Absence due to sickness should be reported to the school by 9.15am on the first day of absence. The school should be kept informed during longer periods of absence. Any medical absence in excess of 5 days (10 sessions) should be supported by medical evidence. If no medical evidence is received then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. School will contact parents during the first day if no satisfactory reason for absence has been received. The school will work with all families on an individual basis if medical absences exceed the maximum threshold.

### **5. Recording and Reporting Absences.**

When appropriate, parents will be informed of their child's attendance level, and may be invited into school to discuss their child's attendance if it was to drop below 96% for no specific medical, or other acceptable reason. The monitoring process will include a three-step referral procedure; this includes the issuing of standard letters. Absence figures will be included in each child's annual progress report. Where a pattern of poor attendance exists and attendance does not improve, despite the school's involvement, the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will be asked for help and school staff will be used as and when required to support the child and family.

### **6. Application For Exceptional Circumstances.**

In September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, make it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any Leave of Absence (holiday) during term time unless there are 'Exceptional Circumstances'.

The Head Teacher and members of the Governing Body will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must complete an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form available from the school office. It should be noted that if any application is declined and unauthorised absence occurs, then school may apply to the Local Authority for consideration of a Fixed Penalty Notice which would be issued to each parent/carer according to the appropriate legislation.

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away, but also they are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid. Clearly, there are times when children are unwell and cannot avoid being absent from school. Absence for any reason other than sickness must be avoided.

The school reports attendance levels to the Governing Body and Academy Trust. The governing body is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with school policy.

## Appendix 1.

### Cheshire West & Chester

#### Code of Conduct for Education Fixed Penalty Notice (Unauthorised Leave of Absence & Irregular Attendance)

1. A Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
2. A maximum of two FPNs may be issued in an academic year and these FPNs may be issued against each parent/carer of a child. Once two FPNs have been issued, should there be further unauthorised absences, the Local Authority are able to move to prosecution immediately.
3. A FPN may be issued per parent per child.
4. Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if
  - Unauthorised absences of at least 10 consecutive school sessions (five school days). Sessions either side of a weekend or school holiday will be counted as consecutive school days.
  - For poorly attending pupils, at least 10 sessions (five school days) lost due to unauthorised absence during a school term. These do not need to be consecutive.
  - For poorly attending pupils, persistent late arrive at school in a term. Persistent means at least 10 sessions of late arrival.
  - Truancy
  - The presence of an excluded child in a public place in the child's first five days of exclusion.
5. The Academy must notify parents of the Attendance Policy and clearly state that parents may receive an FPN for an unauthorised leave of absence relating to holiday in term time.
6. Schools and the Education Welfare Services will take into account and exceptional circumstances when determining whether to issue a FPN