



St Martin's Garden
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Approved by Governors: 4th June 2018

Review Due: June 2019

Signed: Head teacher

Signed: Chair of Governors

Introduction and Background

At St Martin's Garden Primary School we recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil's achievement.

Principles

Education is important.

Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent and can result in legal action by Bath & North East Somerset Council.

Sometimes, children are ill or unhappy about attending school. Families can be going through unsettled times which can make regular school attendance difficult.

Any problems with regular attendance are best discussed and resolved between the school, the parents and the child at the earliest possible stage.

It is never better to cover up children's absence from school or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter and may only serve to make things worse.

The Law

All children of compulsory school age who are registered at school MUST attend school regularly. The expectation is 100% attendance unless they are prevented from attending due to illness or any unavoidable cause.

Expectations

Children need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Absence from school can leave children vulnerable to falling behind with their learning and not reaching their full potential.

The government expects:

- Schools to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence
 - Ensure every child has access to full time education to which they are entitled
 - Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents & Carers to:
 - Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children who are registered at school attend regularly
 - Ensure their children arrive on time.

Rewarding & Celebrating Good Attendance

Children who achieve 100% attendance for each term are presented with a certificate at the end of each of the six terms.

The highest attending class for each week will be rewarded with 15 minutes reward time (30 minutes reward for 100%) which the class decides how to spend.

Start and End Times of the School Day

The school day starts at 8:50am and finishes at 3:15pm.

The doors open for breakfast club at 8:00am.

We encourage parents/carers to bring their child/children to school in the morning and we open the playground at 8:45am to receive children.

Reasons for Absence

If a child fails to attend St Martin's Garden Primary School, it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to establish, with support from the Administrative Team, the reason for the child's absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by St Martin's Garden Primary School staff as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information regarding the reason for each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for valid reasons, such as illness or another unavoidable reason. However leave may be granted on compassionate grounds, in an emergency.

Unauthorised absences are those that school staff do not consider reasonable. Parents may be committing an offence if children are kept away from school.

Some examples of absences that are 'unauthorised' are:

- Keeping children away from school without a good reason e.g. shopping, birthdays, haircuts, waiting for parcels, day trips, visiting relatives
- Absences that have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get their attendance mark in the register
- Taking holidays during term time.

Resolving Problems

Parents & Carers are expected to contact St Martin's Garden Primary School staff and to work with them in resolving any attendance difficulties. Sharing information can be key to improving the attendance.

If difficulties cannot be resolved within school and the child continues to be frequently or persistently absent from school, the Headteacher will refer the child to

the Children Missing Education Officer (CMEO) from Bath & North East Somerset Council.

CMEOs can use legal proceedings if required, including penalty notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court, to secure improved attendance.

Alternatively, parents may themselves wish to contact the CMEO to ask for help or information. CMEOs are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. The Children Missing Education Service number is available from the school reception or by contacting Bath & North East Somerset Council.

Procedures

St Martin's Garden Primary School has a responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. This level of absence adds up to missing more than half a term out of the whole school year. Children who miss this much school are called '**persistent absentees**' by the government, whatever the reason for their absence.

90% attendance indicates poor attendance and means that your child misses:

- one half day each week
- nearly four weeks every school year
- over one school year in a school career.

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to support children with poor attendance :

During Parental Consultation Meetings throughout the year, and alongside the child's Annual Report at the end of each parents will be notified of their child's school attendance rate.

Parents of children whose attendance is between **90% and 95%** will receive a letter pointing out their child's attendance rate is below 95% and is being monitored by the school. It is important for parents to know that 95% is below the average attendance rate for primary aged children in Bath & North East Somerset.

For children whose attendance is **90% or below**:

Stage 1

- There will be an assessment of the situation.
- Parents will be informed of their child's attendance rate, by letter.
- The Assistant Head Teacher & Administrative Team will monitor the child's attendance and review 3 weekly until attendance improves and reaches 95%.

Stage 2

If the child's attendance has improved, a letter will be sent to parents noting improvement.

If the child's attendance has not improved or worsened, parents will be invited to a school level attendance meeting to discuss the issues impacting on the child's attendance and to agree any actions needed to address the poor attendance. In some cases this could also result in a Medical Action Plan (drawn up by school, parent/carer and medical professionals).

Following this meeting, regardless of whether or not the parents/carers have attended, a letter will be sent to them detailing the actions that were agreed. This letter will also advise parents that if their child incurs further unauthorised absences from school by the time of the next review, the school may refer their case to the Child Missing Education Service or may request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice as a sanction to address the unauthorised absences from school.

Stage 3

If the child's attendance has not improved or worsened then referral to Children Missing Education Service will be made.

Punctuality

All children are expected to be in the classrooms ready to learn by **8:55am**.

Persistent lateness can be as damaging to a child's schooling as persistent absence. Parents and carers who allow their child to arrive late disrupt not only their own child's education but also that of others.

Arriving on time for the start of the school day is very important for all children as it allows them to start school calmly, ready to focus on their learning.

If children do arrive late (after 8.55am), they should report to school reception and provide a reason for their lateness before joining their class. Children arriving after 8.55am will be marked as late in the attendance register. If a child arrives after 9.15am, they will be marked as late after the register closed which will mean an unauthorised absence for that entire morning session. Ten unauthorised absences in a ten week period may result in the school requesting that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice as a sanction to address the unauthorised absences from school.

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents and carers of a child who presents as persistently late may be guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance.

Term Time Holidays

It should be noted that a request for a family holiday during term time is NOT a parental right. Leave of absence in term time will be authorised only in exceptional circumstances.

It is important to understand that children who take extended leave of absence usually fall behind their peers in learning and this can have a long-term effect on their education.

Taking a child out of school without prior permission will be classed as an 'unauthorised' absence and can be subject to a penalty notice or other legal proceedings by Bath & North East Somerset Council.

Any requests for leave during term-time must be made in writing to the Headteacher at least two weeks prior to the proposed period of absence. The application for leave of absence will be considered and parents will be notified of the outcome in writing.

Once a penalty notice has been issued, the penalty to be paid shall be:

- **£60 where the amount is paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice;**
- **£120 where the amount is paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice.**

Penalty notices are issued to each parent for each child.

The penalty shall be payable to Bath & North East Somerset Council. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.

Medical and Dental Appointments

Wherever possible, parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, school staff should be informed in advance if possible. Parents/Carers are requested to provide written confirmation of these appointments. A 'present' mark may still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

The People Responsible For Attendance Matters in the School

Governors are responsible for:

- setting annual targets for attendance and monitoring progress towards their achievement
- evaluating the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy and making revisions when necessary.

The Headteacher/Assistant Headteacher is responsible for:

- ensuring that effective systems are in place to accurately record individual pupil, group and whole school attendance and punctuality patterns
- monitoring individual pupil, group and whole school attendance and punctuality
- working in partnership with key agencies when attendance and/or punctuality is an issue

- providing Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of the policy and its practice
- writing to parents/carers regarding any concerns about their child's attendance and/or punctuality
- arranging meetings with parents/carers to discuss support, and to set targets, for those experiencing attendance difficulties
- making a judgement as to whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised
- celebrating excellent performance and achievement.

Class Teachers are responsible for:

- providing an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class
- completing registers carefully and accurately at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions
- returning registers to the School Office after the closure of the registration period
- responding promptly to any issue raised in the weekly analysis of registers by Office Staff
- organising work to be sent home for children in their class who are expected to be absent for an extended period through sickness
- celebrating excellent attendance.

Office Staff are responsible for:

- preparing, managing and co-ordinating the use of the Attendance Manager System
- recording on the appropriate record sheet the reasons for absence given to them
- monitoring and tracking attendance patterns for all children and preparing relevant attendance reports when necessary
- contacting any parent/carer who has not informed the school of the reason for their child's absence on the first day of absence; this is done by phone in the first instance followed by a text
- ensuring that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of each week
- recording punctuality and reporting reasons for late arrival.

All the above can be contacted by telephone on: 01225 832112.

Summary

St Martin's Garden Primary School has a legal duty to promote regular attendance. Equally, parents and carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly.

All of the staff at St Martin's Garden Primary School are committed to working closely with parents and carers as the best way to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance.

Appendix 1 - Requested absence from school FLOWCHART

