



Parent/Carer Handbook

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Welcome to the St. Martin's community.

You are joining a school that values personal development as much as academic achievement and we are looking forward to working with you on this amazing secondary school journey and beyond.

Every child is different, so, if your child has had older siblings move through the school in recent years, or if this is your child's first experience of secondary school, do not worry, we are here to help you and your child settle in quickly and flourish in all aspects of school life.

Opportunities to learn and enjoy beyond the classroom are endless through a huge variety of extra-curricular clubs, educational trips and many varied pupil leadership opportunities. It is important that St. Martin's is at the centre of the community, and, working closely with parents and carers, we ensure that our pupils are proud to come to St. Martin's, and make excellent progress.

I have a firm belief that all of our pupils can be amazing, and have potential that they may not yet realise. It has never been more important that they not only succeed in formal qualifications, but also develop the personal skills and attributes needed in the 21st century. Through an outstanding learning experience and the relationships forged with their peers and our excellent staff, our pupils become confident, responsible, extremely well-rounded young people, who can choose their own future and are ready to make a positive difference in the world.

We look forward to working closely with you to enable your child to be the best they can be.

Jamie Foster
Executive Headteacher

Vision and Ethos

Our Mission Statement is to inspire and empower all of our pupils to realise their full potential and to *Be The Best They Can Be*.

Traditional Values

Our school ethos is based on traditional values, including pupils' personal development and wellbeing, as well as outstanding academic achievement.

We place equal importance on exemplary behaviour, smart appearance, good manners as well as encouraging all of our pupils to make a positive contribution to their school and the local community.

Learning for the Future

Gaining excellent examination results are not enough on their own to help our pupils face everyday life situations in the 21st century. Throughout their time in school, our pupils develop the skills and attributes that are key to empowering them to be successful individuals. Pupils will then go on to flourish in every aspect of their lives and leave as responsible, well-rounded young people, who are able to choose their own future, well-equipped and ready to make a difference in the world.

Outstanding Personal Achievement

This is the ultimate goal of our pupil personal journey regardless of starting point or ability. We continually encourage and challenge in all aspects of school life to enable our pupils to achieve as highly as possible. The nature of their achievement will be very different for every pupil, and will encompass a whole raft of subjects, activities and personal preferences at all levels of ability.

**The individual development of our pupils is woven
into every aspect of life at St. Martin's.**

Be Kind. Be Safe. Be Responsible.

It is a personal journey that is the never-ending ambition to....

Be The Best You Can Be.

Administrative Information

Group Call

We use software called Group Call to either text or email parents/carers, as appropriate. We only use the text facility to contact parents/carers about urgent matters. Where parents/carers do not have access to email at home or work, we are able to send a printed copy home via the pupil's register. Communication is vitally important, of course, and we, therefore, need parents/carers to notify us of any changes to personal information at the earliest possible opportunity. For further information, please refer to the St. Martin's [Communications Policy](#).

ParentPay

Parents/carers are offered the option to pay for many trips, events etc. online. ParentPay is a secure and easy way to pay for trips at any time of the day, and avoids worrying if money sent with their child has reached school safely. Details are included below (see Cashless Catering). If parents/carers have any queries regarding ParentPay, they should contact the Finance Department. At St. Martin's, we use a Cashless Catering system for all payments in the school canteen. More information for ParentPay can be found [here](#).

Arrangements in case of Severe Weather

In matters related to adverse weather conditions, we will keep the school open whenever possible, provided the safety of pupils and staff can be maintained. We will, of course, plan to prevent closures where we can.

The communication method to advise of school closure will be Group Call with notices also published on the school [website](#).

Lost Property

Since the school cannot accept responsibility for lost property, parents/carers are asked to ensure that all clothing is clearly and indelibly marked with the pupil's name. Should a child mislay property, they should report it immediately to their relevant Deputy Head of Year.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is designed to help every pupil to achieve and to be the best they can be. We have constructed a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all pupils the knowledge and cultural capital that they need to succeed in life.

We provide a curriculum that is coherently planned and sequenced towards acquiring sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment. All pupils study the full curriculum during Key Stage 3, and choose their options midway through Year 9 for Key Stage 4.

The vast majority of pupils achieve outstandingly well and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training. Our pupils gain extensive qualifications that allow them to go on to destinations that meet their interests, passions and aspirations.

The timetable is worked on a two-week system, beginning the academic year with **Week A**. When the end of term finishes on a Week A, the start of the new term will commence with Week B, and vice versa.

Pupils are provided with a map of the school at the beginning of each term in order for them to learn the room numbers in each building. Pupils will receive a copy of their timetable. The full names of the teaching staff cannot be printed on the timetable, but their teacher initials are. The department abbreviations are:

En	=	English	Ar	=	Art
Ma	=	Maths	Dr	=	Drama
Sc	=	Science	Dt	=	Design Technology
Cp	=	Computer Science	Mu	=	Music
Gg	=	Geography	Pc	=	PSHE
Hi	=	History	Pe	=	PE
Fr	=	French	Pr	=	PRE
De	=	German	Li	=	Literacy

Breaktime and Lunchtime Arrangements

Food and drink may be purchased from:

- South Hall;
- Key Stage 4 Refectory;
- Food Cube;
- Outback food outlet.

Uniform and Equipment

School Uniform

Full uniform is compulsory and must always be worn by all pupils when on the school site, when travelling to and from school, and when acting as ambassadors of St. Martin's, for example on educational visits, for sporting fixtures etc.

Parents/carers are able to purchase school uniform with the school logo from two providers: [SmartyPants](#) and [PMG School Wear](#).

All items of clothing must be marked clearly and indelibly with the pupil's name. A full list of uniform requirements can be found [here](#).

Attendance

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD ATTENDANCE AND HOW PARENTS/CARERS CAN HELP US TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE.

If a child is absent through ill-health or for any other reason, we ask parents/carers to let us know by 08:30 on each day of absence, via the relevant Deputy Head of Year.

Parents/carers will be required to leave a message explaining why their child is not in school.

Checks are made of registers each morning, and, if the pupil appears to be absent, we will initiate the Groupcall pupil absence text messaging system, which will send a text message to the parent/carer contacts to advise that their child is absent. If there is no response, the Deputy Head of Year will telephone all available contact numbers to establish a reason for absence. It is, therefore, imperative that the contact numbers included on the Admission Form are current and correct. Any changes must be advised to the relevant Deputy Head of Year.

Building on our strong focus of regular school attendance and pupil wellbeing, this academic year, we will be working with an external partner called *Aquinas (School Attendance Provisions)*.

Aquinas is a member of The National Association for Support Workers in Education (NASWE), as well as being an Accredited Company by Essex Police under The Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS). They will also work very closely with our own internal attendance and pastoral teams, as well as the Local Authority's Attendance Compliance Team.

Please book any medical appointments around the school day, where possible. Parents/carers must notify the school in advance of any pre-arranged absence or treatment. **This should be within 48 hours of the appointment being made and a copy of the appointment record should also be shared with the school when requesting absence so that this can be authorised. This request must be made to the Deputy Head of Year.** We ask parents/carers to only request leave of absence for such appointments **in exceptional circumstances**. Without this evidence, the absence will be unauthorised.

[Applications for 'Leave of Absence'](#) for other circumstances, for example, attending a family member's graduation, attending a funeral, dance and music examinations etc. must be applied for in writing, in advance, to the relevant Year Office, and before making any travel arrangements.

Family Holiday Arrangements

Pupils' absence from school for family holidays can adversely affect their progress and examination performance. Please note, any holidays during term time will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances, and a referral to Essex County Council will be made for a fixed penalty notice to be issued or possible prosecution.

Clubs and Extra-Curricular Activities

We have a large number of clubs and activities, which run at lunchtime and after school, and we actively encourage pupils to get involved in anything that interests them. In addition, we run an extensive number and variety of school trips, all of which enhance the holistic experience and learning of our pupils. Please use the link to view more information of our clubs [here](#).

Homework Policy

Home learning can make an important contribution to the learning process and development of self-directed learning. This is clearly understood by the vast majority of our parents/carers. It is our policy to set home learning on a regular basis to build on what is taught in lessons or to prepare pupils for future lessons.

At St. Martin's, we also believe that home learning is an integral part of pupils' development and an effective means of enhancing and consolidating knowledge and understanding.

The Setting of Home Learning

Home Learning is set via SatchelOne. All pupils and parents/carers can access SatchelOne as per the instructions sent out with the set-up guidance. We encourage all parents/carers to download the SatchelOne App so that they can monitor home learning and its completion. If parents/carers need any support with SatchelOne, they should contact their Deputy Head of Year for support.

Types of Homework

Home learning activities will vary significantly, particularly between younger and older pupils and departments. They may include, but are not limited to:

- reading activities;
- projects;
- extended writing, including essays;
- directed and focused work such as revision for tests;
- Pupils may also be set 'flipped learning' tasks, where pupils prepare at home for new learning, class room discussion and application tasks; thereby developing independent learning skills;
- consolidation and completion of work begun with the class teacher, thereby strengthening the learning process;
- preparation and completion of project work and examination coursework;
- research skills, for example, to find out about the life and work of a pioneer in a particular field of study; developing pupils' cultural capital.

At St. Martin's, we believe that home learning must promote learning and progress, whether preparing for new learning or responding to and consolidating prior learning.

Frequency

Key Stage 3:

	Description	Subjects
Constants	Set every week for core subjects	English, Maths, Science
Variables	The amount of home learning set will vary depending on the subject's curriculum time.	All other subjects
Reading and Literacy	We encourage all pupils to read for 15-20 minutes each day in addition to DEAR time.	

Key Stage 4:

During Key Stage 4, due to the range of varied deadlines, greater independence and flexibility is required with regard to home learning and examination preparation. However, we expect pupils to adhere to Department for Education guidelines, which state that pupils should complete between one and a half and two hours of homework per night or around ten hours per week.

Proportionally, as a guide, we expect around 20% of this time to be spent separately on English, Maths and Science, and around 10% per option subject.

It will be at staff discretion whether the homework is set as one longer task or several shorter tasks to accumulate the required hours of expected home study. We expect staff to allow a 48-hour turnaround as a minimum from setting work to the completion deadline.

Key Stage 5:

Staff will set work according to the needs and demands of the course syllabus. Therefore, home learning tasks will vary in length and frequency, as appropriate.

Homework Club

We recognise that not all pupils have a 'quiet' space in which to complete their home learning. To that end, we offer pupils a **'Homework Club' in Room NO05**. The club is open from **Monday to Thursday between 15.15 and 18.00** and available to all Year Groups. Here, pupils are offered a quiet space to work and access to computers, should they be required. The Library is also open to pupils from 08.00 every morning.

Mobile Phones

Pupils are permitted to bring mobile phones to school as they can be extremely useful in terms of their safety on the journey to and from school. However, phones must be switched off and not seen on the school site and should only be turned on again at the end of the school day when pupils have crossed the red line at the gates and left the school site.

If a staff member sees a mobile phone, it will be confiscated and taken to the relevant Year Office and parents/carers will be notified of the confiscation. On the first offence, the phone will be returned at the end of the school day. On the second offence, the pupil remains after school for ten minutes and the phone will then be returned. On the third offence, the phone will be held overnight. On the fourth offence, the phone will be held until the end of the week and then returned.

Medical Room

A medical room is available in the North Building for pupils, who feel ill. However, it is our policy to contact parents/carers so that arrangements can be made for pupils to go home as soon as possible. Pupils are not sent home unless parents/carers have been informed. Pupils must not call home prior to going to the Medical Room as this can lead to confusion. Pupils are required to have a note from the teacher to attend the Medical Room during lesson time.

If a child is required to take medicine during school hours, a separate request form to administer the medication must be completed by parents/carers. This form can be obtained from the Main Reception or from the Medical Room. It is not our policy for children to carry

medicine on their person. All medication must be handed in by the parent/carer, who is responsible for keeping all medication up-to-date and disposing of out-of-date items.

Bicycles

Pupils may cycle to school. Bicycles should be placed in the racks provided, and securely padlocked. Bicycles must not be ridden in the school grounds. We cannot accept responsibility for damage, loss or theft of bikes whilst they are on our premises.

Riding Bicycles to School

Most of our pupils, who ride to school, do so very safely and sensibly. The following should be adhered to:

- Cyclists should enter and exit the school via the North Drive or by the footpath on the South site;
- Cyclists must walk their bikes when on the school premises;
- Cyclists must not use the school field to enter and exit the school premises.

Parent/Carer Cars on School Premises

We have a one-way system operating in the car park in order to make it safer for pupils. Therefore, it is important that all parents/carers follow this system when dropping off pupils, especially at times when the coach park is in use by coaches, and when collecting pupils between 15.15 and 15.35. This system applies to all parents'/carers' cars, but excludes coaches and taxis. Parents/carers should not normally use the North Drive for entering and exiting the school site.

Some parents/carers, understandably, find it frustrating that it takes so long to use the one-way system, but we must always put pupils' safety first. The cooperation of parents/carers on this important matter is much appreciated.