



## Parent/Carer Handbook

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## Contents

<b>Vision and Ethos</b> .....	4
<b>Traditional Values</b> .....	4
<b>Learning for the Future</b> .....	4
<b>Outstanding Personal Achievement</b> .....	4
<b>Group Call</b> .....	5
<b>ParentPay</b> .....	5
<b>Arrangements in case of Severe Weather</b> .....	5
<b>Lost Property</b> .....	5
<b>Curriculum</b> .....	5
<b>Breaktime and Lunchtime Arrangements</b> .....	6
<b>Uniform and Equipment</b> .....	6
<b>School Uniform</b> .....	6
<b>Attendance</b> .....	7
<b>Family Holiday Arrangements</b> .....	7
<b>Clubs and Extra-Curricular Activities</b> .....	7
<b>Homework Policy</b> .....	7
<b>Medical Room</b> .....	9
<b>Bicycles</b> .....	9
<b>Riding Bicycles to School</b> .....	9
<b>Parent/Carer Cars on School Premises</b> .....	10



# St Martin's — School —

Be the best you can be

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 student 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 students are proud to come to St. Martin's, and make excellent progress.

I have a firm belief that all of our students 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 students 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 students to realise their full potential and to *Be The Best They Can Be*.

## **Traditional Values**

Our school ethos is based on traditional values, including students' 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 students 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 students face everyday life situations in the 21st century. Throughout their time in school, our students develop the skills and attributes that are key to empowering them to be successful individuals. Students 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 student personal journey regardless of starting point or ability. We continually encourage and challenge in all aspects of school life to enable our students to achieve as highly as possible. The nature of their achievement will be very different for every student, and will encompass a whole raft of subjects, activities and personal preferences at all levels of ability.

**The individual development of our students 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 student's register. Communication is vitally important, of course, and we, therefore, need parents/carers to notify us of any changes of 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 students 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 made via Group Call and notices published on the school website <https://www.st-martins.essex.sch.uk>.

### **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 student'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 student to achieve and to be the best they can be. We have constructed a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all students 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 students study the full curriculum during Key Stage 3, and choose their options midway through Year 9 for Key Stage 4.

The vast majority of students achieve outstandingly well and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training. Our students 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.

Students are provided with a map of the school at the start of the academic year in order for them to learn the room numbers in each building. Students 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 students when on the school site, and when travelling to and from school, as ambassadors of St. Martin's.

Parents/carers are able to purchase school uniform with the school logo from two providers: SmartyPants <https://www.smartypantsschoolwear.com/st-martins.html> and The School Uniform Specialist [www.theschooluniformspecialist.com](http://www.theschooluniformspecialist.com).

In order to make purchases, parents/carers should enter the login code **stm506** at the top right-hand corner of the screen.

**All items of clothing must be marked clearly and indelibly with the student'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 09.00 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. When the student returns to school, parents/carers are required to send a letter to the Form Tutor confirming the reason for the absence and the number of days absent.

Checks are made of registers each morning, and, if the student appears to be absent, we will initiate the automatic ringing system, which will telephone the parent/carer to advise that their child is absent. If there is no response, the machine will telephone other available contact numbers. This process will be repeated every hour until there is a response or until 19.00 that evening. 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 student 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.

### **Family Holiday Arrangements**

Students' absence from school for family holidays can adversely affect their progress and examination performance.

### **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 students 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 students. 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 being taught in lessons.

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

## The Setting of Home Learning

Home Learning is set via SatchelOne. All students 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 your Deputy Head of Year for support.

### Types of Homework

All homework should be completed in the back of exercise books, with dates and titles underlined.

Home Learning activities will vary significantly, particularly between younger and older students 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;
- students may also be set 'flipped learning' tasks, where students prepare at home for new learning, class room discussion and application tasks; as such 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 students' cultural capital.

At St. Martin's, we believe 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
<b>Constants</b>	Set every week for core subjects	English, Maths, Science
<b>Variables</b>	The amount of home learning set will vary depending on the subject's curriculum time.	All other subjects
<b>Literacy</b>	We encourage all students 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 students to adhere to Department for Education guidelines, which state that students 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 students have a 'quiet' space to complete their home learning. To that end, we offer students a '**Homework Club**' in **Room N005**. The club is open from **Monday to Thursday 15.15 – 18.00** and available to all Year Groups. Here students are offered a quiet space to work and access to computers, should they be required.

The Library is also open to students from 08.00 every morning.

### **Mobile Phones**

Students 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 upon arrival at school, and should only be turned on again at the end of the school day when students have left the school site and crossed the red line at the gates.

### **Medical Room**

A medical room is available in the North Building for students, who feel ill, but it is our policy to contact parents/carers so that arrangements can be made for students to go home as soon as possible. Students are not sent home unless parents/carers have been informed.

Students must not call home prior to going to the Medical Room as this can lead to confusion. Students 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**

Students 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 students, 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 students. Therefore, it is important that all parents/carers follow this system when dropping off students, especially at times when the coach park is in use by coaches, and when collecting students 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 students' safety first. The cooperation of parents/carers on this important matter is much appreciated.