

☆ Garden Suburb Infant School ☆

# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

## **1. Aims of the School**

At Garden Suburb Infant School, we aim to provide a high quality education in a safe, caring and disciplined environment so that all pupils are able to reach their full potential and leave here with positive feelings about education and its value to them.

## **2. Statement of Intent**

Garden Suburb Infant school recognises the importance of pupils' attendance & punctuality in terms of children being able to benefit from good quality education, children establishing good future life habits and children's safeguarding.

Garden Suburb Infant school management and Governing Body aim to promote the importance of good attendance & punctuality as part of its pupils' education.

The school has a fair and rigorous approach to attendance and punctuality.

This policy outlines the duties & responsibilities of the school and parents/carers as well as the procedures to follow.

Good attendance & punctuality is a whole school priority.

The school endeavours to raise awareness among parents/carers, support parents and families who may have difficulties with bringing their child/children on time for school as well as raise the children's awareness to the benefits of regular attendance & being on time.

Finally the school will apply this policy rigorously and insist that parents/carers follow the rules and procedures.

## **3. Principles**

- a. The Education Act 1996 states that all pupils should attend school regularly and punctually.
- b. If pupils are to benefit from their school education, good attendance is crucial.
- c. Children from an early age need to acquire the habit of regular attendance and punctuality as these are essential qualities necessary to their future.
- d. As a school we do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils.
- e. We give high priority to conveying to parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- f. We endeavour to identify problems that prevent full attendance and address them quickly.
- g. It is important that parents and staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities with regard to the attendance of pupils.

## **4. Purpose**

- a. To encourage good attendance and punctuality.
- b. To minimise disruption to the learning environment caused by lateness and absence.
- c. To record and monitor attendance and use appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism.
- d. To ensure a consistent approach throughout the school.

## **5. Statutory Framework**

- a. Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states that 'If a child of compulsory age, who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at school, their parents are guilty of an offence'
- b. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the Headteacher is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter or message will the absence be authorised.

## **6. Rights and Responsibilities**

Improving attendance at Garden Suburb Infant School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community: parents, pupils, the Education Welfare Office and all staff.

The Headteacher is responsible for authorising absence requests.

The Pupil Welfare Assistant is responsible for Pupil Welfare, Attendance and Punctuality and receives all letters and communication regarding attendance and punctuality.

## **7. Informing Parents about Attendance and Punctuality**

At the beginning of each year a letter will be sent home reminding parents of the starting and finishing time of the school day, their legal obligations to ensure children attend regularly and punctually, regulations regarding holidays during term time, authorised/unauthorised absence and the necessity to inform the school of absences (see Appendix 1)

Parents will be informed about school holiday and INSET dates annually, and copies will be available in the lobby area throughout the year. (See Appendix 2)

## **8. Leave of Absence During Term Time**

Parents have no right to remove their children from school for the purpose of a holiday. Parents may request permission for an absence in exceptional circumstances (see Appendix 3).

By requesting permission for their child to be excused from school, they are agreeing to abide by the decision of the Headteacher. They must provide relevant information and not make travel arrangements before receiving permission.

If their request is not agreed, the child must attend school, or they will be liable to a fixed penalty notice. In some circumstances, especially if taking a long term absence, they may be jeopardising their child's place at the school.

Each request for exceptional leave of absence will be considered on its own merits, but proof of the exceptional nature must be provided, before a decision is made. In making the decision, the child's attendance record will be taken into account.

If a child fails to return to school on the expected date, any extra days taken will be unauthorised, unless a valid reason is given and accepted by the Headteacher.

If a child fails to return after 10 days have elapsed from the expected date and no valid reason has been received, the school may remove the child from role.

The removal of a child for private tuition during school time will be treated as an unauthorised absence.

Religious observation days will always be granted, but must be requested. There is a form in the lobby area for parents to complete (see Appendix 4).

It is only the actual religious day(s) that can be authorised. Extra days tagged on before or after the religious observance will not be authorised unless in exceptional circumstances and only at the Headteacher's discretion. These will be treated as "Leave of Absence", as detailed above.

Parents/carers should be made aware that failure to request a leave of absence or defying the decision of the Headteacher, could lead to the issuing of a fixed penalty notice.

## **9. Start of the school Day**

All children can go through to the classroom from 8.45am each morning. They **must** however be there by 8.55am. This is the official start of the school day.

Any child arriving after 8.55am will have their name taken and a late mark and time of arrival noted in the class register. The register formally closes at 9.30am. Any child arriving after that time will be recorded as an unauthorised late, unless the reason given for the late arrival is accepted by the Head teacher. If the reason for the late arrival is accepted an L should be placed inside the red circle and time of arrival noted. If the reason is not accepted, the whole of the morning session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

## **10. End of the School Day**

Children are collected from the designated area in the front playground at 3.20pm (12.00 or 1.15 for some reception children). Parents are asked to wait by the class coloured area for their child. They are asked to see that their child says goodbye to their teacher.

Children not collected on time are brought back into school and their names taken. On collection a valid reason must be given for the late collection.

Parents are asked to telephone the school if they are going to be late collecting their child, so that the child does not get anxious.

Forms are available in the lobby area for the parents to inform the class teacher of any change to the normal pick up arrangements.

## **11. Notifying the School of Lateness/Absence**

Parents/carers are requested to call the school to notify any absence before 10am. This only needs to be done on the first day of the absence or after a weekend.

If parents/carers do not inform the school by 10am, the school will ring them to find out the reason for the absence.

If a child is absent and no valid reason has been given, the school will send the parent/carer a letter requesting a written explanation of why their child was absent on a particular day(s).

## **12. Medical/Dental or Other Appointments**

Under normal circumstances, parents/carers should arrange medical/dental or other appointments outside of school hours.

If a parent/carer needs to take a child out of school during the day for any reason, they must inform the school in writing before the day, stating date, time and reason.

Children leaving school during the day, must be signed out by a staff member in the "Signing-out Folder" which is in the lobby.

### **13. Guidance to Staff on Recording Attendance and Punctuality**

Attendance registers should be marked at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and returned to the reception area after each registration.

If a child is present at registration they are marked with a /. If a child is absent at registration, leave it blank until 9.10am. If a child is still absent when you are ready to send the register back to the reception area, please mark with a red O, filling the whole square, if a child has arrived, mark as present.

At 9.10am and 1.20pm the register should be taken to the reception area.

Any child arriving after that time will be recorded as an unauthorised late, unless the reason given for the late arrival is accepted by the Headteacher.

If the reason for the late arrival is accepted an L should be placed inside the red circle and time of arrival noted. If the reason is not accepted, the whole of the morning session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If a child arrives to school late on a regular basis, the school will send out a letter reminding parent/carer of school start time (see Appendix 4)

All absence must be accounted for. Authorised absences can be shown using the system of capital letters placed inside the red absent circle, explained below:

Sickness of a child	I (state in space provided, what illness
Medial Appointment	M (state in space provided, Hosp. Den. Dr etc)
Religious observance	R (state in space provided, what religious holiday)
Exceptional circumstances	C (state in space provided circumstances and return date)
Educational Visit	V
Educated off site	B
Unauthorised absence	O

Alongside the Friday section of each week of the register there is a space to record late arrival times and any form of explanation for the absence. Please mark as follows:

Let. + date, reason (for a letter from parent/carer)

Email + date, reason (for an email from parent/carer)

Tel + date, reason (for telephone call from parent)

Told + date, reason (for personal verbal contact)

Thus, if a parent has telephones on 3<sup>rd</sup> September to explain that their child has a cold and can't come to school it should read as thus - Tel. 3/9 - cold

### **14. Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

The Headteacher should be informed if any member of staff is concerned about a child's absence - both authorised and unauthorised, or regular late arrivals/collections.

The Headteacher along with the Pupil Welfare, Attendance and Punctuality Officer will carry out half termly and termly monitoring of the attendance and punctuality records to identify any patterns of poor attendance or punctuality.

Class teachers are given the attendance percentages for their class each half term so that they are able to identify any concerns that may need to be raised with parents or referred to the Inclusion Team.

Concerns will be raised with the Inclusion Team to decide any action that needs to be taken with each family.

A meeting may be set up with the Headteacher/SENCo/ Pupil Welfare, Attendance and Punctuality Officer/Education Welfare Officer to discuss any issues that may be causing poor attendance or punctuality, and to discuss support where appropriate.

Attendance registers are reviewed regularly with the Education Welfare Officer from the London Borough of Barnet.

# ANNUAL LETTER TO PARENTS – APPENDIX 1

## Attendance and Punctuality

Dear Parent/Carers,

Below you will find the school procedures for Attendance and Punctuality at Garden Suburb Infant School. Please take the time to read them as the procedures must be followed by you and the school, according to instructions from the Department for Education and advice from the Education Welfare Officer from the London Borough of Barnet.

### Start of the School Day

All children can go through to their classrooms from 8.45am each morning. They must however, be in the classroom by 8.55am, as this is the official start of the school day. Any child arriving after 8.55am will have their name taken and the time of their arrival noted in the class register. The number of late arrivals for each child is included within their annual report.

Any children arriving after 9.30am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for the whole morning session, unless a valid reason is given and accepted by me.

Some reasons that are not accepted as reason for late arrival are:

- Traffic - unless it is known that there is a problem on the local roads, which means that several children and staff will arrive late
- Nowhere to park
- Over sleeping - either from a late night or parents sleeping through the alarm
- Birthdays (opening presents etc.)

If your child has an appointment and will be coming late to school, please inform Mrs Cox in writing prior to the day of the appointment.

If you think your child will arrive later than 8.55am due to unforeseen circumstances, please telephone the school.

**Late arrivals and collections are monitored by the Education Welfare Officer from the London Borough of Barnet.**

### End of school

Children are collected from the designated area in the front playground at 3.20pm (12.00 for some Reception and new children). Please wait for them by the appropriate coloured area. Make sure your child says goodbye to their teacher.

Children not collected on time are brought back into school and their names taken. The time of collection will be noted and a valid reason must be given for the late collection, when they are collected.

If you know you are going to be late due to unforeseen circumstances, please always telephone the school and give your estimated time of arrival so that your child does not get anxious.

Any changes to normal pick up arrangements must be made in advance and a form is available in the lobby area, which should be handed to Mrs Cox in the morning to inform them of the change. Please call the office with changes of pick up arrangements in an emergency.



**The school will not let any child go with someone else unless we have heard from the parent.**

### **Absences**

If your child is not attending school, please telephone the school on the first day of absence by 10am, and state the reason for their absence. You do not need to phone every day, but if the absence goes over a weekend, please phone again on the Monday.

If the school has not heard from a parent/carer as to why their child is absent by 10am on the first day, the school will telephone them.

When your child returns you should send a note in with them explaining the absence.

On a child's return to school following an absence without a given reason, a letter will be sent from the school requesting a written explanation.

If felt necessary a parent/carer may be asked to provide a medical certificate from the GP for any child's absence, at any time.

### **Requests for Absence**

Parents/carers have no right to remove their children from school for the purpose of a holiday, and they will never be authorised. Your child is expected to attend school for 190 days, or 38 weeks per academic year (September to July). This leaves 14 weeks of school holidays every year in which you can arrange a family holiday, so that it does not affect your child's education. The Government's guidance is that going on holiday during term time because it is cheaper is not acceptable.

Parent/carers may request a leave of absence from school in exceptional circumstances only, and on one occasion only while the child is in the infant school (forms available in the lobby area).

By requesting permission for your child to be excused from school, you are agreeing to abide by the decision of the Headteacher. You must provide relevant information including proof of the exceptional nature and not make travel plans before receiving permission. All requests will be considered on their own merits.

If your request is not agreed, your child must attend school, or you may be liable to a Fixed Penalty Notice. In some circumstances, if you take an extended leave of absence, you may be jeopardising your child's place at the school.

If a child fails to return to school on the expected date of an authorised absence, any extra days taken will be unauthorised and may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice, unless a valid reason is given and accepted by the Headteacher.

Parents/Carers should be aware that failure to request a leave of absence or defying the decision of the headteacher will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

**What is a Fixed Penalty Notice?** - If your child does not attend school for a period of absence during term time that has not been agreed, the Headteacher will ask the Education Welfare Team to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60 per parent, per child. If this penalty is not paid within 21 days, a higher rate of £120 per parent, per child, will be charged. If this is not paid within 7 days the Education Welfare Team will begin court proceedings against you, for taking an unauthorised absence from school, and you could be fined up to £1,000 per parent, per child. The Education Welfare Team will also seek full costs of any prosecution taken against you.

These are the regulations have been set down by the local authority, which we must all abide by.



## APPENDIX 2 TERM DATES

# ★ Garden Suburb Infant School ★

### AUTUMN TERM 2014

First Half: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September - Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October  
Half-term: Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October - Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October  
Second Half: Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November - Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December

### SPRING TERM 2015

First Half: Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January - Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February  
Half-term: Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February - Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February  
Second Half: Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February - Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March

### SUMMER TERM 2015

First Half: Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April - Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May  
May Day Bank Holiday: Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May  
Half-term: Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May - Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June  
(Includes the Spring Bank Holiday)  
Second Half: Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June - Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> July

### INSET DAYS (School closed for training days for staff)

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September  
Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September  
Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January  
Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February  
Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June

APPENDIX 3  
**EXCEPTIONAL ABSENCE REQUEST FORM**

**Application for Exceptional Leave of Absence**  
**Academic Year -----**

I/we confirm that the new regulations concerning exceptional leave of absence have been read  
and accepted by us/me ☐

I/We request exceptional leave of absence for:

Full  
Name.....Class.....

From.....to.....

Return to school  
date:.....

Reason for request: (Continue overleaf if necessary)

Both parents/carers must sign below (if appropriate), then return this form to Mrs Cox in the school office. You will receive a written reply from the headteacher as soon as possible.

Signature ..... Relationship to child .....

Print Full Name  
.....

Date .....

Signature ..... Relationship to child .....

Print Full Name .....

Date .....

## APPENDIX 4

# RELIGIOUS ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

## Garden Suburb Infant School

### Religious Observance - Absence Request Form

Although days for religious observance will always be authorised, please note that only the actual official religious day(s) can be authorised by the school.

Name of Child .....

Child's Class .....

Name of Parent/Carer making request .....

Which religious holiday will it be?

.....

Date(s) requested

.....

.....

.....

How many school days? .....

Parent/Carer Signature .....

Date of Request .....

Please return this form to Mrs Cox as soon as possible so that she can enter the date(s) in the class register.

Please assume that the religious day(s) requested are authorised. You will only get a reply if felt necessary.

If you have any queries about any type of absence request, please in the first instance see Mrs Cox who deals with all matters regarding attendance and pupil welfare.

# APPENDIX 5

## ABSENCE LETTER NO EXPLANATION

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re:.....Class:.....

Under the regulations governing attendance registers, I have to account for every absence of any child. Our records show that on the date(s) listed below, your child was absent from school. We do not appear to have an explanation for the absence and need to complete our records. Would you therefore complete the reply slip and return it to school as soon as possible.

I would like to remind you that if your child is not attending school, you must ring the office by 10.am on the first day of absence to let us know why.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Sands  
Headteacher

.....

Garden Suburb Infant School  
Reply Slip

Childs Name:.....Class:.....

Date(s) absent (to be completed by staff member)

.....  
.....

Reason for absence (to be completed by parent/carers)

.....  
.....  
.....

Signed:.....Date:.....