

★ 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's leadership 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.

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 Pastoral Support staff are responsible for Pupil Welfare, Attendance and Punctuality and receive 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 on the school website.

## **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 if they reach the national threshold of 10 sessions (half days) in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The FPN can be issued under the threshold above at the discretion of the headteacher.

In some circumstances, especially if taking a long term absence, they may be jeopardising their child's place at the school.

The first FPN incurred will be charged at £80 per parent per child and the second fine will be charged at £160 per parent per child.

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 roll.

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 providing they are recognised by the particular religious body, but must be requested. Please email [admin@gsis.barnetmail.net](mailto:admin@gsis.barnetmail.net) with any such requests.

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.

## **9. Fixed Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance at School**

The school may issue a fixed penalty notice where a parent/carer has failed to secure their child's regular attendance at school. A penalty notice can be issued against one of the following criteria:

1. Where there is a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in a 10-week period (these do not need to be consecutive) which includes pupils who are persistently arriving after the close of the registration period.
2. Where a parent(s)/carer(s) refuses to engage with a school in the interest of improving their child's school attendance levels;
3. Where a holiday in term time has been requested but has been unauthorised.

The Local Authority can issue a fixed penalty notice if:

1. Parents are intentionally and deliberately, taking leave at the same time every academic year or purposefully taking under the threshold of 10 sessions to avoid a fixed penalty notice.

Each pupil's absence will be considered on its own merits and if appropriate, a fixed penalty notice may be requested to encourage improved future attendance. If a pupil's attendance is significantly low, a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be considered as an alternative to requesting a penalty notice.

## **10. 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 9.15am. 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 6 unauthorised late marks are recorded in any period of 4 weeks, the school may issue a fixed penalty notice.

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

Children are collected from the designated area in the front playground at 3.20pm (Reception, once they are staying full time) and 3.25pm (KS1). 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.

Please email [admin@gsis.barnetmail.net](mailto:admin@gsis.barnetmail.net) to inform the class teacher of any change to the normal pick up arrangements.

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

Parents/carers are requested to call the school to notify any absence before 10am. Parents/Carers should phone the school every day that the child is absent.

If parents/carers do not inform the school by 10am, the school will ring them to find out the reason for the absence, if we don't get a response the absence will automatically be marked as unauthorised.

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).

If a pupil is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request supporting evidence that the pupil is receiving the necessary medical treatment. An appointment card, consultant letter, photograph of prescription medication, would all suffice as medical evidence. Without the necessary evidence, the school may notify the parent or carer that all future absences will be unauthorised until the necessary medical evidence has been provided, and a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made.

Please note that parents can incur a FPN if a child is off for 10 sessions in 10 weeks. This can be a mixture of lateness and unauthorised absences during this period. The FPN can be issued under the threshold above at the discretion of the headteacher.

### **13. 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 and provide proof of the appointment.

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

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

Attendance registers should be marked online at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.

If a child is present, at registration they are marked as present or late. If a child is absent at registration, please leave them unmarked.

Any child arriving after the register has been taken will be recorded as an unauthorised late, unless the reason given for the late arrival is accepted by the Headteacher.

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.

### **15. 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 Pastoral Support staff, 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 Lead.

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

A meeting may be set up with the Headteacher/SENCo/ Pastoral Support staff/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.

## **16. The Education Welfare Service (EWS)**

The principal function of the Education Welfare Service is to improve attendance in all schools and alternative education provisions across the local authority by supporting pupils and their families to overcome their barriers to engagement.

The service provides support to schools, pupils and their families to ensure regular attendance and address any difficulties relating to absenteeism. The Education Welfare Service works collaboratively with a range of support services and agencies and provides an essential link between home and school to ensure that pupils benefit from the educational opportunities available to them.

The service acts on behalf of the authority in its statutory enforcement capacity and is responsible for a number of related duties that include:

- the regulating and issuing of child employment and performance licenses for school age children and young people, and their chaperones;
- to investigate, locate and track children who are referred as “Children Missing from Education and Children Missing from School”;
- to oversee the education needs of vulnerable pupils e.g. Gypsy Traveller families;
- to work in partnership with the Police in the arrangement and coordination of formal truancy operations in accordance with Crime and Disorder legislation.