

★ Garden Suburb Junior School ★

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Aims of the School

At Garden Suburb Junior 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.

Statement of Intent

Garden Suburb Junior 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 Junior 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.

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 qualities essential for 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.

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.

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.

Rights and responsibilities

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

The Headteacher, Mrs Bhavsar, is responsible for authorising absence requests.

Mrs Morgan Chiswick is the member of staff with responsibility for Pupil Welfare, Attendance and Punctuality. All letters and communication regarding attendance and punctuality should be given to Mrs Morgan Chiswick.

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 times 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).

In the middle of each term a letter will be sent to remind parents about the importance of good attendance. This letter will also be attached to absence request forms (see example in Appendix 2).

Parents will be informed annually about school holiday and INSET dates.

Leave of absence during term time

We do not authorise leave of absence for holidays during term time.

Under exceptional circumstances, it is up to the Headteacher's discretion to authorise an absence during term times.

Permission from the Headteacher must be sought in writing, in advance, for any known absence of one day or more. Each request for absence will be looked at individually by the Headteacher and the parent/carer will be informed by letter as to whether the absence has been authorised. A child's attendance record will be considered in any request for leave of absence.

The absence request form must be completed and permission granted before any arrangements are made, including travel arrangements. Absence Request Forms are available from the reception and online from the MLE (see example in Appendix 3)

If the requested absence is not authorised and the parent/carer still removes their child from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the class register. The Education Welfare Officer from the London Borough of Barnet will be informed and after consultation with them the Headteacher may issue a fixed penalty notice.

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 to school after 10 days from the expected date and no valid reason has been given for the continued absence, the school may remove the child from the school roll.

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

Religious observance days

Religious observance days will always be authorised, but must be requested. There is a separate absence request form for religious observance days. Each request will be looked at individually by the Headteacher before being authorised.

It is only the religious observance day that has to be authorised. Extra days tagged on before or after the religious observance days 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.

There are differences between religious observance days and national holidays for different countries. The Education Welfare Team advises that national holidays are not authorised.

Religious observance request forms are available from the reception. (see example in Appendix 4)

Start of the school day

8.55am is the official start of the school day and children must be in their class line in the playground by that time.

Any child arriving after 8.55am will go to the Medical Room to sign in and their time of arrival will be noted.

Registration formally closes at 9.30am. Any child arriving after that time will be recorded as unauthorised late or absent, unless the reason given for the late arrival is accepted by the Headteacher.

Notifying the school of lateness/absence

Parents/carers are requested to call the school before 9.30am to notify any lateness or absence for that day.

If parents/carers do not inform the school by 9.30am, the school will ring them to find out the reason for the lateness/absence.

In cases of absence, parents/carers are required to bring a written note on the day their child returns to school explaining the absence. If a written note is not provided, the school will send the parent/carer a letter requesting a written explanation (see Appendix 6)

Medical/Dental or other official appointments

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

If parents/carers need to take a child out of school during the day, they must inform the school in writing before the day, stating date, time and reason.

The parent/carer must sign the "signing out book" which is in the Medical Room

Start of the School Day

In the morning the playground is supervised from 8.40am and children should not be in the playground unsupervised before this. The buzzer sounds at 8.55am and children should then line up ready to walk into school. Parents are politely asked to move away from the children's lines when the bell is rung to enable the teachers to lead their classes calmly and quietly into the building.

End of the School Day

Children should always be clear about who is collecting them from school. All children should be collected from the playground at the end of the school day at 3.25pm by parents/carers. If children are lone travellers (Years 5 and 6 only), parents should complete a lone traveller form and keep the school updated of any changes. Children are escorted to the playground by their class teachers. Year 3 children are collected from near their lining up place. In Years 4, 5, and 6 this arrangement is less formal and parents/carers should agree a meeting point in the playground.

Any changes to normal pick up arrangements should be made in advance. Please only call the school office with changes of pick up arrangements in an emergency.

Children not collected on time are brought back into school and their parents/carers phoned. 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 doesn't get anxious.

Lone Travellers

Parents of Independent Travellers (travelling without an adult), whose children are not attending school (due to illness for example) must contact the school by 9.00am on each day of absence, with the reason. Failure to do so will result in the school contacting parents/carers at home or work to ask where the child is. If it is not possible to contact parents/carers the matter will be referred to the local Police. This is to ensure the safety of the child.

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 Medical Room after each registration.

If a child is present at registration they are marked with a black / \. If a child is absent at registration the register will be left blank until 9.05am. At 9.05am, if the child has arrived they will be marked as present. If the child is absent the register will be marked with a red **O** filling the whole square.

At 9.05am the register should be taken to the Medical Room.

The register is formally closed at 9.30am. If a child arrives before close of registration an **L** will be inserted in the red **O** and the time of arrival noted in the register.

If a child arrives after 9.30am but before the end of the morning session they will be recorded in the register as an unauthorised late, unless the reason for the late arrival is accepted by the Headteacher.

If a child arrives late to school on a regular basis, the school will send out a letter reminding parents/carers of the school start time (see Appendix 5).

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

Sickness of child	I (what illness)
Medical Appointment	M (Hosp. Den. Dr etc.)
Religious Observance	R (which religious holiday)
Holiday (approved)	H (expected return date)
Other circumstances	C (circumstances)
Educational Visit	V
Educated off site	B

If the absence is unauthorised, the red circle should be left blank. The parent/carer will be told if any absence has not been authorised.

There is an 'absence and information' column to record late arrival times and any form of explanation for the absence. It will be marked as follows:

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

Tel. + date, reason (for telephone call explaining absence)

Name + date, reason (for personal verbal contact)

Thus, if a parent has telephoned on 3rd September to explain that their child is ill and can't come to school it should read - Tel. 3/9 - what illness.

If the parent/carer has not called by 9.30am to notify the school of the child's absence, the designated member of staff will ring the parent/carer to find out the reason for absence.

If no written note is provided on the child's return, the designated member of staff will ensure that a letter is sent to the parent/carer.

When a child is taken out of school during the school day, staff must ensure that the "signing out book" is countersigned once the parent/carer has signed it.

Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

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

The Headteacher and the school's Pupil Welfare, Attendance and Punctuality Assistant will carry out half termly monitoring of the attendance and punctuality records to identify any patterns of poor attendance or punctuality.

A meeting may be arranged with the parent/carer, Headteacher, Pupil Welfare, Attendance and Punctuality Assistant and the Education Welfare Officer from the London Borough of Barnet 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.

All absence letters must be sent to the office when received so that they can be logged and filed for future reference.

ANNUAL LETTER TO PARENTS - APPENDIX 1

Attendance and Punctuality

Dear Parents/Carers,

Below you will find the school procedures for Attendance and Punctuality at Garden Suburb Junior School. Please take 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 for the London Borough of Barnet.

Start of the school day

In the morning the playground is supervised from 8.40am and children should not be in the playground unsupervised before this. The buzzer sounds at 8.55am and children should then line up ready to walk into school. Parents are politely asked to move away from the children's lines when the bell is rung to enable the teachers to lead their classes calmly and quietly into the building.

All children must be in their class line in the playground by 8.55am. This is the official start of the school day. The name and time of arrival of any child arriving between 8.55 and 9.30am will be noted. The number of late arrivals for each child is included in their annual report.

The class registers are formally closed at 9.30am. Any child arriving after this time will be recorded as unauthorised late or absent, unless the reason for the late arrival is accepted.

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

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

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

If unforeseen circumstances occur and you think your child will arrive later than 8.55am please telephone the school.

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

End of the school day

Children should always be clear about who is collecting them from school. All children should be collected by parents/carers from the playground at the end of the school day at 3.25pm. If children are lone travellers (Years 5 and 6 only), parents should complete a lone traveller form and keep the school updated will any changes. Children are escorted to the playground by their class teachers. Year 3 children are collected from near their lining up place. In Years 4, 5, and 6 this arrangement is less formal and parents/carers should agree a meeting point in the playground.

Children not collected on time are brought back into school and parents/carers are phoned. A valid reason must be given for the late collection.

If unforeseen circumstances occur, please telephone the school and give an estimated time of arrival so that your child doesn't get anxious.

Any changes to normal pick up arrangements should be made in advance. Please only call the school office in an emergency with changes of pick up arrangements.

ABSENCES

Sickness

If your child is not attending school, please telephone the school **by 9.30am**, and state the reason for their absence.

If the school has not heard from a parent/carer by 9.30am as to why their child is absent the school will telephone them.

When your child returns to school you **must** send in a note, 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.

Requests for Absence

We are not permitted to authorise leave of absence for holidays during term time.

My permission **must** be sought in writing, in advance, for any known absence of one day or more. **This includes days for religious observance.** An absence request form must be completed and permission granted before any arrangements are made, including travel arrangements.

There is a separate absence request form for religious observance days.

Leave of absence or religious absence request forms are available from the reception area or online from the MLE. Please note that religious observance days will always be authorised, but must be requested.

Each request for absence will be looked at individually by myself and Mrs Morgan Chiswick and you will be informed by letter as to whether the absence has been authorised. A child's attendance record will be considered in any request for leave of absence.

If I am not able to authorise a requested absence and you still remove your child from school, the absence will not be authorised and will be recorded as such in the class register. The Education Welfare Officer from the London Borough of Barnet will be informed and, after consultation with them, I may issue a fixed penalty notice (please see attached leaflet which explains this procedure).

If a child fails to return to school on the expected date, any extra days will be unauthorised and, after consultation with the Education Welfare Officer from the London Borough of Barnet, I may wish to issue a fixed penalty notice, unless a valid reason is given and accepted by myself.

If a child fails to return to school after 10 days from the expected date and no valid reason has been given for the continued absence, the process of removing the child from the school roll may be put in action.

If permission is not sought before an absence it will be recorded as unauthorised in the register and after consultation with the Education Welfare Officer from the London Borough of Barnet I may wish to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

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

Removal of children during the school day

If you need to take your child out of school during the day, please let the school know in writing before the day, stating the reason, the date and time of collection. This must be addressed to Mrs Morgan Chiswick.

When collecting your child, please see Mrs Morgan Chiswick in the Medical Room so that they can be signed out of school.

Please try to make medical appointments out of school hours.

The attendance and punctuality of all pupils are closely monitored by the Education Welfare Officer from the London Borough of Barnet. The school's endeavours in trying to reduce absence is also monitored.

If you have any concerns about any of the above procedures, please, in the first instance, see Mrs Morgan Chiswick, who deals with matters concerning Welfare, Attendance and Punctuality in school.

Yours sincerely



Mrs E Bhavsar
Head Teacher

TERMLY LETTER TO PARENTS - APPENDIX 2

(Also attached to forms for requesting leave of absence)

Dear Parents/Carers

Requests for Absence during Term Time

At Garden Suburb Junior School we know that good attendance is crucial if the children are to make the most of their education and is a key factor in high attainment. We work in partnership with the Education Welfare Team from the London Borough of Barnet to improve the attendance and punctuality of the children in our school.

We greatly value the positive relationships between parents and the school and we do not want the issue of holidays to create conflict in this relationship. However, parents do not have a statutory right to leave of absence and we are not permitted to authorise any requests for holiday absence. The School may authorise a request for leave only if there are exceptional circumstances. A child's attendance record will be considered in any request for leave of absence.

We understand that holidays are cheaper during term time but this is not a valid reason for authorisation, neither are odd days off for long weekends away or family celebrations.

The Department for Education sets the standard of 95% attendance for each child in each academic year. If a child takes a term time leave of absence of 10 days this will take their attendance down to 94%; on top of this add any illness or medical appointments and you can see how attendance at school is affected.

If we have to decline approval for leave of absence this may lead to a referral to the Education Welfare Team and ultimately a monetary fine so you are asked to bear this in mind before making any applications.

All applications for exceptional leave of absence must be made in writing to the Headteacher prior to the date of the absence. All applications will be carefully considered, but good attendance and punctuality at school will be a factor in the decision to authorise any requests. Please make an appointment if you would like to discuss this.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of parents and carers who do their best to ensure that their child/children achieve good attendance and punctuality at school and who take the trouble to keep the school informed if their children are unable to attend school for any reason.

Yours sincerely,



Eileen Bhavsar
Headteacher

ABSENCE REQUEST FORM - APPENDIX 3

General Absence Request Form

Child's Name:.....Class.....

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

Dates requested:
.....
.....

How many school days?.....

Return to school date:.....

Reason for requested absence:.....
.....
.....
.....

Parent/Carer Signature:.....Date.....

Please return completed form to Mrs Morgan Chiswick as soon as possible, prior to the requested absence.

If you wish to request an absence for religious observance, please complete a Religious Absence Request form, available in the reception or online from the MLE.

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

OFFICE USE ONLY

How many school days requested:.....

Authorised absence: Yes No

Headteacher Signature:.....

Date Reply Sent to Parent/Carer:.....

RELIGIOUS ABSENCE REQUEST FORM - APPENDIX 4

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 Morgan Chiswick as soon as possible so that the date(s) can be recorded.

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

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

REGULAR LATE ARRIVAL LETTER - APPENDIX 5

Garden Suburb Junior School

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re:.....

We are concerned that your child has arrived late for school on several occasions recently.

I would like to remind you that all children must be in their class line in the playground at 8.55am. This is the official start of the school day.

Late arrivals are noted in the register and on school reports. They are also monitored on a regular basis by the Education Welfare Officer for the London Borough of Barnet.

If there is any difficulty, perhaps you would like to discuss the matter with me.

Yours sincerely,

Eileen Bhavsar

Headteacher

ABSENCE LETTER - APPENDIX 6

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re:.....

Under the regulations governing attendance registers, I have to account for any absence of every 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.

Parents are asked to telephone the school by 9.30am on the first day if your child is going to be absent from school.

Yours sincerely,

Eileen Bhavsar

Headteacher

.....

Garden Suburb Junior 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:.....