



## Garden Fields JMI School

### Attendance Policy

#### 1 Aims

We are committed to raising levels of attendance for individual children. We believe that only if children attend school regularly and punctually will they be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. We aim to work in partnership with parents and the Hertfordshire County Council Attendance Improvement Team to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for all pupils. Improving attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents/carers and school staff.

#### 2 Statutory Framework

2.1) The Government expects all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. Since changes contained in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, Headteachers do not have the discretion to allow up to 10 days in a school year for family holidays or extend leave for parents to visit their country of origin. Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave **only for exceptional circumstances**. The Head teacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if any leave is granted. Any absence not agreed as exceptional will be marked as **unauthorised**.

2.2) A pupil of compulsory school age is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. 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 school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised. Even then the school reserves the right to decline to authorise absence in line with the policy (see section 8.)

2.3) We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

2.4) Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

#### 3 Responsibilities

##### 3.1) Responsibility of Pupils

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and constructive support, initially from the class teacher, and if the need should arise, from the Phase Leader or Inclusion Coordinator (INCO).

### 3.2) Responsibility of Parents and Carers

Parents whose children are registered at school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school. Parents should:

- Ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and in a condition to learn
- Instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending regularly
- Impress upon their children the need to observe the school's behavioural expectations
- Take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- Work in partnership with school to resolve issues, which may lead to non-attendance
- Ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy
- Notify the school if their child is absent. Notification can be either by telephone call or e-mail by 9.15 a.m. every morning the child is absent. They should also provide an explanation for the absence in writing when the child returns to school
- Avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- Avoid booking holidays during term time as these will be considered as unauthorised (See section 9)

### 3.3) Responsibility of the School

- To support the attendance of pupils and deal with problems that may lead to non-attendance
- Call the attendance register at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions
- Differentiate between absence that is authorised and unauthorised
- Consider the maximising of attendance rates - both in relation to individual pupils and for the pupil body as a whole
- Support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issues which may lead to non-attendance
- Be sensitive to the needs of individual parents in the way in which attendance issues are addressed, recognising family circumstances
- Produce school attendance policies that are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents
- Adhere to Hertfordshire Count Council guidance on Penalty Notices as per section 444 of the Education Act 1996

## 4 Registration

4.1) Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases and should be kept for a minimum of 3 years. The register must record whether each pupil is present, absent or engaged in an approved educational activity. It must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school.

4.2) Registers will be called daily at 8:50 a.m. for all children in Years 1 to 6 and at 9.00 a.m. for pupils in Reception. Registers will then be called again at 1.00 p.m. for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 and at 1.30 p.m. for KS2.

4.3) If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close, he/she will be marked as late. Pupils who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the school office where the office staff will ask them to complete their details in the 'late arrivals file'. The class teacher or office staff will subsequently amend the electronic register entry to read absent/late.

4.4) Registers will be checked regularly by the office staff and Head Teacher to ensure that correct procedures are being followed. The Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) will monitor the registers during his/her visits.

4.5) Schools are required to notify their AIO of any pupils of compulsory age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason.

4.6) Deletions and transfer information (using form EWN1) will be made in accordance with Hertfordshire CFS Policy.

4.7) Any pupil with an attendance below 90% is considered as a Persistent Absentee and monitored closely.

## **5 Punctuality**

5.1) Lateness should be monitored and followed up. When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked 'late' but counted as present for that session.

5.2) If a pupil arrives late after the register has closed and provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session. When a pupil arrives late and fails to give a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked 'unauthorised absent.'

5.3) When a pupil arrives late having missed registration his/her presence on site should be noted in the 'late arrivals file' kept in the office. (This is important for fire/evacuation emergencies). Parents are asked to complete the details in the 'late arrivals file' when dropping off children who are late. Children who arrive late should not be left at the gate to come in alone.

## **6 Authorised/Unauthorised Absence**

Only the school can authorise an absence. The school uses consistent criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. The school will decide on how an absence is to be recorded according to LA guidelines. These state that:

Absence should be authorised if:

- The pupil is absent with leave (defined as "leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body").
- The pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their intention to return.
- There is a family bereavement (close relative – parent, or grandparent).
- The pupil is taking part in an approved public performance.
- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition.
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit.
- The pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion. A family holiday is not considered an exceptional circumstance.
- Absence should be unauthorised if no explanation is forthcoming or the school is dissatisfied with the explanation Examples of unauthorised absence may include:
  - The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. a birthday)
  - The pupil is away from school on a family holiday or family gathering

Note: Absence notes are kept for at least a term. In the case of a pupil whose absence is a cause for concern they will be kept until the concern has passed.

## **7 Holidays in Term Time**

Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking family holidays during term time. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a reason and as such it will not be authorised. It is school policy that teachers will not set work for pupils who are absent due to parents taking them on holiday in term time.

## **8. Procedures for Following up Absence**

8.1) The school office will contact a parent by telephone if a pupil is absent and no reason/explanation has been provided by the parent/carer. Absence patterns are monitored closely.

8.2) If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Head Teacher or INCO will contact the parents and invite them to attend a meeting at school. If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and fails to bring a note or if the explanation offered by a note is unsatisfactory, the Head Teacher will contact the parents.

8.3) If a pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Attendance IO during his/her consultation visits. Persistent absence may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued to the parent.

## **9. Fixed Penalty Notices Rationale**

9.1) Garden Fields School has adopted the use of Fixed Penalty Notices for school non-attendance. Regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for pupils registered at schools, academies or other maintained or alternative provision. A penalty notice may be a suitable intervention in circumstances of unauthorised absence where the school considers a parent is capable of securing their child's regular attendance. Circumstances in which a penalty notice may be issued:

- Penalty notices may only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence
- The deliberate taking of a holiday during term time without the school's permission and where this has resulted in a period of unauthorised absence in the previous and/or current term exceeding 15 sessions (7.5 school days)
- The pupil must have at least 15 sessions (half days) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term
- The school must have sent a formal warning to the parent
- The school or AIO considers that issuing a penalty notice could avoid further absence
- Issuing a penalty notice does not conflict with any other legal action being taken
- A maximum of two separate penalty notices can be issued to a parent within any twelve month period
- Penalty notices can be issued for pupils of compulsory school age, up to the end of the spring term of year 11
- A penalty notice will not be issued in respect of a pupil who is looked after by the Local Authority without the prior agreement of the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Attendance

### **9.2) Amount and payment of penalty**

In accordance with LA guidelines, the amount of the penalty to be paid is as follows:

- £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days
- £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice
- Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child.

The primary responsibility for issuing a penalty notice rests with the Local Authority. Head teachers may apply to the Local Authority for a penalty notice to be issued. The LA issues penalty notices on behalf of Hertfordshire schools in order to ensure consistency and in the event that a prosecution may need to be brought against a parent. Full details of the Hertfordshire guidance on fixed penalty notices for unauthorised absence are available on request and are published on the school website.

## 10. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Our aim is to work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure good attendance so that learning opportunities are maximised. Some of the methods we use to promote high attendance include:

- The school will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos demonstrates that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A broad and balanced curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to pupils' needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice.
- Parents will be regularly reminded (via newsletters, parents' evenings, School Comms, etc.) of the importance of good attendance.
- On admitting their children to school parents are asked to sign a Home School Agreement, part of which set out the expectation of good attendance
- The school will arrange meetings with parents where there are attendance concerns
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them and will be reintegrated back into school upon their return.
- The Head Teacher will make termly reports to the school's governing body on attendance matters
- The school will, when appropriate, liaise with other agencies - AIO, School Health and local faith leaders etc. - when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Head Teacher will have regular meetings with the school's AIO in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

**March 2021**

**Next Review: March 2023**