



## **Oxford Gardens Primary School** **Attendance Policy**

'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfill their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated - pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school'.

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Aug 2013

Pupils' achievement is directly influenced by attendance and punctuality and suffers when attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.

Oxford Gardens Primary School aims to encourage all pupils to achieve their potential through regular attendance and punctuality. Poor attendance and punctuality is monitored and followed up swiftly.

Oxford Gardens Primary School expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved.

- The national average for attendance in primary schools is currently 96%.
- At Oxford Gardens we are continuously working towards our goal of 100% attendance for all pupils. However, as a minimum we aim to be in line with the national average of 96%.

### **Procedures if children are:**

#### **Absent**

- On the first day of absence if there has been no contact by 9.20 am from a Parent/Carer as to why their child is not at school, a member of the office staff will call home to find out why the child is absent and this will be noted in the register.
- If the member of the office team cannot get through to the main contact, they will try all of the alternative contacts listed. Once one of the contacts is reached, it is then their responsibility to find out where the child is.

- If none of the contacts can be reached then a home visit will be instigated that day. Following this, the police may be informed that the child is missing.
- When a child returns to school after being absent, the Parent/Carer should write a letter explaining the absence.
- If it is a long period of sickness (3 days or more) evidence should be provided. There are copies of the 'child sickness form' in the office to take to the doctor's surgery. These simply need to be signed or stamped by the nurse, doctor or receptionist to acknowledge that an appointment has been made and then brought to the school office. An appointment card, a copy of a prescription or a doctor's note could also be used.
- If a child is persistently absent the procedures outlined in this policy will be followed.

## **Late**

- School starts at 8.55 a.m. Children should be in the playground by 8:55am to go into class for learning to start at 9am. Any child arriving at school after 9.00a.m. will be marked in the register as late. Children will receive a late card from a member of staff at the gate.
- If children arrive after 9:15 they will need to go into the school office to sign in.
- Children arriving after 9:45 are automatically assigned an absent mark in the school register which affects their attendance; we are unable to override this.
- If children are deemed to be persistently late then the parent/carers may be invited in to meet with a member of the office staff, Head teacher and attendance lead.
- Persistent lateness is taken very seriously. If following the action above, punctuality remains an issue, and is contributing to unauthorised absence, then a referral can be made to the Early Help Team.

## **Child Missing Education**

If a child stops attending school and no communication about the reason is given then the child will be referred to Early Help services. The Early Help service will then complete a number of checks in order to locate the child. If the child cannot be found, then Early Help will alert the school and the child can be removed from the school roll. The child will be classed as CME (Child Missing Education) and the local authority will then look into the case.

## **If a child is persistently absent:**

Where a school is concerned about the pattern of a child's attendance and punctuality, the school will follow the procedures set out below to enable early intervention:

- When a child's attendance drops below 90% (for the school year) a member of staff will ring the parent to alert them to this fact. They may be invited in for an informal meeting with the School Attendance Lead and a member of the Early Help team to set targets and discuss ways forward.

- If there isn't significant improvement, a parent contract will be set up with the School Attendance leader, Early Help practitioner and/or the Head Teacher to discuss any issues with attendance and set out a period of time to show improvements.
- If there is lack of parental co-operation or no improvements made, then the school will make a formal referral to The Early Help Team.
- In extreme cases, parents that do not engage with The Early Help Team may be prosecuted.

### **Rights and responsibilities for attendance/punctuality:**

#### **The Legal Framework:**

There are legal obligations on:

- The parent(s)/carer(s) to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to send them to school regularly once they are on the register
- The School to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school
- The Local Authority to provide education and to enforce attendance.

#### **Parents:**

The law requires that children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full time education. Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents have a duty to *"cause (the child) to receive full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he or she may have."*

Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing. If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, stomach aches etc. parents should inform the school and bring them in. If they don't get any better, school will contact parents straight away, to collect them. If pupils have a dental, clinic or hospital appointment, parents should let the school know and bring the appointment card to the school office. Pupils should be brought back to school after appointments so that they miss as little school time as possible.

#### **Therefore, parents are expected to:**

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day at 8:55 am.
- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- Arrange medical and dental appointments outside of school time wherever possible and bring the child back to school following or before the appointment.
- Telephone to inform the school on the first day of absence for their child.

- Provide up to date contact details.
- Provide a written explanation of absence, including dates of absence as soon as their child returns to school.
- If it is a long period of sickness (3 days or more) a medical letter should be provided.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.
- If a child leaves Oxford Gardens Primary School, provide details of the new school that they will attending.
- If a parent chooses to home educate their child, put this in writing and give it in to the school office.

#### **Head Teacher:**

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
- To deal with parental requests for extended leave in line with the RBKC policies and procedures.
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices, in line with RBKC policies and procedures.

#### **School Attendance leader:**

- To lead on/take responsibility for attendance/punctuality, on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with/responding to parental enquires.
- To oversee the analysis of/analyse weekly/termly/yearly data and respond to findings.
- To meet with the School Administrator to monitor the systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To liaise with external agencies such as the Early Help service and make referrals where necessary.
- To ensure that rewards and incentives for attendance and punctuality are being used.
- Work with the teachers, to plan for the reintegration of pupils after long-term absence.
- To revise and amend the policy, as required.

#### **The class teacher will be responsible for:**

- Marking the register accurately and ensuring that children who come late are in receipt of a blue late card, if the child does NOT produce a late card, they must be sent to the office to get one where the office will enter the late mark. (It is the responsibility of the office to mark children late).
- Providing a welcoming and safe environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.

- If required, to work collaboratively with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties, regarding for example, child protection.
- Promptly informing the School Attendance leader, of pupils who persist with poor attendance.
- Giving feedback to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality at Parents Evenings.
- Sending half termly letters home to the parents of children whose attendance is below 96% in targeted year groups

**The Senior Administrative Officer with responsibility for Attendance will be responsible for:**

- Checking periodically to ensure registers are being entered correctly.
- Following up absences that are causing concern.
- Liaising with the Early Help Team.
- Making formal referrals to Early Help Team and completing the paperwork for Fixed Penalty Notices.
- Organising rewards for good attendance.
- Adding late marks and monitoring lateness weekly.

**Members of the Office Team will:**

- Make first day contact with parents and carers.
- Ensure that letters regarding lateness or questioning absence are sent out.
- Bring concerns to the Senior Administrative Officer, Attendance lead and Head Teacher.

## **Early Help Team**

### **Introduction**

The Early Help Team works closely with schools and other agencies to promote, encourage and enforce regular school attendance of children of compulsory school age who are residents in The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

By Law all children between the ages of 5- 16 years of age must receive an education. Once a child is registered at a school, it is the parent's legal duty under The Education Act 1996 to ensure that the child attends school regularly and punctually.

**School's expectation of the Early Help team:**

- Weekly a member of Early Help will attend the school to support attendance and lateness. They will support with monitoring lateness and absence as well as meeting parents and reviewing systems.
- The Early Help Team will visit the school when requested in order to meet with the Head Teacher or the Attendance leader, to discuss all aspects of pupil attendance or other welfare issues.
- The Early Help Team will inspect the school attendance registers to check that all correct attendance codes are used and attendance registers are maintained. During those inspections the Early Help Team may identify pupils with attendance or punctuality patterns that appear to be of concern and will discuss appropriate action about those cases with the school.
- When a school has referred a pupil to The Early Help Team they will arrange to meet with or speak with the parent and the child to make sure that they are fully aware of the referral information and the nature of the attendance or punctuality problems. The Early Help Team will explain the importance of regular attendance and inform the parent of their legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at the school.
- The Early Help Team will carry out a short-term intervention plan and will monitor and review the child's attendance with the school on a regular basis. Where longer-term intervention is needed, The Early Help Team will consider a range of strategies to help improve attendance; this may include legal proceedings where necessary.
- The Early Help Team will advise the Head Teacher or the relevant member of staff at the school in writing on any ongoing works that have been completed with the family.

#### **Whole school initiatives aimed at raising attendance in the school:**

- Scooter run.
- Workers Coop
- Breakfast club open to all children.
- Tracking of children with attendance below 90%.
- Half termly attendance assembly celebrating children who have attendance of 99% and above attendance for the half term. Badges are given for 100% attendance and a sticker for those with 99%.
- Prize draw for children with 100% half termly attendance.

- Weekly meeting with children that are below 90% attendance.
- Letters sent home to the parents of children with less than 96% attendance in targeted year groups
- Attendance certificate given to parents termly

### **Procedures for Exceptional Leave**

The law says that parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time.

Any absence during term time disrupts the continuity of a child's education and reduces their chances of success. Wherever possible, Parents/Carers are asked to take family holidays during the school holidays.

However, we appreciate that in some cases taking your child out from school during term time can be unavoidable. In these cases, it is the parents' responsibility to check with the school regarding the procedures for requesting a period of exceptional leave. It is advisable to apply for the leave giving as much notice as possible. Do not assume the Head Teacher will authorise exceptional leave requests. (No flights or bookings to be made in advance until authorisation is given from the Head Teacher).

Any unauthorised holidays taken will result in taking the risk that your child could lose their place at school and may be taken off role.

### **When deciding whether to allow term-time leave the Head teacher will consider:**

- the age of the child
- the reasons and circumstances provided by the parent
- the timing and duration of the leave
- the child's record of school attendance
- any previous term-time absences
- the child's level of academic progress
- the amount of notice given
- the time of year
- the effect on any tests or examinations
- the likely impact of the absence
- the cultural background of the child and whether extended family members live in another country

In requesting exceptional leave, parents are expected to complete an exceptional leave request form (available from the school office) and hand it back into the office staff at least **three weeks** in advance of the date requested.

The requests are shown to one of the Senior Admin Officers and advice taken from the Early Help Team, however the ultimate decision lies with the Headteacher. The Parent/Carer is notified of the decision in writing.

Where absence is not authorised, the school will confirm this decision in writing advising that they will be at risk of being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

If a child is taken out of school without the Head Teacher's authorisation, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice and legal action being taken.

Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007:

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £60.

- If this is not paid within 21 days the amount rises to £120.
- If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority can prosecute under section 444(1) unless it comes to our attention that the penalty notice had been issued in error.

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996: "If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence." The court can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs and/or make a Parenting Order.

### **Home-School Agreement**

There is a Home-School agreement in place, which addresses attendance and punctuality. Both parents, and the school are expected to sign this agreement on an annual basis.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually in the light of new legislation/school developments.