



Squirrel Hayes First School

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Behaviour & Attendance Policy

- 1 This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people/vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.



PRINCIPLES

- At Squirrel Hayes First School we are committed to working together to ensure that all of our pupils receive the best education possible to enable them to make progress and become successful lifelong learners.
- Excellent school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.
- Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community and as such it is promoted through the school's high expectations and both academic and pastoral curriculum.
- All learners should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.
- Pupils are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, parents and the pupil. If a pupil is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance and education does not matter. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer. Working in partnership between home and school is the best approach.
- This Policy should not be seen in isolation, but is a strand that underpins all other policies related to the well-being of children including safeguarding, behaviour, bullying, and support for children with medical needs.

School Responsibilities:

- We will promote positive behaviour and attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials and will recognise good attendance appropriately.
- We will build positive relationships between home and school that can be the Foundation of good attendance.
- We will ensure that parents/carers are aware of attendance matters and work with them to ensure good attendance and punctuality.
- We will support pupils and parents to address any barriers both in school and out of school.
- We will work in partnership with pupils, parents and external agencies to improve attendance and punctuality where required, to support the school's commitment to this issue we have employed an Independent Welfare Service - VIP Education who will provide advice and guidance to the school, parents and pupils.
- We will work with a number of other agencies to help resolve any attendance problems such as representatives of the Local Support Team and Education Welfare Workers to ensure all pupils can benefit from consistently good punctuality and attendance. We will use the Early Help Assessment process to support this where this is deemed appropriate.
- We will be proactive in encouraging attendance for all pupils through ensuring parents and pupils receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality and will react swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual pupils should this become a concern.
- We will intensify support where absence does not improve or earlier support is not engaged with.

Parents or Carers Responsibilities:

- 2 This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people/vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly.
- Inform school straight away on each day of their absence if your child cannot attend and give the reason. (e.g. unexpectedly absent due to sickness)
- Try to make medical, dental or other appointments outside the school day.
- Ensure the school is aware of any circumstances at home or in school that may be likely to affect your child's attendance. Work with the school and Local Authority to help them understand any barriers to your child's attendance.
- Proactively engage with any support offered to prevent the need for more formal support or action.
- **If more formal support is required to address attendance issues, proactively engage with this support including any 'Attendance contract' or voluntary Early Help to prevent the need for Legal Intervention.**
- Encourage good routines at home which promote a healthy lifestyle including enough sleep.
- Talk to your child about school and let the school know if your child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with home learning, mental health or friendship problems.
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. Any period of Leave of Absence must be requested by parents/carers by completing a Request of Leave form, which must then be authorised by the Headteacher prior to taking the leave.
- Seek advice from your G.P. if you are not sure how long to keep your child off school with an illness.
- Ensure school has all your up to date contact details.
- Encourage your child to enjoy school and make the most of all the opportunities available to them.
- Provide evidence such as a GP appointment card, Medical appointment and Dental appointment card where necessary.

Admissions and Attendance Register

Admissions Register:

School keeps an admission register, which contains the personal details of every learner in the school, along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school including those of their parents and of their previous school. Information regarding parents and carers and details of the school last attended. All schools (including academies) must keep a record of attendance register entries for at **least 6 years** and inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register.

A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register **if a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulation 2024**. Full details of keeping the admissions register can be found in **chapter 7 of 'Working together to improve school attendance- applies from 19th August 2024**.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf

Registration:

School opens at 08:45am and closes at 3:15pm.

Schools are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether the pupil is present, absent, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site or unable to attend school due to exceptional circumstances as defined in **regulation 11(2)**.

- 3 **This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people/vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.**

Schools must record whether the absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or not. If a pupil is absent, every half-day absence from school must be classified and coded by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents/carers. Therefore, information regarding the reason for absence for each day's absence is always required.

There is no requirement for schools to record whether absence of pupils not of compulsory school age is authorised or not. At Squirrel Hayes First School we do however use the national attendance and absence codes to record attendance and track and monitor pupils of none compulsory school age to support the promotion and forming of good attendance habits and expectations.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason e.g. illness, medical appointment or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- **Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily**
- **evidence not supplied for on-going absence as requested**
- **holidays taken in term time that have not been authorised by the Headteacher or in excess of the period granted by the school**
- **truancy before or during the school day**
- **absences which have never been properly explained**
- **Arrival after the register has closed or persistent late arrival at school**

Parents/carers whose children are experiencing difficulties **either in school or out of school** should contact the school at an early stage, asking for an appointment with the school's 'Home School Link Worker' Mrs Oakes. Parents should work together with staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful and school values partnership working with parents and other agencies.

When completing the register, school follows the DfE school attendance guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' to determine which relevant code to use:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf

The register is taken twice a day, at the start of the morning and the afternoon.

Morning Registration

The morning register is taken at 08:50am Pupils arriving after the register has been taken but before 09:10am are recorded as late - **L**

Registration closes at 09:10am. Pupils arriving after this time are late - after registration closes, and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness - **U**

Afternoon registration

The afternoon register is taken at 1:00pm. Pupils arriving after the registration has been taken but before 1:20pm are recorded as late - **L**

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Registration closes at **1:20pm** in the afternoon. Pupils arriving to school after this time are late - after registration closes, and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness - **U**

Late Procedures

At Squirrel Hayes we actively encourage all learners to arrive at school on time and try to work in partnership with parents to ensure this. If a parent/carer is aware that they are going to be late and have a valid reason then we ask that they follow the procedure below:

- Ring or text the school office (as soon as possible) so that class teachers can be informed and prepare for the late arrival of the child.
- Parents and pupils who arrive late should come to the school office to register and sign in the 'Late Registration' Book providing a reason for being late.
- Pupils arriving at school up to 20 minutes after the register was taken in the morning and 20 minutes after the register was taken in the afternoon will be recorded as **L** for late.
- Children arriving later than this period will be recorded as **U** which legally means they were absent. This will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If lateness is a cause for concern, the following procedures will be followed:

- Parents/Carers receive a phone call from the Home-School-Links-Worker Mrs Oakes regarding recent late marks.
- Parents/carers will receive a letter informing of the concern. The Home-School-Links Worker may contact parents/carers to discuss any support that may be required.
- Parents/carers will receive a further letter if no improvements in lateness is seen. The Home-School-Links Worker may contact parents/carers to discuss any support that may be required.
- If no improvement, the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from VIP Education will contact parents to further discuss and offer support and advice to improve punctuality.
- If still no improvement, Parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting with the EWO and Home-School-Links Worker to discuss reasons for lateness to offer support. Referrals to wider support services and signposting may be offered. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised with parents/carers and pupils where appropriate during the meeting and a review date set if needed.
- If no improvement is seen after the meeting has taken place, the school may follow Staffordshire Local Authority Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices:
(see link below for chapter 6 Attendance legal Intervention - 'Working together to improve school attendance 19th August 2024)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf)

Attendance Categories

The following attendance categories are used to track each pupil's attendance. The school uses both 'in school' tracking systems and the DfE's 'Monitor your school attendance' online system to monitor and track each pupil's individual attendance and that of groups and cohorts on regular basis. Parents and Carers receive a letter indicating their child's attendance for each half term and how this compares to the

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'Attendance Categories'. Colour coded boxes visually highlight where the attendance falls within an agreed scale. See below Attendance colour codes:

Trust	DfE Absence Bandings
<p align="center">95% - 100% Well Done! This is excellent!</p> <p>If you are in the Green group you have been absent for less than two weeks in the whole year or you may have attended school every day.</p>	<p align="center">Absence from 0% to less than 5%</p>
<p align="center">90.1% - 94.9% Be Carefull!</p> <p>If you are in the Yellow group, you could be missing more than 2 weeks of learning.</p>	<p align="center">Absence from 5% to less than 10%</p>
<p align="center">90% and below = <u>PERSISTANT ABSENCE BAND</u></p> <p>If you are in the red group, you are now classed as <u>persistently absent</u> and could be missing just under 4 weeks of learning.</p>	<p align="center">Persistently absent DfE Banding</p>
<p align="center">79.9% - 50.9% = <u>At risk of Severe Absence</u></p> <p>If you are in the red group and fall within this band, you could be missing between 7 to 19 weeks of learning</p>	<p align="center">Persistently absent DfE Banding</p>
<p align="center">50% and below = <u>SEVERVE ABSENCE</u></p> <p>You are now a Severe Absence Pupil and are missing more than 19 weeks of learning in the school year.</p>	<p align="center">Severely absent DfE Banding</p>

Poor Attendance

If a pupil's attendance falls below 90% (persistent absence) the procedures listed below will be followed. It is to be noted that the following attendance categories are used to identify poor attendance within the RED Persistent Absence band:

- 90% and below - Persistent Absence (National Guidance)
- 79.9% - 50.9% - At risk of Severe Absence (LA Guidance)
- 50% and below - Severe Absence (National Guidance)

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If Persistent and/or Severe absence is the case, the following procedures will be followed:

- Parents/Carers receive a phone call from the Home-School-Links-Worker Mrs Oakes regarding recent absences.
- Parents/carers will receive a letter informing of the concern. The Home-School-Links Worker may contact parents/carers to discuss any support that may be required.
- Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from VIP Education will contact Parents and Carers if no improvements in attendance seen to offer advice and support to improve attendance and make Parents/ Carers aware of attendance clinic invite.
- Parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting with the EWO and Home-School-Links Worker to discuss reasons for poor attendance and to offer support. Referrals to wider support services and signposting may be offered. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised with parents/carers and pupils where appropriate during the meeting and a review date set if needed. Parents/cares made aware of the legal implications.
- If no improvement is seen after the meeting has taken place, the school may follow Staffordshire Local Authority Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices: (*see link below for chapter 6 Attendance legal Intervention - 'Working together to improve school attendance 19th August 2024*)
- If no further improvement seen Parents/Carers invited to attend a follow up meeting with the EWO and Home-School-Links-Worker to discuss reasons for lack of engagement or support not working. More formal conversation held to be clear about the protentional need for legal intervention.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, school will work with the Local Authority on Legal Intervention.

Reporting Absence

Parents/Carers whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school's Home-School-Links Worker Mrs Oakes at an early stage to try and work together to resolve any issues or receive sign posting to support. Alternatively, Parents/Carers may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from VIP Education themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice and the telephone number is available from the school office.

If a pupil is absent form school, we ask Parents/Carers to following the below procedures:

A reminder text message is sent out to all parents/carers every day at 08:15am to ensure that school is contacted regarding any absence.

Absence known in advance (e.g. Medical Appointment)

A copy of the medical/hospital appointment letter or Doctor's appointment card should be given to the school office, informing the school and class teacher of the nature of the absence (reason why) and when it will be taken. This will be added to the learner's file and electronic system for monitoring attendance. If no proof has been received for your child's appointment, the session will be *recorded as unauthorised until proof is seen*.

Absence not known in advance

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- Ring, text or e-mail the school (*before 10.00am where possible*) on the first day of absence in order to inform the school and provide a reason.
- Inform school of the reason for absence on each day of your child's absence.
- Reply promptly to any request or inquiry concerning absence.

If a child is absent without explanation then the following procedures will be followed:

- If by 10.00am we have not received an explanation for absence - School office staff will contact the Parents/Carers by phone call or text message. Family members will also be contacted where necessary.
- This will enable us to ensure that the Parent/Carer was aware of their child's absence from school enabling the Parent/Carer where necessary to establish their child is safe.
- This will also determine the reason for absence and when the pupil might be expected to return to school.
- The school may also ask the EWO from VIP Education to establish contact either by telephone, text message or a home visit.
- School office staff will then enter the correct code into the school register and relay any messages to the appropriate members of staff.
- **If a reason is still not known after 5 school days, the absence will be unauthorised.**

Children Missing in Education

Schools have a duty by law to refer any absence of 20 days or more to the Local Authority Children Missing in Education department where they have been unable to establish contact with the Parent/Carer/Pupil or have general concerns about the absence.

To avoid any referrals, Parents/Carers are requested to inform the school if they are moving house/area or country and to provide a forwarding address, contact number and the name of the new school if known.

Truancy

All staff at Squirrel Hayes First School are responsible for promoting regular attendance and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They also strive to ensure that every learner's safety, welfare and happiness is at the heart of all decision making. Although it is a very rare occurrence for a learner to truant, if there is a concern that a learner might be truanting then the following action is taken immediately:

- Notify the Headteacher.
- Headteacher then contacts the parents either by phone or by home visit with the Home-School- Links- Worker if possible.
- This is then followed up by notifying the Educational Welfare Worker of the situation.
- The Headteacher, Parents and learner concerned meet to discuss any reasons for the learner not wanting to attend school in an effort to resolve any issues and put relevant support into place.
- Actions decided are shared with all relevant personnel and put into place.

Medical Absence

Schools have the responsibility to decide whether an absence can be authorised on medical grounds. If the school has concerns about the level of medical absence that a pupil has incurred, they will contact the Parent/Carers to discuss it further and to find out whether their GP or other health professionals have been contacted.

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Mrs Oakes as Home-School-Links Worker will communicate with Parents/Carers to review any Care Plans and signpost to relevant support. Parents/Carers may be asked to provide evidence that their child is too unwell to attend school by providing a copy of any prescribed medication or medical appointments/communication. [Mrs Oakes will contact 'Health' /NHS Hub for advice on support if the illness or medical condition is considered to be long-term.](#) If the school do not receive medical evidence, the absences will be unauthorised.

Medical and Dental Appointments

We expect Parents/Carers to make every effort to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays. If this is not possible, confirmation of the appointment will be required prior to authorising the absence and an **M** code used on the register to record when the child has attended an appointment. Pupils are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and Parents/Carers are expected to return their children to school following the appointment unless not well enough to do so.

Monitoring and Tracking of School Attendance

At Squirrel Hayes First School we view excellent attendance as a vital component in helping our learning community to achieve both academically and pastorally. As a result, we regularly track monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify individuals, cohorts or groups that require support with their attendance and to inform strategic decision making around attendance across the school.

The following tracking, analysis and monitoring is undertaken:

- The Headteacher and or Home-School-Links Worker liaises with office staff to monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends to inform early intervention for individuals, families, groups and cohorts.
- [Key action points or proposed interventions shared with Class Teachers weekly.](#)
- The Home-School-Links Worker meets [fortnightly](#) with the Independent Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from VIP Education to analyse attendance data and identify those who need support and focus, developing actions for identified active cases.
- [Half Termly benchmarking undertaken against National Attendance Data at whole school, year group and cohort level. Outcomes used to inform strategic action planning and feedback to Stakeholders.](#)
- Half termly, termly and full year analysis of attendance data is undertaken by members of the Senior Leadership Team to identify trends and patterns. [This includes analysis of pupils and cohorts and use of certain codes.](#) All data gained is used to inform strategic decision making and specific strategies to address any areas of poor attendance or to celebrate attendance achievements.
- Senior leaders and Governors monitor the impact of actions taken and use information gained to inform future strategic planning around attendance. Attendance data and reports are shared with the Governing Body on a termly basis to monitor and measure impact at a strategic level.

[The school receives 'Targeted Support Meetings' from the Local Authority. These take the form of regular conversations with school using the attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance or any targeted actions or support required.](#)

The Local Authority also provides the school with communication and advice, multi-disciplinary support

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for families and legal intervention when required. The Local Authority has the responsibility to track local attendance data and monitor and improve attendance.

Our independent Education Welfare Officer from VIP Education regularly meets with the Headteacher and Home-School-Links Worker to monitor and review pupil's attendance. Where there appears to be a particular problem or barrier identified then the following procedures are applied:

- Communication to home via the Home-School-Links Worker to identify any challenges or barriers and to offer and signpost to support.
- Letters sent to Parents and Carers informing them of a decline in school attendance and the need for this to improve due to the impact on their child's education.
- If school attendance continues to decline, further communication is made with Parents and Carers via letter and or phone call by Mrs Oakes and /or the Education Welfare Officer from VIP Education.
- If no improvement seen, parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer and Home-School-Links Worker to discuss concerns and to offer support around any possible barriers or challenges at home or in school which may be contributing to low attendance. Referrals to wider support may be offered where appropriate. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised during the meeting with a review date set if needed.
- If school attendance does not improve, the school may follow the Local Authorities Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for pupils with persistent absence.
- More formal action may be undertaken if deemed appropriate by professional agencies involved.

Targets

The following targets have been agreed by the Governing Body for the academic year.

- **School absence target for 2024-2025 = 4%**
- **School attendance target for 2023-2024 = 96%**
- **Biddulph Partnership of Schools agreed target = 96.5%**

Communication

Key information regarding lateness, illness and absence is available to parents through the website and provided through letters, [texts messages and social media accounts linked to the school](#). This highlights the importance of being at school on time and in Parents/Carers notifying the school if their child/children are absent for any reason. Parents and Carers are encouraged to share any worries their child might have in school and to work in partnership with the school to address any issues or concerns.

Attendance Initiatives and Celebrating Good Attendance

At Squirrel Hayes we believe that attendance is an important factor in the success of a learner's education. In order to ensure consistency and progression in their learning development it is vital that learners not only attend on a daily basis but also arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important however, that learners should not be in school if they are unwell and unable to cope with the daily learning. The school has adopted the following attendance initiatives in order to help further improve our attendance targets.

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As a school we have signed up to the Local Authorities 'Little Heroes' campaign. This approach is used to work with the learners in a fun, Motivational and engaging approach to promote and celebrate the benefits of attending school every day and on time.



Celebrating Weekly Attendance

- Once a week attendance records for each class are celebrated during an Achievement Assembly. The class with the best attendance gets to look after the school's mascot 'Cyril the Squirrel' for the week. The class with the best weekly attendance will also be shared via the general newsletter.
- Individual learner's attendance is monitored weekly. *For all learners who have attended 100% for the week a 'coloured attendance reward sticker' is issued.*
- *Each individual learner will receive a small 'gold star' for their Attendance Chart/tracker card. These will be given out after each registration session to track their attendance.*
- Each week every child that arrives to school on time and achieves 100% for that week gets a raffle ticket which is entered into the half termly attendance draw. Each half term the attendance raffle is drawn and a child from each class will be picked out of the draw to receive a prize along with their parent/carer.

Celebrating Half Termly Attendance

- Each week the class with the highest attendance receives a star on the attendance display in the school library. Each half term the points are added up and the winning class gets a golden attendance ticket which allows them to choose a class reward.

Celebrating Termly Attendance

- Every learner who achieves 100% attendance for 1 term will receive a Bronze Certificate. If they achieve 100% for 2 terms they will receive a Silver Certificate. *These certificates are awarded at the end of year Awards Assembly.*

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Celebrating Yearly Attendance

- Every learner who achieves 100% attendance for the academic year will receive a special attendance medal which is awarded at the end of year Awards Assembly.

Requests for 'Leave of Absence' from school

All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and schools maintained by a local authority must do so. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

(see *Working together to improve school attendance 19th August 2024* for further information)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf

Squirrel Hayes First School follow Staffordshire's Local Authority Protocol and agreed Biddulph Schools Partnership Trust policy in relation to requests for 'Leave of Absence' from school during term time.

Squirrel Hayes First School does not promote leave of absence in term time, however, if a parent feels leave of absence has a justifiable circumstance they are asked to submit a leave of absence form which can be **requested** via the school office.

Headteachers may NOT grant any leave of absence during term time **unless they meet the above approved criteria set out in regulation 11 or are exceptional circumstances**, in which the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted. The fact that a holiday may be cheaper during term time will not be considered as exceptional circumstances.

Each request will be considered individually and on its own merits. Requests will need to be made in writing at least 14 days before the absence is to be taken if approved. In considering a request, the school will take account of the following:-

- The **exceptional circumstances** stated that have given rise to the request
- The stage of the child's education and progress and the effects the requested absence could have on these.
- The overall attendance pattern of the child
- The frequency of similar requests
- Whether the request was made giving the 14 days' notice in advance

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- Whether the absence will be during examination or assessment times

If parents proceed to take their child out of school for a family holiday without the Headteacher's permission, all of the absences during this period will now be recorded as 'unauthorised'. Parents/Carers should be mindful that this will affect the child's attendance record. A Penalty Notice can be issued if any period of absence is taken without the Headteacher's authorisation.

Where a child does not reside with both parents, it is the responsibility of the parent making the request to inform the other parent.

If a request for leave has not been received and we have reason to believe a pupil is on holiday, a letter will be sent to Parents/Carers requesting evidence to verify reason for absence other than a holiday. If no evidence can be provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised and a penalty notice request sent to the Local Authority.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued

Parents/Carers have the legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, on time, properly dressed and with the correct equipment ready to learn.

Parents/carers may be prosecuted if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually. This is in accordance with the 1996 Education Act, Section 443, 444(1), 444(1A). It aims to ensure that Parents/Carers carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their child/children.

Penalty Notices are issued to Parents and Carers as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided.

National Threshold for Issuing Penalty Notices

The new National Threshold for issuing penalty notices has been set at 10 sessions (5 days of school) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. Please note that if the Local Authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, one can be issued for less than 5 days and before the threshold is met. E.g. If Parents and Carers are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below the threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events.

As a school we will be expected to notify the County Council of all unauthorised leave in term time that meets the threshold of 5 days or less if appropriate.

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if one of the following criteria is met:

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. "Persistent" means at least 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence over a period of ten school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive and the absence can span different terms or school years.
- There is a period of absence not authorised by the head teacher or in excess of the period authorised by the head teacher. (e.g. family holiday)
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. "Persistent" means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 10 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.

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- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the LA with whom other interventions will be used.

(Please note a session is the equivalent to half a day in school)

Other conditions.

- **New two penalty notice limit in a three-year period:**
 - The three-year rolling period starts for Parents/Carers when the first penalty notice is issued after the 19th August 2024.
 - The **first penalty notice** for leave in term time issued will increase to £160 per parent/carer per child but can be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
 - If a **second penalty notice** is issued within three years of the first penalty notice, then this will be fixed at £160 per child per Parent/Carer with no reduction for an early payment.
 - **A third penalty notice cannot be issued within the three-year period; therefore, the County Council will deal with any further unauthorised leave through prosecution in the Magistrates Court. If a Parent/Carer is found guilty, the potential fine is up to £1,000.**

Excluded Learners

A Penalty notice will be considered if the presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. The parent of the excluded learner must ensure that the learner is not present in a public place at any time during school hours on a day that he / she is excluded, up to and including the first 5 days or, where that exclusion is for a fixed period of 5 days or less, any of the days to which the exclusion relates.

If the excluded learner is present in a public place at any time during school hours on a school day specified above the parent commits an offence under section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and is liable, on a summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

Elective Home Education

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child, school will contact the Parent/Carer to discuss their reasons in more detail, offering support to deal with any issues raised. If after this the Parent/Carer still wishes to home educate their child, the school will inform the Local Authority of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register.

Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this - particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record. Prior to deciding to home educate, parents/carers are requested to contact the Local Authority Elective Home Education Department,

Summary

It is vital to a child's progress that they attend school as often as possible and that they are on time.

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There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. Just 17 days absent from school in a year could mean a drop in a GCSE grade within all subjects.

Impact of absence:

Missed number of days	Missed number of sessions	Missed number of weeks	Missed number of lessons
1	2	0	5
3	6	0.5	15
5	10	1	25
7.5	15	1.5	35
10	20	2	50
12.5	25	2.5	65
15	30	3	75
17.5	35	3.5	90

Impact of lateness:

Over a school year -

5 minutes late every day = 3 days absent

15 minutes late every day = 10 days absent

30 minutes late every day = 19 days absent

If parents have any concerns relating to attendance or lateness that they wish to discuss, they should contact the school office in the first instance. Staff can then put Parents/Carers in contact with the most relevant person to support.

School staff are committed to working with Parents/Carers to ensure any problems are dealt with straight away in order for pupils to feel happy and safe at Squirrel Hayes First School and achieve to the best of their ability. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school and are on time every day.

RESPONSIBLE CONTACTS

All staff in school are responsible for promoting good attendance.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Mrs. E.J Pickford - (Headteacher & Senior Attendance Champion)

Mrs. L. Oakes - (Home-School- Links- Worker)

Mr. S. Stephenson-Evans - (Clerical Assistant & Registration Lead)

Mrs. H. Johnson-Allen- (Mental Health Lead)

School buy into the additional services of VIP Education (support can be gained from this service by contacting the school office initially)

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All staff have a shared responsibility in encouraging good attendance. They follow the school's positive behaviour management and Anti-bullying policies and practice in order to ensure that learners feel safe, cared for and positive about their experience of school.

Guidance and Legal Framework:

Please see the link below to 'Working together to improve school attendance 19th August 2024'

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

Appendices:

- **Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time**
- **Application for Pupil Leave of Absence**

DOCUMENT CHANGE LOG

Version No.	Date of review	Reviewer	Changes Made
01	June 2010	Erica Smith	Inclusion of class attendance targets and weekly award system.
02	Nov 2010	Erica Smith	Changed to reflect new attendance target of 95%.
03	Nov 2011	Erica Smith	Includes latest guidance & attendance communication procedures
04	Oct 2012	Erica Smith	Includes changes to wording of requests for leave. Includes new factors in determining whether an absence is authorised or not dependent upon the impact of absence on the learners attendance score taking it below 96%.
05	Sept 2013	Nikki Stroud	Includes Department for Education's Statutory Guidance on Attendance - request for leave only in exceptional circumstances, holidays in term time, red band % and school incentives and rewards.

Version No.	Date of review	Reviewer	Changes Made
06	October 2014	Nikki Stroud	Additional request for medical evidence for on-going illness by means of medical letter, GP appointment card or a copy of the learner's prescription. Also for on-going illness a referral to the School Nurse will be made by school to ensure the learner's health care needs are being met. All learners at 90% will be discussed with the LST to see if a referral for early support is required. The same learners will be flagged up with the EWW during monthly meetings. Appendices added.
07	01/02/15	Nikki Stroud	Addition of the LA's new Code of Conduct for Penalty Notice for leave of absence and persistent absence in operation from 28.02.2015. Addition of visual and interactive team attendance display.
08	20/06/2016	Nikki Stroud	Adapted from Staffordshire Model Policy May 2015 v2. Addition of Biddulph Schools Partnership Trust letter and agreed procedures and targets. Changes to Colour Bands and targets. Appendices.
09	12.06.2017	Nikki Stroud	Request for evidence if learners attendance falls below 90%
10	March 2018	Sally Edwards & Nikki Stroud	Policy amended to reflect new penalty notice changes for absence from school. The time the register closes has been updated to 9.30am, in line with other schools across the partnership trust
11	Feb 2019	Sally Edwards	Updated attendance rewards
12	March 2020	Sally Edwards	Reviewed
13	March 2021	Sally Edwards	Added any changes in blue. Highlighted areas that are affected by COVID-19 and updated relevant staff.
14	Feb 2022	Sally Edwards	Amended the half termly attendance to reflect the new display in the school hall. Amended the class reward to reflect class choice.
15	March 2023	Erica Pickford	Reviewed and updated to follow the latest DfE guidance. Includes partnership working with VIP Education and new start times to the school day.
16	March 2024	Erica Pickford	Reviewed and updated rewards section and clarified expectations for suspected holidays.
17	August 2024	Erica Pickford	Reviewed and updated in line with new guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance - 19 th August 2024' and LA Guidance

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Version No.	Date of review	Reviewer	Changes Made
18	November 2024	Erica Pickford	Adjusted colour coding and banding to align with DfE banding systems. Include reference to the 'Little Heroes' campaign.

Guidance Notes for Parents and Carers requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parents who want the school to consider granting leave of absence in school term time should read these notes carefully, **complete the attached form and send it to the Headteacher**. This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered **well before** the desired period of absence. Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any booking arrangements before receiving the school's decision regarding their request. Head teachers cannot authorise any leave of absence unless the request is received before the period of absence begins.
 2. The Department for Education makes it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time **unless it meets specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024** or there are **exceptional circumstances**. Headteachers now also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
 3. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time.
 4. Staffordshire County Council understands the challenges that some parents face when booking holidays particularly during school holidays. However, we believe that, in order to ensure children receive the best education and prospects, that they should be in school during term time.
 5. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave of absence. **In considering a request, the school will take account of the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024** : -
 - the **exceptional** circumstances stated that have given rise to the request
 - the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
 - frequency of similar requests
 - whether the parent made the request in advance
 - students/pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will **not** normally be granted leave of absence.
 6. Where parents have children in more than one school a separate request must be made to each school. The headteacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. However, Headteachers may choose to liaise with each other as part of their decision-making process.
 7. Should the school decide to grant leave of absence, but the child **does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave of absence period) and no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence this absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
 8. Should the school decide **not to grant leave of absence** and parents still take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised**, which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine:
 - **New two penalty notice limit in a three-year period:**
- 18 **This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people/vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.**

- The three-year rolling period starts for Parents/Carers when the first penalty notice is issued after the 19th August 2024.
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 - **A third penalty notice cannot be issued** within the three-year period; therefore, the County Council will **deal with any further unauthorised leave through prosecution in the Magistrates Court**. If a Parent/carer is found guilty, the potential fine is up to £1,000.
9. The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school absences during term time and support Headteachers in challenging parents who ignore the law.

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Request for Leave during Term Time

Date _____

To: The Headteacher of Squirrel Hayes First School

I request a leave of absence from school during term time for:

My child (full name) _____

for the period from (date) _____ to (date) _____

The **exceptional** circumstances and reason for this request are: -

I have other children in other school(s) as follows:

Child(ren) full name(s) _____

School(s) attended _____

Signature of 1st Parent/Carer _____ Print Name _____

Signature of 2nd Parent/Carer _____ Print Name _____

Please return completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether the request is authorised or not.

For Office Use Only

Current Attendance _____% Number of sessions taken as leave during term time _____ (this academic year)

Agreed/Not Agreed - Request for leave is agreed/is not agreed for the above learner to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Rationale to decline request: _____

Signed _____ Headteacher Date _____

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Notification of decision: Date letter sent to Parent/Carer_____

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