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Exclusions Policy

Procedure Owner:	Polaris Education
Approved by:	Managing Director
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Version No:	03
Associated Documents:	This policy should be read alongside all other relevant policies, procedures and guidance documents, including: Trauma Informed Relationship and Behaviour Policy Complaints Policy

This policy forms part of the Group Quality Management system ISO 9001.
All group companies are detailed in the current legal structure.

Guiding Principles

Government guidance on exclusions does not automatically apply to independent schools. However, we have regard to the principles contained within this guidance as a matter of good practice, and these inform our working practices. Our school leaders are experienced in working with pupils with Social, Emotional and /or Mental Health Needs.

Our leaders are aware of ways the therapeutic approach and vast number of strategies our schools employ usually help our pupils to develop the feeling of safety and skills or social interaction, socially acceptable behaviours, presentation and self-regulation so they are far better prepared for their future independent lives.

Despite this well understood and practised approach a very small number of pupils are presenting in a way which is putting other pupils and staff at significant risk of harm or is disrupting the education of other pupils to such an extent that leaders have been forced to use suspension or even exclusion. This policy is designed to explain the approach around pupils demonstrating behaviours which are not compatible with the safety and wellbeing of other pupils or staff.

Support for the pupils continues during difficult times

Exclusion is not seen as a system for managing difficulties within the school. It is the action of last resort and will only happen when an incident or series of incidents is deemed so serious there is no other option or all other options have been tried. It will only be used after a discussion involving the school's senior leadership team (SLT). The SLT will review all action taken to date, together with the nature of the pupil's difficulty and will decide on whether an exclusion is the only option available. The Head teacher will take the final responsibility for the decision to exclude a pupil and will then initiate the appropriate procedures. If exclusion is made, the Head teacher will inform school's proprietor, the parents/carers of the child/young person, and the placing authority.

The Head teacher will take all reasonable steps to ensure that parents /carers are informed of the terms of the exclusion, whether it is a suspension from school for a number of days or a permanent exclusion, when the period of exclusion will end and how to appeal or receive further information relating of the Exclusion Procedures. Letters will be sent to parents/ carers and copied to the LEA. Parents/ carers will have the right to discuss the procedures with the senior leaders.

School should be a calm, safe and supportive environment which pupils want to attend, free from disruption and fear of bullying. To help create this environment, the

behaviour policy sets out how all pupils should behave, including the prevention of, and response to, bullying.

The role of parents/carers

Parents/carers have a significant role in helping schools develop and maintain socially acceptable (good) behaviour. Parents should understand the Behaviour Policy and support their child to follow the school rules.

School should work with parents and carers to provide pupils with the right support at the right time and keep them updated about their child's behaviour. This might include letting them know if a pupil has broken the school rules, as well as celebrating what a pupil has done well. Recognising and rewarding good behaviour helps everyone understand what is expected of them.

Involving the pupils

Pupils voice should be sought wherever possible and appropriate – the pupil at risk of suspension/ exclusion but also the voice of those affected by the presentation in school (in terms of the impact on themselves not in terms of them making decisions around the decision making of school leaders – to help leaders make informed decisions not to have pupils make decisions about other pupils).

Involving staff

Talk to staff – including their views around the situation and ensure they are feeling supported, and their wellbeing is being considered. Have they any ideas on how things may be improved?

School also has - Pupil Risk Assessments based on Risk Assessment Profile Summary.

Involvement of other professionals

The involvement of the local authority in any concerns around pupils' they have placed at the school. Communication is key to ensure they are aware of initial concerns before they have escalated. Ensuring parents/ carers are aware of the escalating concerns but also all steps/ strategies which are being used to try to support the pupil and prevent escalation. Examples of other professionals who may be involved include Social Care professionals, Health professionals, Community Police teams, CAMHS (or CYPS). Other professionals – many of our pupils have several external professionals already involved – consulting them is best practice (if agreed by parents).

Removal from lessons or activities / individual route timetable

We aim to always include all pupils in all activities. Pupils often have difficulties in communicating in a socially constructive way leading to difficulties in regulating their own behaviour and the school will provide opportunities for inclusion that are not dependent on high levels of internal control by pupils. Providing differentiated amounts of external control supports pupils. Nevertheless, it is sometimes necessary to provide an individual route through parts of the curriculum for a period, for some pupils.

If pupils are finding it difficult to follow the group timetable (maybe one aspect of this is causing them problems) they may need to be withdrawn for all or part of the lesson. These absences are fully logged and the replacement activity carefully considered and documented. If this happens for more than five sessions/ lessons, a meeting is called to decide if the pupil needs to be placed on an individual timetable. When pupils are not following the group timetable, for a prolonged period, their individual route is discussed fully with the placing authority, parents/carers, and social workers at the review meeting. All aspects of the timetable the pupil follows (charted against any activities missed) are logged. The meeting will also decide when to reconvene to discuss progress. A pupil will be on an individual timetable for a maximum period of one term before a review meeting is called.

For some pupils in the school an individual timetable needs to be in place whilst staff work on aspects of the behaviour that prevent the pupil from following the group timetable. All pupils on an individual timetable will work in a group situation or participate in regular activities whenever they can. For example, some pupils may be able to eat with all the pupils, or participate in the horticultural sessions, etc. The senior management team do not want pupils isolated from their peers and every effort will be made to ensure that all pupils gain as much from the community as is possible. Any worries about isolation will be fully explored in the review meeting.

Part-time timetables

There are very limited circumstances in school will place a pupil on a part-time timetable. This should only happen if a part-time timetable is required because of a pupils physical or mental health needs. School should not be using a part-time timetable to manage a pupil's behaviour although some behaviour can be because of mental health need which would be better supported with a part-time timetable.

Phased transition may also include a part-time approach to ensure successful integration.

Managed Moves

In very rare cases, school may decide it is best for a pupil to move to another school permanently. This is known as a managed move. Managed moves should be discussed carefully and require parental agreement before they take place. Although we can come to a point when we can no longer meet need and request a LA find another school for a pupil. Pupils with an EHC plan, school will work closely with the parent/carers and contact the local authority prior to the any suggestion of a move.

Suspension or Exclusion

In rare situations schools have come to the point where they are so concerned about the welfare of pupils and staff, we are considering suspension or exclusion.

School will only use suspension and permanent exclusion as a sanction when warranted as part of creating calm, safe, and supportive environments where both pupils and staff can work in safety and are respected. To achieve this, suspension and permanent exclusion are sometimes a necessary part of a functioning system, where it is accepted that not all pupil behaviour can be amended or remedied by pastoral processes, or consequences within the school.

We are guided by these principles:
The headteacher can suspend or permanently exclude a pupil on disciplinary grounds. A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year) or permanently excluded.

A pupil's behaviour outside school can be considered grounds for a suspension or permanent exclusion. Any decision of a headteacher, including suspension or permanent exclusion, must be made in line with the principles of administrative law, i.e. that it is: lawful (with respect to the legislation relating directly to suspensions and permanent exclusions and a school's wider legal duties); reasonable; fair; and proportionate.

When establishing the facts in relation to a suspension or permanent exclusion decision the headteacher must apply the civil standard of proof, i.e. 'on the balance of probabilities' it is more likely than not that a fact is true, rather than the criminal standard of 'beyond reasonable doubt.' This means that the headteacher should accept that something happened if it is more likely that it happened than that it did not happen. The headteacher must take account of their legal duty of care when sending a pupil home following an exclusion.

Headteachers should also take the pupil's views into account, considering their age and understanding, before deciding to exclude, unless it would not be appropriate to do so. They should inform the pupil about how their views have been factored into

any decision made. Where relevant, the pupil should be given support to express their view, including through advocates such as parents or, if the pupil has a social worker.

Off-site directions

To support a pupil with their behaviour, school can decide that your child will be educated somewhere else for a limited period.

A pupil could be educated at another site, school or alternative provision setting. This could also include splitting time between two different locations. This should only be used when it is the best way to support the pupil's behaviour. This arrangement is commonly known as off-site direction. Parents/carers and the LA placing team will be involved in discussions.

Suspension

A suspension, where a pupil is temporarily removed from the school, is an essential behaviour management tool. A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year). A suspension does not have to be for a continuous period. A suspension may be used to provide a clear signal of what is unacceptable behaviour as part of the school's behaviour policy and show a pupil that their current behaviour is putting them at risk of permanent exclusion.

Where suspensions are becoming a regular occurrence for a pupil, headteachers and schools should consider whether suspension alone is an effective sanction for the pupil and whether additional strategies need to be put in place to address behaviour. It is important that during a suspension, pupils still receive their education. Headteachers should take steps to ensure that work is set and marked for pupils during the first five school days of a suspension.

The school's legal duties to pupils with disabilities or SEN remain in force, for example, to make reasonable adjustments in how they support disabled pupils during this period.

A suspension can also be for parts of the school day. For example, if a pupil's behaviour at lunchtime is disruptive, they may be suspended from the school premises for the duration of the lunchtime period. The legal requirements relating to the suspension, such as the headteacher's duty to notify parents, apply in all cases. Lunchtime suspensions are counted as half a school day in determining whether a governing board meeting is triggered.

Permanent exclusion

A permanent exclusion is when a pupil is no longer allowed to attend a school (unless the pupil is reinstated). The decision to exclude a pupil permanently should only be taken:

• In response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and
• Where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others such as staff or pupils in the school.

For any permanent exclusion, headteachers should take reasonable steps to ensure that work is set and marked for pupils during the first five school days where the pupil will not be attending alternative provision. Any appropriate referrals to support services or notifying key workers (such as a pupil's social worker) should also be considered. In all cases the school will take all reasonable steps to ensure there has been communication with the parents/carer and LA placing team.

Pupils with special educational needs or a disability (SEND)

The law does not prevent a pupil with SEND from being suspended or permanently excluded. However, schools do have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate against a pupil by suspending or permanently excluding them from school because of their disability and reasonable adjustments may need to be made.

Schools should consider whether your child's SEND has contributed to the breaking of the school rules, and if so, whether it is right and lawful to issue a suspension or as a last resort, permanent exclusion. Schools must also ensure that they do not discriminate against disabled pupils by increasing their risk of suspension or permanent exclusion more than other pupils without a good reason.

The reasons below are examples of the types of circumstances that may warrant a suspension or permanent exclusion.

• Physical assault against a pupil
• Physical assault against an adult
• Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour against a pupil
• Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour against an adult
• Use, or threat of use, of an offensive weapon or prohibited item that has been prohibited by a school's behaviour policy
• Bullying
• Racist abuse
• Abuse against sexual orientation or gender reassignment
• Abuse relating to disability

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to offer examples rather than be complete or definitive.

Off rolling and unlawful exclusions

Telling or forcing a pupil to leave school, or not allowing them to attend school, is a suspension (if temporary) or permanent exclusion (if permanent). Whenever a pupil is made to leave school, or forbidden from attending school, on disciplinary grounds, this must be done in accordance with the suspension or exclusion processes of the school. Suspending a pupil for a short period of time, such as half a day, is permissible but the formal suspension process must still be followed.

Reintegration after a suspension or off-site direction

Schools should support pupils to reintegrate successfully into school life and full-time education following a suspension (this may also be after a cancelled exclusion) or period of off-site direction.

The school has a reintegration strategy that offers the pupil a fresh start; helps them understand the effect of their behaviour on themselves and others; teaches them how to meet the high expectations of behaviour in line with the school culture; fosters a renewed sense of belonging within the school community; and builds engagement with learning.

Reintegration meeting

The reintegration strategy should be clearly communicated at a reintegration meeting before or at the beginning of the pupil's return to school. During a reintegration meeting, the school should communicate to the pupil that they are valued, and their previous behaviour should not be seen as an obstacle to future success. This meeting should include the pupil's parents/carers. To ensure ongoing progress, the strategy should be regularly reviewed and adapted where necessary throughout the reintegration process in collaboration with the pupil, parents, and other relevant parties.

A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour and must only be in place for the shortest time necessary. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time education, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing a part-time timetable with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and must take the appropriate steps for a leave of absence.

Informing parents/carers about a suspension or an exclusion

Notification should be in person or by telephone in the first instance as this would allow parents to ask any initial questions or raise concerns directly with the headteacher. A letter or email of a letter will usually follow the telephone communication.

Letters of notification of exclusion would usually contain:

- For a fixed period exclusion, the precise period of the exclusion
- For a permanent exclusion, the fact that it is a permanent exclusion
- The reason for the exclusion
- The parents/ guardian's rights to make representation about the exclusion to the head teacher and chair of governors/proprietary body
- The person whom the parents/carers should contact if they wish to make such representations.
- The latest day in which the SMT and the proprietary body will meet to consider the circumstances in which the pupil was excluded (except where the exclusion is for a total of not more than five school days in any one term and would not result in the pupil missing a public examination).
- In the case of a fixed period exclusion, the date and time when the pupil should return to school and how this will be managed.
- If the exclusion is permanent, the date it takes effect and any relevant previous history.
- For fixed term exclusion the arrangements made for enabling the pupil to continue working, including the setting and marking of work. It is the parents'/ carers' responsibility to ensure that work sent home is completed and returned to school.

The school administrator will provide the appropriate contact details for parents/ carers on request.

ALL EXCLUSION CASES SHOULD BE TREATED IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

Informing Social Workers and Virtual School Heads about an exclusion

Information sharing is vital in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, including their educational outcomes. School should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children. Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children set out the requirements for schools and colleges about information sharing in more detail.

Informing the governing board about an exclusion

The headteacher must, without delay, notify the governing board of:

• Any permanent exclusion (including where a suspension is followed by a decision to permanently exclude the pupil);
• Any suspension or permanent exclusion which would result in the pupil being suspended or permanently excluded for a total of more than five school days (or more than ten lunchtimes) in a term;
• Any suspension or permanent exclusion which would result in the pupil missing a public examination or national curriculum test.

Guidance for governing boards on considering an excluded pupil's reinstatement.

It is best practice for a governing board to consider parents'/carers' representations about a permanent exclusion. The Governors consideration will usually take place 15 days following the decision to exclude.

Complaints relating to suspension or exclusion- see also complaints policy

If the parent/carer or LA are unhappy with the decision they would have to make a complaint to the proprietor of the school.

Review Dates

Date:	Version:	Summary of Changes: