



Suspension/ Permanent Exclusion Policy

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1 Introduction

The Headteacher and governing board believe in the principle of inclusion and support all measures to allow pupils to remain within the school community. Nevertheless, there are occasions when the behaviour of an individual and their impact on other pupils and members of staff means that he/she is excluded for a short term or, rarely, on a permanent basis. This document sets out the procedures which the school will adopt and the principles on which they are founded to ensure fairness, consistency, openness and legality in the process.

2 Use of Suspension and Permanent Exclusion

The school considers it important that the right consequence is set for each student and the right conditions for their return. Many factors necessarily affect such decisions. These include: the severity of the offence; the student's previous record; the student's current personal circumstances; what support/intervention has been offered to the student; alternatives to exclusion e.g. The Hub, restorative justice, mediation.

It is impossible to write an exhaustive list of offences that would lead to a period in the Reflection Room or an exclusion, but we would aim to follow the sanctions as explained in the school's behaviour policy:

2.1 The Reflection Room

The school has established a designated internal intervention space called the Reflection Room to ensure that instances of behavioural concern are addressed without compromising pupils' access to learning or their engagement with school. When pupils are required to access this provision, they will not be removed from learning entirely; instead, they will continue to complete curriculum-aligned work within a calm, well-structured environment.

The purpose of this internal provision is supportive and restorative rather than purely punitive. It is intended to promote accountability, support pupils in making improved choices, and prevent escalation to more serious formal sanctions. Reasonable adjustments will be made within this space for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Reflection Room categories:

C3 Reflection Bullying
C3 Reflection Drug and alcohol related (inc. vapes)
C3 Reflection Persistent or general disruptive behaviour
C3 Reflection Damage to property
C3 Reflection Abuse relating to disability
C3 Reflection Abuse against sexual orientation and gender identity
C3 Reflection Inappropriate use of social media or online technology
C3 Reflection Use or threat of use of an offensive weapon or prohibited item
C3 Reflection Physical Assault against adult
C3 Reflection Wilful and repeated transgression of protective measures in place to protect public health
C3 Reflection Physical Assault against pupil
C3 Reflection Racist Abuse

C3 Reflection Sexual misconduct
C3 Reflection Theft
C3 Reflection Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against adult
C3 Reflection Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against pupil

2.2 Suspension

A suspension is a formal, temporary removal of a pupil from the school premises on disciplinary grounds, issued for up to and including 5 school days per incident, with each case taken strictly on its individual merits.

The reasons for an internal placement in the Reflection Room or a formal suspension may include, but are not limited to, serious or persistent breaches of the school's Behaviour Policy, such as physical assault, verbal abuse, bullying, racist abuse, drug or alcohol-related incidents (including vapes), property damage, or sexual misconduct.

Some offences will also result in students being reported to the police. Referral to the police will not be taken into account when determining an internal sanction or suspension, as the school cannot anticipate subsequent police action.

Suspension categories:

C4 Bullying
C4 Drug and alcohol related (inc. vapes)
C4 Persistent or general disruptive behaviour
C4 Damage to property
C4 Abuse relating to disability
C4 Abuse against sexual orientation and gender identity
C4 Inappropriate use of social media or online technology
C4 Use or threat of use of an offensive weapon or prohibited item
C4 Physical Assault against adult
C4 Wilful and repeated transgression of protective measures in place to protect public health
C4 Physical Assault against pupil
C4 Racist Abuse
C4 Sexual misconduct
C4 Theft
C4 Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against adult
C4 Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against pupil

3 Procedures

If a suspension is to be considered, then the school will follow the procedures outlined below:

- ensure that a thorough investigation has been carried out considering, if the behaviour does not clearly meet the threshold for a suspension, and the extent to which any provocation led to the incident
- consider all the evidence available to support the allegations, taking into account the School's various policies and the school's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010

(including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils) and the Children and Families Act 2014.

- allow the student to give their version of the events
- keep a written record of the action taken including any interviews with the students concerned. The statements must be dated and signed on the school template.
- if necessary, consult others, but not anyone who might have a role in reviewing the decision.

In order that the decision and any subsequent punishment is appropriate the school may withdraw a student from lessons in the first instance and, if necessary, place them in the Reflection Room to give time to carry out a thorough and fair investigation and to put the student record together.

The decision that a behavioural concern or offence of sufficient seriousness has taken place to warrant a suspension can only be taken by the Headteacher (or the officially designated Acting Headteacher in the Headteacher's absolute absence). Parents/Carers, the pupil's social worker (if applicable), and the Virtual School Head (if the pupil is a looked-after child) must be notified without delay of the decision, the nature of the incident, and the interim arrangements. The written notice must also explicitly inform the parents of their right to request that any subsequent governing board meeting be held via remote access (live video link).

The Headteacher will write to parents/carers explaining:

- the precise period and the reasons for the suspension
- the parents'/carers' duties during the first five days
- the parents'/carers' right to make representations to the Governing Board and how the student may be involved in this. The parent/carer must inform the Clerk to Governors (ctog@downlands.org) as soon as possible if representations are to be made. For suspensions totalling five school days or fewer in a term, the governing board has no power to direct reinstatement but must consider parental representations. However, for suspensions that exceed five days (where representations are made) or those exceeding 15 days in a term, the governing board maintains full statutory power to consider and direct reinstatement. Parents/Carers should also be aware that if they think the suspension relates to a disability and that disability discrimination may have occurred, there is a right to appeal and/or make a claim to the First Tier Tribunal, or a County Court, in the case of other forms of discrimination. A claim of discrimination made under these routes should be lodged within 6 months of the date on which the discrimination is alleged to have taken place. (www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-special-educational-needs-and-disability)
- arrangements made by the school to set work for the student during the initial five days of the suspension (for suspensions of more than one day)
- if the suspension is to be for more than five days, the school day on which the student will be provided with full time education
- Following a suspension, the pupil will be supported to reintegrate successfully into full-time education using a planned reintegration strategy. While a supportive behaviour plan or pastoral support programme (PSP) may be established, a pupil must not be prevented from returning to the mainstream classroom if parents are unable to attend the reintegration meeting. If formal parental engagement is required to manage behaviour, the school or local authority may explore a voluntary Parenting Contract or apply for a statutory Parenting Order via the courts.

The Headteacher must inform the Governing Board if a student is being suspended for more than 15 days in any one term. Students can be suspended for one or more fixed periods which, when aggregated, do not exceed 45 school days in any one school year.

A copy of the current statutory guidance on suspensions and permanent exclusions from the Department for Education (updated August 2024) is available via the official GOV.UK portal: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusions>.

4 Permanent Exclusion

A decision to permanently exclude a pupil will only be taken as a last resort:

- 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 in the school community.

Against this threshold, the Headteacher will consider individual circumstances, which may include extremely serious one-off incidents or persistent behavioural failures.

5 Pupil Suspension/Permanent Exclusion – Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board must establish a Pupil Discipline Panel of at least three governors to meet when necessary regarding suspensions. No staff governor can be included on the panel.

If any other governor has a connection with the pupil concerned or member of staff involved, they are also disqualified from the panel.

The panel will be convened by the clerk to the governors and chaired by the Chair of Governors, if present, or another member of the panel, to be agreed in advance by panel members. In the event of a vote being necessary there will be one vote per panel member.

The committee will meet to consider suspensions:

- totalling more than five school days and fewer than 16 days in any one term where the parent expresses a wish to make representations to the governing board. A meeting must be convened no later than 50 school days following notice of the suspension
- totalling more than 15 school days a term and for permanent exclusions. The law does not allow for 'converting' a suspension into a permanent exclusion; where further evidence comes to light, a separate permanent exclusion must be issued to begin immediately after the suspension ends. A meeting must be convened no later than 15 school days after the governing board receives notice of the exclusion from the Headteacher.
- following notice of the suspension which could result in the loss of an opportunity to take a public examination.

The pupil discipline panel will:

- consider the circumstances of any pupil suspended for more than five days or unable to take an exam
- consider representations from the parents or the LA
- ensure the school has adhered to legal procedures and guidance

- decide whether to direct re-instatement (in cases of permanent exclusions)

In the case of suspensions of up to and including five days, the committee may meet to consider representations by the parent/carer but may not direct re-instatement.

Governors likely to be called on to serve on the pupil discipline panel will keep themselves informed of current guidance and good practice in suspensions/permanent exclusions.

Clerk to the Panel should be someone who is not a governor. At Downlands the Clerk to the Governors fulfils this role. The clerk will make all necessary administrative arrangements in respect of room bookings, circulation of documentation etc.

The decision to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil can only be taken by the Headteacher (or the officially designated Acting Headteacher in the Headteacher's absolute absence). At Downlands, unless an immediate, serious one-off incident warrants a permanent exclusion, the school will normally explore and utilize a range of targeted interventions, which may include a pastoral support programme (PSP) designed to manage and support the pupil's behaviour in partnership with parents/carers and relevant external agencies.

Following a decision to suspend a pupil for more than five school days, or to exclude them permanently, or where a pupil would miss a public examination, the Headteacher must set in motion the suspension/permanent exclusion procedures.

The Headteacher and other relevant staff will present evidence to the Pupil Discipline Panel as to why the decision was taken to exclude a pupil and will respond to questions from Committee members and parents/guardians who wish to make representations.

The Local Authority's role is to give their view to the discipline panel on the appropriateness of a suspension based on knowledge of law and procedure, and cases in other schools. In West Sussex, the LA normally attends permanent exclusions only. The LA must also set up an Independent Review Panel (IRP) to review the decisions of a governing board's discipline panel if requested by parents.