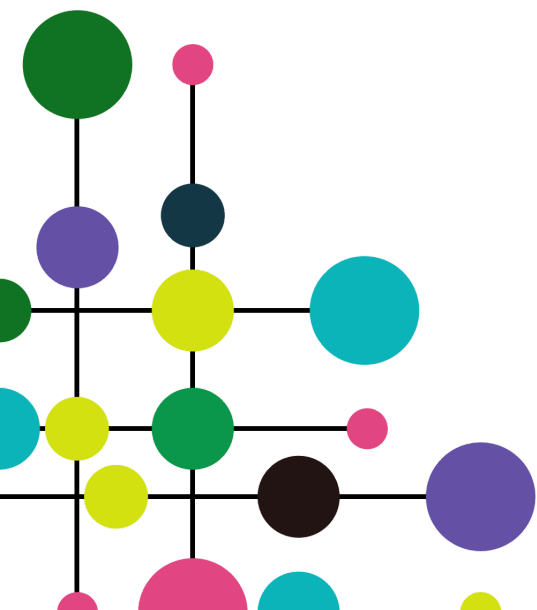


SUSPENSION & EXCLUSION POLICY

MAT Version	1.0
Date written	July 2024
Last review date	
Next review due date	July 2026
Approved by Trustees	July 2024

Record of Alterations
Version 1.0 Original (July 2024)



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Scope and publication

The policy sets out guidelines and circumstances under which a pupil may be suspended or permanently excluded from a Robin Hood Trust school and applies to all pupils at all Trust schools, including those who may be below compulsory school age. The policy is available on each school website and can be made available in large print or other accessible formats if required.

In this policy the term Headteacher also includes any person formally appointed as Acting Headteacher.

Relationship to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School Behaviour Policy as well as other relevant school policies, particularly the Special Educational Needs Policy, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Public Sector Equality Duty Policy. It also has a close interrelationship with the Anti-Bullying Policy and Attendance Policy.

Guidance and legislation

This policy is drafted to be compliant with the [Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England](#) (September 2023) statutory guidance.

This policy contains a summary of the statutory guidance and is not intended to provide a full account of all the guidance content which should be read alongside this policy.

The non-statutory government guidance [Behaviour in Schools](#) (February 2024) is also very relevant. This policy takes account of our public sector equality duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

Statement of principles

Permanent exclusion will only be used as a last resort, in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the School 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.

We seek to reduce the number of incidents leading to a suspension and permanent exclusion by promoting a positive atmosphere of mutual respect and discipline within the school.

We regularly monitor the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions to ensure that no group of pupils is unfairly disadvantaged through their use and that any underlying needs of individuals are being fully met.

A note on off-rolling

Our school is aware that off-rolling is unlawful. Ofsted defines off-rolling as:

- The practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent/carer to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil.

We will not suspend or exclude pupils unlawfully by directing them off site, or not allowing pupils to attend school:

- Without following the statutory procedure or formally recording the event, e.g. sending them home to 'cool off'.
- Because they have special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) that the school feels unable to support.
- Due to poor academic performance.
- Because they have not met a specific condition, such as attending a reintegration meeting.
- By exerting undue influence on a parent/carer to encourage them to remove their child from the school.

Authority to exclude

Permanent exclusions can only be authorised by the Headteacher, after discussion with the CEO to ensure all practical steps have been explored to avoid exclusion.

Headteachers have the sole authority to decide on suspensions. While consultation with the CEO or Director of School Improvement is encouraged to ensure alignment with school values and policies, the final decision rests with the Headteacher. This authority cannot be delegated, except to an Acting Headteacher.

The final decision will always rest with the Headteacher.

The Headteacher must always seek Trust legal advice where any potential suspension or permanent exclusion involves a child with special educational needs or a disability (SEND), or a looked-after or previously looked-after child or for any exclusion where the circumstances are particularly complex.

Decision to exclude

A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods, up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year. They can also be excluded permanently.

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

- in response to a serious breach, or persistent breaches, of the School Behaviour Policy; and where a pupil's behaviour means that allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.

The decision will always be:

- Lawful
- Rational
- Reasonable
- Fair
- Proportionate

When establishing the facts in relation to a possible exclusion, the Headteacher will always 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.'

Before issuing a suspension or permanent exclusion, the Headteacher will:

- Investigation and evidence: Ensure that a thorough investigation has been carried out and consider all the relevant facts and evidence on the balance of probabilities, including whether the incident(s)

leading to the exclusion were provoked. As per the School Behaviour Policy, the Headteacher may consider the behaviour of a pupil outside school as grounds for an exclusion or suspension.

- Pupil voice: Allow and encourage the pupil to give their version of events. The Headteacher will give the pupil an opportunity to present his or her case taking into account their age and understanding, before taking the decision to exclude or suspend unless it would not be appropriate to do so. Pupils who need support to express their views will be allowed support of an advocate, such as a parent/carer or social worker.
- Vulnerable pupil: Find out whether the pupil comes into a category that is known to be a particularly vulnerable group (e.g., pupils with SEND, free school meal (FSM) pupils; looked after children; pupils with a social worker; certain ethnic groups; (for example traveller children) and consider whether all supportive and preventative strategies have been fully utilised.
- SEND: Where a pupil has any SEND, the Headteacher will consider if any reasonable adjustments need to be made and liaise with the SENDCo to ensure the pupil has been provided with adequate support and to consider whether any further support can be provided. The Headteacher will seek to understand the underlying cause of the behaviour and consider whether the pupil's SEND influenced their behaviour and if it did, whether it is still appropriate to issue the sanction or any sanction at all.
- Social worker and/or virtual school head (VSH): Where a pupil has a social worker the Headteacher will ensure they and, as appropriate, any parent/carers; the Designated Safeguarding Lead; and the designated lead for Looked-After Children are involved as early as possible in relevant conversations.
- Consider alternatives: Consider whether all relevant initial intervention strategies set out in the [Behaviour in Schools](#) guidance and alternative solutions have been explored, including an off-site direction or managed move.
- Mitigating circumstances: Take into account possible short-term mitigating circumstances such as bereavement, mental health issues etc.
- Safeguarding: Consider whether there are any safeguarding concerns and whether the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be consulted.
- Seek guidance from the Robin Hood MAT CEO or the Director of School Improvement as per the section on 'Authority to exclude' on page 2 above.

Headteachers have access to a [Pre-Exclusion Checklist](#) to ensure every avenue has been explored before decisions on exclusion are made.

The Headteacher will keep a written record of the actions taken including the signed statements of witnesses. Any exclusion of a pupil, even for short periods of time, will be formally recorded.

The Headteacher will not:

- exclude or suspend any pupil for non-disciplinary reasons
- use exclusion informally or unofficially, pupils will not be sent home to 'cool off' even with parent/carers' permission
- extend or 'convert' a suspension into a permanent exclusion. In exceptional cases, usually where further evidence has come to light, a further suspension may be issued to begin immediately after the first suspension; or a permanent exclusion may be issued to begin immediately after the end of the suspension.

Behaviour related to a protected characteristics

We will take care to ensure that a decision to exclude or suspend does not involve any kind of discrimination as defined by the Equality Act 2010. We will not discriminate against pupils on the basis of protected characteristics, such as disability or race.

The school will make reasonable adjustments for managing behaviour which is related to a pupil's disability. Where permanent exclusion or suspension needs to be considered, the school will ensure that a pupil with a disability is able to present his or her case fully where the disability might hinder this.

We recognise that disruptive behaviour can be an indication of unmet needs. Where we have concerns about a pupil's behaviour, we will try to identify whether there are any causal factors and try to intervene early in order to reduce the need for a subsequent sanction. We will consider whether a multi-agency assessment that goes beyond a pupil's educational needs is required. Where a pupil has SEND or an EHC Plan and we have concerns about their behaviour, we will work in partnership with others to consider what additional support or alternative placement may be required. We will work proactively with our SENDCo to help avoid exclusions for pupils with SEND and help ensure these pupils are fully supported in school and in liaison with other agencies. We will also work closely with parents/carers in supporting behaviour of pupils with additional needs.

Lunchtime suspensions

A suspension can be for parts of the school day. For example, pupils whose behaviour at lunchtime is disruptive may be suspended from the school premises for the duration of the lunchtime period only, then back into school in the afternoon. In such cases the legal requirements in relation to suspensions, such as the Headteacher's duty to notify parents/carers, still apply.

Lunchtime suspensions are counted as half a school day for statistical purposes and in determining whether a Governors Disciplinary Committee (GDC) meeting is triggered.

Action following any exclusion

Informing parent/carers

The Headteacher will provide the following information to parent/carers of an excluded pupil, without delay (usually by phone initially and then followed up in a letter):

- The reason(s) for the suspension or permanent exclusion.
- The length of a suspension or, for a permanent exclusion, the fact that it is permanent.
- Information about parent/carers' right to make representations to the Governing Board and how the pupil may be involved in this.
- Where there is a legal requirement for the Governing Board to meet via a GDC to consider the reinstatement of a pupil, and that parent/carers have a right to attend a meeting, be represented at a meeting (at their own expense) and to bring a friend.

The Headteacher will also notify parent/carers by the end of the afternoon session on the day their child is suspended or permanently excluded:

- That for the first five school days of a suspension or permanent exclusion, or until the start date of any alternative provision where this is earlier, parents/carers are legally required to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without a good reason. Parents/carers may be given a fixed penalty notice or prosecuted if they fail to do this.

If alternative provision is being arranged, the following information will be included when notifying parent/carers of an exclusion:

- The start date for any provision of full-time education that has been arranged.
- The start and finish times of any such provision, including the times for morning and afternoon sessions, where relevant.
- The address at which the provision will take place.
- Any information required by the pupil to identify the person they should report to on the first day.

Where this information on alternative provision is not reasonably ascertainable by the end of the afternoon session, it may be provided in a subsequent notice, but it will be provided no later than 48 hours before the provision is due to start. The only exception to this is where alternative provision is to be provided before the sixth day of an exclusion, in which case the information can be provided with less than 48 hours' notice with parent/carers' consent.

The Trust has adopted Local Authority template letters for the Headteacher to communicate this information to parents/carers with further detail as to what must be included. This letter should be sent without delay. If a pupil is issued with a further suspension or is subsequently permanently excluded, the Headteacher must inform parent/carers without delay and issue a new suspension or permanent exclusion letter to parent/carers.

Informing the Governing Board and CEO

The Headteacher will immediately notify the Clerk to the Governors and the CEO of:

- a permanent exclusion
- suspensions which would result in the pupil being excluded for more than five school days (or more than 10 lunchtimes) in a term
- suspensions which would result in the pupil missing a public examination.

Informing the Local Authority (LA)

The Headteacher will notify the LA of all suspensions and permanent exclusions without delay, regardless of the length of a suspension. The notification will include:

- The reason(s) for the suspension or permanent exclusion.
- The length of a suspension or, for a permanent exclusion, the fact that it is permanent.

For a permanent exclusion, if the pupil lives outside the LA in which the school is located, the headteacher will also, without delay, inform the pupil's 'home authority' of the exclusion and the reason(s) for it.

Informing the pupil's social worker and/or virtual school head (VSH)

As noted above, if a:

- a pupil with a social worker is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion, the Headteacher will inform the social worker as early as possible.
- a pupil who is a looked-after child (LAC) is at risk of suspension or exclusion, the Headteacher will inform the VSH as early as possible.

This is in order to work together to consider what factors may be affecting the pupil's behaviour, and what further support can be put in place to improve the behaviour.

If the Headteacher decides to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil with a social worker / a pupil who is looked after, they will inform the pupil's social worker / the VSH, as appropriate, without delay, that:

- They have decided to suspend or permanently exclude the pupil.
- The reason(s) for the decision.
- The length of the suspension or, for a permanent exclusion, the fact that it is permanent.
- The suspension or permanent exclusion affects the pupil's ability to sit a National Curriculum test or public exam (where relevant).

The social worker/VSH will be invited to any meeting of the Governing Board about the suspension or permanent exclusion. This is so they can provide advice on how the pupil's background and/or circumstances may have influenced the circumstances of their suspension or permanent exclusion. The social worker should also help ensure safeguarding needs and risks and the pupil's welfare are taken into account.

Alternative education

During the first five days of a suspension

During the first five days of a suspension, if the pupil is not attending alternative provision (AP), the Headteacher will take steps to ensure that achievable and accessible work is set and marked for the pupil. Online pathways such as Google Classroom may be used for this. If the pupil has a special educational need or disability, the Headteacher will make sure that reasonable adjustments are made to the provision where necessary.

If the pupil is looked after or if they have a social worker, the school will work with the LA to arrange AP from the first day following the suspension or permanent exclusion. Where this is not possible, the school will take reasonable steps to set and mark work for the pupil, including the use of online pathways.

For a suspension of more than five school days

For a suspension of more than five school days for a pupil of compulsory school age, the school will arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil to begin no later than the sixth day of the exclusion. However, the school will attempt to start this provision as soon as possible.

Where a pupil receives consecutive suspensions, these are regarded as a cumulative period of exclusion for the purposes of this duty. This means that if a pupil has more than five consecutive school days of exclusion, then education must be arranged for the sixth school day of exclusion, regardless of whether this is as a result of suspension or more than one suspension.

Provision does not have to be arranged for pupils in the final year of compulsory education who do not have any further public examinations to sit.

For permanent exclusions, the pupil's home LA has responsibility for arranging suitable full-time education for the pupil.

Reintegration

Reintegration strategy

Following suspension or any cancelled suspension or cancelled permanent exclusion, the school will put in place a strategy to help the pupil reintegrate successfully into school life and full-time education.

Where necessary, the school will work with third-party organisations to identify whether the pupil has any unmet special educational and/or health needs.

The following measures may be implemented, as part of the strategy, to ensure a successful reintegration into school life:

- Maintaining regular contact during the suspension and welcoming the pupil back to school.
- Daily contact in school with a designated pastoral professional.
- Mentoring by a trusted adult or a local mentoring charity.
- Regular reviews with the pupil and parent/carers to praise progress being made and raise and address any concerns at an early stage.
- Informing the pupil, parent/carers and staff of potential external support.

The strategy will be regularly reviewed and adapted where necessary throughout the reintegration process in collaboration with the pupil, parent/carers, and other relevant parties.

Reintegration meeting

The school will explain the reintegration strategy to the pupil in a reintegration meeting before or on the pupil's return to school. During the meeting the school will communicate to the pupil that they are getting a fresh start and that they are a valued member of the school community.

The pupil, parent/carer, a member of senior staff, and any other relevant staff will be invited to attend the meeting. The meeting can proceed without the parent/carer in the event that they cannot or do not attend.

This meeting will seek to establish practical ways in which further exclusion or suspension can be avoided and behaviour modified to acceptable standards in partnership between pupil, parent/carer, and school.

Cancelling an exclusion

The Headteacher may cancel a suspension or permanent exclusion that has already begun, but this will only be done where it has not yet been reviewed by the Governing Board. Where there is a cancellation:

- The parent/carers, Governing Board and Local Authority will be notified without delay.
- Where relevant, any social worker and Virtual School Head will be notified without delay.
- Parents/carers will be offered the opportunity to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the cancellation.
- The Headteacher will report to the Governing Board once per term on the number of cancellations; and
- The pupil will be allowed back in school.

Considering the reinstatement of a pupil (GDC panel)

Robin Hood Trustees have delegated responsibility for reviewing exclusions to the Governing Board. The Governing Board has established a Governors Disciplinary Committee (GDC) for this purpose.

The Clerk to the Governors will arrange a GDC panel to consider the reinstatement of an excluded pupil within 15 school days of receiving the notice of the exclusion if:

- the exclusion is permanent
- it is a suspension which would bring the pupil's total number of school days of exclusion to more than 15 (including 15.5 days) in a term
- it would result in a pupil missing a public examination.

If requested to do so by parents/carers, a GDC panel will consider the reinstatement of an excluded pupil within 50 school days of receiving notice of the exclusion if the pupil would be excluded from school for more than five school days, but less than 16, in a single term.

The GDC panel will consist of at least three Governing Board members or Trust Trustees. The Governing Board Members may be from any Robin Hood Trust school. The panel members must be impartial and not be conflicted in taking a place on the GDC panel through, for example, a personal connection with the excluded pupil or his or her family.

Where an exclusion would result in a pupil missing a public examination or national curriculum test, a GDC panel will consider the reinstatement of the pupil, as far as reasonably practicable, before the date of the examination or test. If it is not practicable for a sufficient number of panel members to consider the decision before the examination or test, a smaller sub-committee may make the decision.

The GDC panel can either:

- decline to reinstate the pupil, or
- direct the reinstatement of the pupil immediately, or on a particular date.

In reaching a decision, the GDC panel will consider whether the exclusion or suspension was lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair and whether the Headteacher followed their legal duties. They will decide whether or not a fact is true 'on the balance of probabilities', which differs from the criminal standard of 'beyond reasonable doubt', as well as any evidence that was presented in relation to the decision to exclude.

Minutes will be taken of the meeting, and a record of evidence considered kept. The outcome will also be recorded on the pupil's educational record.

The GDC will notify, in writing, the Headteacher, parent/carers, the LA (and where relevant the social worker and VSH) of its decision, along with reasons for its decision, without delay.

Where an exclusion is permanent, the GDC's decision will also include the following:

- The fact that it is permanent.
- Notice of parent/carers' right to ask for the decision to be reviewed by an independent review panel, and:
 - the date by which an application for an independent review must be made

- the name and address to whom an application for a review should be submitted
- that any application should set out the grounds on which it is being made and that, where appropriate, reference to how the pupil's SEND are considered to be relevant to the exclusion
- that, regardless of whether the excluded pupil has recognised SEND, parent/carers have a right to require the school to appoint a SEND expert to attend the review
- details of the role of the SEND expert and that there would be no cost to parent/carers for this appointment
- that parent/carers must make clear if they wish for a SEND expert to be appointed in any application for a review
- that parent/carers may, at their own expense, appoint someone to make written and/or oral representations to the panel, and parent/carers may also bring a friend to the review.
- That if parents/carers believe that the exclusion has occurred as a result of discrimination, they may make a claim under the Equality Act 2010 to the first-tier tribunal (special educational needs and disability), in the case of disability discrimination, or the county court, in the case of other forms of discrimination. A claim of discrimination made under these routes should be lodged within six months of the date on which the discrimination is alleged to have taken place.
- Availability of free and impartial advice.

The Trust has provided GDC panel members with template GDC response letters to ensure all of the required information is provided and explained clearly to parents/carers.

The GDC should set out the reasons for its decision in sufficient detail to enable all parties to understand why the decision was made.

Independent review panels

Applications for an independent review must be made by the parent/carers within 15 school days of notice being given to the parent/carers by the GDC of its decision to not reinstate a pupil.

If parents/carers apply for an independent review, the Clerk to the Governing Board will arrange for an independent panel to review the decision of the GDC not to reinstate a permanently excluded pupil.

A panel of three or five members will be constituted with representatives from each of the categories below. Where a five-member panel is constituted, two members will come from the Governing Board Member category and two members will come from the Headteacher category.

- A lay member to chair the panel who has not worked in any school in a paid capacity, disregarding any experience as a Governing Board Member or volunteer.
- School Governing Board Members who have served as a Governing Board Members for at least 12 consecutive months in the past five years, provided they have not been teachers or Headteachers during this time.
- Headteachers or individuals who have been a Headteacher within the past five years.

A person may not serve as a member of a review panel if they:

- Are a member/director of the Trust or Governing Board Member of the excluding school.
- Are the Headteacher of the excluding school or have held this position in the past five years.

- Are an employee of the Trust, or the Governing Board Member, of the excluding school (unless they are employed as a Headteacher at another school).
- Have, or at any time have had, any connection with the Trust, school, Governing Board, parent/carers or pupil, or the incident leading to the exclusion, which might reasonably be taken to raise doubts about their impartiality.
- Have not had the required training within the past two years. A clerk will be appointed to the panel.

The independent panel will decide one of the following:

- Uphold the GDC's decision.
- Recommend that the GDC reconsiders reinstatement.
- Quash the GDC's decision and direct that the GDC reconsider reinstatement (only when the decision is judged to be flawed).

The panel's decision can be decided by a majority vote. In the case of a tied decision, the chair has the casting vote.

School registers

A pupil's name will be removed from the school admissions register if:

- 15 school days have passed since the parent/carers were notified of the GDC's decision to not reinstate the pupil and no application has been made for an independent review panel, or
- the parents/carers have stated in writing that they will not be applying for an independent review panel.

Where an application for an independent review has been made, the Governing Board will wait until that review has concluded before removing a pupil's name from the register.

Where alternative provision has been made for an excluded or suspended pupil and they attend it, code B (education off-site) or code D (dual registration) will be used on the attendance register.

Reporting, monitoring and analysing suspensions and exclusions data

Suspension and exclusion data is recorded and regularly monitored and analysed at both school and Trust level. Further detail on this is set out within the School Behaviour Policy.

Annex A: Summary of the Governing Board's (GB) duties to review the Headteacher's exclusion decision

