



Fir Vale Academy

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Part of United Learning

Exclusions Policy

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Exclusion from school
3. Stages of exclusions
4. Responsibilities of the Principal
5. Role of the LGB (Local Governing Body)
6. Role of the Clerk to the Behaviour Committee
7. The role of the Local Authority
8. Education of excluded students
9. Independent Review Panels
10. Role of the Clerk to the Independent Review Panel
11. Conduct and role of the Independent Review Panel

1. Introduction

This policy outlines United Learning's and Fir Vale Academy's responsibility and approach to exclusions in line with the statutory framework as defined in the 'Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance September 2023 (publishing.service.gov.uk) ("the DfE Exclusion Guidance").

United Learning believes that a suspension and permanent exclusion is recognised as an appropriate sanction, however permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort when a range of other strategies have been tried and exhausted. Most suspensions are the result of persistent breaches of the school's discipline policy. During a suspension or permanent exclusion, the Pastoral Head of Year will remain in contact with the student to monitor and ensure the safety and welfare of the student. A permanent exclusion for a serious breach (e.g. a one-off or first offence) should only happen in the most serious of circumstances and exclusions should only be instigated when all other routes have been exhausted or when behaviour is in direct conflict with the Fir Vale Academy's behaviour policy.

Permanent exclusions should only ever be issued by the Principal or Vice Principal in their absence. All permanent exclusions will be confirmed with the relevant Education Director before issuing.

School leaders, Local Governing Bodies, United Learning, independent review panel members and clerks, and SEND experts, social workers, and Virtual Schools heads must by law have regard to the DfE guidance this guidance when deciding in their roles one of:

- whether to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil;
- whether to decline to reinstate the pupil;
- whether to direct reinstatement of the pupil; or
- whether to recommend or direct that the LGB reconsiders reinstatement of the pupil.

All United Learning schools must have policies, procedures and staff training in place that will promote good behaviour. Behaviour policies must be widely publicised so that students, parents and all school staff are aware of the standards of behaviour expected and the range of sanctions.

This policy provides an overview of the exclusion process. The school will adhere to current legislation, including the Equality Act 2010. The school is obliged to have regard to the DfE guidance on exclusions. We ensure that our policies and practices do not discriminate against students by unfairly increasing their risk of exclusion. Provisions within the Equality Act allow schools to take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages, needs, or low participation affecting one group, where this can be shown to be a proportionate way of dealing with such issues.

The Principal and governing body comply with statutory duties in relation to SEN when administering the exclusion process. This includes having regard to the SEND Code of Practice when making a decision. The exclusion policy relates to behaviour not only in school but also to behaviour out of school: e.g. travelling to and from school; on school trips; work experience placements etc.

2. Exclusion from school

The decision to exclude a pupil must be lawful, reasonable, and fair. There are two types of official exclusion:

Suspensions

This is a suspension for a **fixed number of days**. The pupil must remain at home up to the first 5 days (during which time the school should take reasonable steps to set and mark work for the pupil). For a suspension of more than 5 days, full time education provision commences from the 6th day and must be organised by the excluding school. A pupil is entitled to return to school once the period of suspension has ended.

A pupil may not be excluded for more than **45 days** in a school year. Where this threshold has been met and there are further breaches of the school's behaviour policy that would warrant a suspension, the school cannot issue a FTS but could instead permanently exclude the child on the basis the 'persistent breaches' criteria has been met - see below (2b). Schools must ensure they have a reliable method for **tracking** the number of suspensions in an academic year, including from any previous schools.

A pupil may be suspended during **lunchtimes** for a **fixed number of days**. Each lunchtime suspension is equivalent to half a day's suspension. Arrangements will be made to provide a lunch if the pupil is entitled to free school meals.

Repeated use of suspension for children with an EHCP or disability (and potentially those on SEN Support – especially those undergoing statutory assessment and likely to get an EHCP) could be considered ineffective or failing to sufficiently meet a child's needs. There is an expectation that where this is occurring, schools ensure the SENCO is involved as part of a behaviour intervention and planning process to elicit different approaches to improving the child's behaviour. This may involve advice from colleagues and specialists such as an educational psychologist, speech and language therapist etc.

Permanent Exclusion

This is where the Principal's decision is that the pupil should not be allowed to return to the school. The decision should only be taken if:

- (a) the pupil has committed a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and
- (b) allowing the pupil to remain in the school would seriously harm the learning or welfare of the pupil or others such as staff or pupils in the school;

In most cases, this will be after a wide range of alternative strategies having been tried without success. However, there will be exceptional circumstances where, in the Principal's judgement, it might be appropriate to permanently exclude a child for a single serious breach (one-off or first offence). Examples of misconduct that might be considered as a serious breach are set out in Appendix 1.

Each case must be judged on the facts and the context taking into account:

- The degree of severity of the offence;
- The likelihood of reoccurrence (including a consideration of the student's previous behavioural record – taking care to be clear what behavioural incidents the pupil is actually being excluded for);
- Contributory factors (e.g. recent bereavement, mental health issues, bullying) harassment);

- Support provided, including with specific reference to special educational needs and disabilities (see above) and LAC status (see above);
- Preventative measures to a school exclusion including an off-site direction or a managed move
- The school behaviour policy, special educational needs policy and equality law obligations. Fir Vale Academy – Exclusions Policy
- The pupil's views considering these in light of their age and understanding, unless it would not be appropriate to do so.

On considering a permanent exclusion, the Principal should immediately contact their relevant Regional Director before making their decision. Where that is not possible, the Principal should contact the Education Director to sense check their decision. If this is not possible, the Principal should issue the permanent exclusion which can be rescinded if necessary (but only before the Behaviour Committee reviews it). Consequently, the Principal should not issue a suspension whilst waiting to speak to their Regional Director if their view is that a permanent exclusion is the appropriate course of action. A suspension cannot be turned or “converted” into a permanent exclusion except in exceptional cases, usually where further evidence has come to light, where a permanent exclusion can be issued to begin immediately after the end of the suspension (see “Suspension or Permanent Exclusion?” below).

Unofficial exclusions

Formal exclusion is the only legal method of preventing a pupil's attendance on disciplinary grounds. If a pupil is sent home for disciplinary reasons (including lunch times) for example, to “cool off” for the rest of the day and this is not recorded as a suspension: this is an informal or unofficial exclusion which is unlawful, regardless of whether they are done with the agreement of the parent.

3. Stages of exclusions

1. Permanent exclusions

The permanent exclusion process falls into **three stages**:

1. Decision by the Principal to exclude.
2. Consideration of the Principal's decision by the Local Governing Body (LGB), usually delegated to a Behaviour Committee.
3. In the case of a permanent exclusion, and only if requested by the parent, consideration of the Principal's decision by an Independent Review Panel.

The initial decision on whether to exclude is for the Principal to take. As part of considering a permanent exclusion, as stated above, the **Principal is expected to sense check their decision with the relevant Regional Director/ National Director** at United Learning before making their decision.

2. Suspension or Permanent Exclusion (“PEX”)?

The DfE Guidance is very clear that PEXs must be carefully investigated and used as a last resort. It is inevitable in some cases that it is not possible to carry out a thorough investigation the same day as the incident. However, the guidance is equally clear that a suspension cannot be extended or “converted” into a further suspension or a PEX. The exception is where, in exceptional circumstances, usually where new evidence has come to light, a further suspension or PEX may be issued to begin immediately after the first suspension ends. Whilst using a 5-

day FTS may allow for further consideration on the same facts (and thereby making the decision a more rational and considered one) it is unlikely that this would amount to “new evidence”.

As such, the distinctions between two different scenarios as set out below may be helpful:

Decision can be made immediately

- Where there is no doubt as to the facts of the incident and the Head has been able to hear the child's version of events and to take into account relevant considerations (including support provided, the child's Fir Vale Academy – Exclusions Policy

SEND or LAC status if appropriate and any mitigating circumstances) then a PEx should be issued that day in line with the guidance above and statutory guidance. Heads should exercise caution in such circumstances.

Decision cannot be made immediately

- Where there is any ambiguity, or if the necessary information is not to hand, or emotions might be clouding voice of the child (or similar) then a full and formal investigation needs to take place. A suspension would be appropriate in these circumstances for a short period as a sanction for the behaviour as understood by the evidence available at the time (a maximum of 5 school days is advised). However, it must be made clear to the child and parent that a further sanction, including a PEx, may follow once the investigation has been completed and all the facts are known. See Appendix 3 for suggested wording that can be added to parental letters to explain this.

- In such cases, usually where significant additional evidence emerges from an investigation, a further sanction may be appropriate where the initial sanction does not fit the more serious behaviour as it is now understood. This must be issued to begin immediately after the suspension ends (i.e. the student must not return to school between the sanctions, but equally the sanctions must not overlap as this would amount to a further sanction being imposed for the initial behaviour). This further sanction may be either another suspension or a permanent exclusion.

Once the investigation is complete, a letter should be sent containing one of the following;

- notification for the pupil to return to school;
- notification of another suspension to begin immediately after the first period ends; or
- notification of a permanent exclusion to be begin immediately after the end of the suspension.

3. Cancelling a suspension or PEx

The purpose of the investigation is to ensure that the right decision is made. However, in very rare cases it is possible that further evidence comes to light, once a suspension or PEx has been issued, that had it been known at the time would have led to a different decision.

Should schools find themselves in this position, a suspension or PEx *can* be cancelled or rescinded, providing it is done so before the LGB has considered it. This means that a suspension or PEx cannot be cancelled during a LGB hearing. Where a decision to cancel is taken, Heads should ensure a letter is issued and placed in the student's file. Heads should notify parents, the LGB and the Local Authority without delay, and if relevant, the social worker and VSH. The notification must also provide the reason for the cancellation.

Heads should offer parents the opportunity to meet them to discuss the circumstances that led to the exclusion being cancelled. A termly report should be made to the LGB on the number of exclusions which have been cancelled. **NB** A PEx cannot be cancelled if the pupil has already been excluded for more than 45 School days in a school year, or if they will have been so by the time the cancellation takes effect. Further details are set out in paras 13 and 14 of the [DfE guidance](#)

Any days spent out of school as a result of any exclusion, prior to the cancellation, will count towards the maximum of 45 school days permitted in any school year.

4. Behaviour outside school

Subject to the requirements of this guidance, the Principal (or designated teacher in charge) may exclude or otherwise sanction students even if the circumstances giving rise to exclusion occur when the student is out of Fir Vale Academy, provided that behaviour is relevant to the maintenance of good behaviour in the school. This might include where the behaviour takes place on the journey to and from school, or in circumstances where the school is responsible for the conduct of a student, such as on a school trip, or where the behaviour affects the reputation of the school.

5. Police Involvement and Parallel Criminal Proceedings

The process of exclusion from school and criminal proceedings can, and should, run parallel. The Principal need not postpone taking a decision on an exclusion solely because a police investigation is underway and/ or any criminal proceedings may be brought. In such circumstances, the head teacher will need to take a decision on the evidence available to them at the time. In all cases, schools should follow general safeguarding principles as found in Keeping Children Safe in Education. Where the evidence is limited by a police investigation or criminal proceedings, the Principal should consider any additional steps they may need to take to ensure that the decision to exclude is fair. However, the final decision on whether to exclude is for the Principal to make. It is also critical that a school does not undermine the evidence gathering in a parallel police investigation: the school should consult with police before carrying out its own investigation.

6. Reintegration Meetings

Schools should support pupils to reintegrate successfully into school life and full-time education following a suspension. A reintegration strategy should be in place in all schools which offers the pupil a fresh start; helps them understand the effect of their behaviour on themselves and others; teaches them to how 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. Where possible this meeting should include the pupil's parents. Further information and advice on reintegration meetings is set out in the [DfE Guidance](#) paragraphs 27-31.

7. Part-Time Timetables

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 treat absence as authorised.

4. Responsibilities of the Principal

Principals will follow the procedures set out in the DfE Exclusion Guidance, which has been designed to ensure fairness and openness in the handling of exclusions. Following the guidance will reduce the chance of any successful legal challenge to the exclusion at a later stage.

The DfE guidance is clear that only the Principal, or the acting Principal, can exclude a pupil. When the Principal is not available then the 'Acting' Principal in the Academy will be the Vice Principal.

5. Role of the LGB (Local Governing Body)

The United Learning Trust Charity Board has delegated powers to the LGB to review exclusions and the LGB must consider any representations about an exclusion made by the parent of the excluded student. The LGB usually delegates some or all of its functions in respect of exclusions to a committee. Any such committee must consist of at least three governors, who are independent and have had no direct involvement with the case; such a committee may be called the Behaviour Committee.

The LGB's role is to review exclusions, either on parental request or because required to do so by law and the following different requirements apply to different types of exclusion. In the case of a suspension which does not bring the student's total number of days of exclusion to more than five in a term, the governing board must consider any representations made by the parent.

If the student will be excluded for more than five but not more than 15 school days in the term, and only if the parent makes representations, the governing board must consider within 50 school days of receiving the notice of exclusion whether the excluded student should be reinstated. In the absence of any representations the governing board can consider reinstatement on their own.

The LGB / Behaviour Committee must (whether the parent requests it or not) consider the reinstatement of an excluded student within 15 school days of receiving notification of the exclusion if:

- . The exclusion is permanent; or
- . It is a suspension which would bring the student's total number of school days of suspensions to more than 15 in a term; or
- . It would result in a student missing a public examination or national curriculum test.

The Behaviour Committee can only uphold or overturn the suspension or permanent exclusion imposed by the Principal. It cannot extend a suspension nor substitute it with a permanent exclusion.

The Behaviour Committee must inform the parent, Principal and the Local Authority of their decision, in writing without delay, preferably within 2-3 school days, stating their reasons. Where the student resides in a different Local Authority to the one in which the school is based, they must also inform the student's 'home' authority.

A note of the Behaviour Committee's views on the suspension or permanent exclusion should be placed on the student's school record with copies of relevant papers.

If the Behaviour Committee directs reinstatement, this should take place as soon as possible. No conditions can be attached to any direction to reinstate the student save that the Committee can direct reinstatement on a particular date. However, the Behaviour Committee should not use this as a way of effectively imposing an alternative sanction, e.g. a suspension in place of a permanent exclusion. Future dates should be for purely practical purposes and be reasonable in all the circumstances.

LGB / Behaviour Committee hearings and IRPs can now be held via the use of remote access (for example, live video link) for suspension and permanent exclusions if requested by the parents, provided certain criteria are satisfied.

6. Role of the Clerk to the Behaviour Committee

The Behaviour Committee may appoint a Clerk. The Clerk must not be a member of the governing body or the Principal.

The role of the Clerk is to handle the administrative arrangements for considering permanent exclusions. The Clerk should not have taught the student or been involved in any of the incidents involved in the case, and should not contribute to the meeting other than in an administrative capacity. Where possible the Clerk should be experienced in exclusion matters so that the meeting can progress smoothly.

7. The Role of the Local Authority

The Local Authority does not have a decision-making role in the exclusion process for any United Learning school. A representative from the LA can however attend the Behaviour Committee or the Independent Review Panel if requested by the parent. They can only make representations if invited to do so by the Chair of the respective bodies.

8. Education of excluded students

The school's obligation is to ensure education continues while the student is on roll. In all cases of suspension or permanent exclusion, work should be set from day one and marked. Any appropriate referrals to support services or notifying key workers (such as a student's social worker) should also be considered. During a suspension, the school's legal duties to students with disabilities and SEN remain in force, for example, to make reasonable adjustments in how they support disabled students during this period. Where a student is given a suspension of six school days or longer, the school must arrange full time educational provision from and including the sixth day of exclusion.

The Local Authority is required to arrange full time educational provision for permanently excluded students from the sixth day of a permanent exclusion. Once the Principal has decided to permanently exclude a student, the Local Authority will arrange to assess the student's needs and how to meet them (even though the exclusion might still be overturned by the Behaviour Committee). The student's name will be deleted from the school roll only if:

1. the student was permanently excluded; and
2. 15 school days have passed since the parent was notified of the Behaviour Committee's decision to uphold the permanent exclusion and no application has been made for an independent review panel; or
3. the parent has stated in writing they will not be applying for an independent review panel.

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to offer an alternative school place.

Independent Review Panels

Each LGB must take responsibility for ensuring any Independent Review Panel is appropriately set up and trained. The independent review panel is only involved in reviewing permanent exclusions and only if requested by the parent of the excluded student, and/or the student if over 18.

1. Notification of Governors' Decision

In cases where Governors consider either a permanent exclusion, or a suspension above 15 days' suspension for the term, or suspension between 6-15 days where the parent makes representations the Behaviour Committee, must notify parents (or the student if they are 18 years or over), the Principal, and where relevant, the student's social worker and/or the VSH of its decision, and the reasons for it, in writing and without delay. The Behaviour Committee's decision letter to the parent must also give the last day for lodging a review (within 15 further school days¹) and explain that the grounds for the review should be set out in writing. If a parent does not request a review within the timescales the LGB must reject the application.

2. The timing of the hearing

An independent review panel must meet to consider an exclusion no later than the 15th school day after the day on which the review was requested. However, only if strictly necessary, the panel may then decide to adjourn the hearing to a later date.

3. Composition of Independent Review Panels

Review panels must consist of 3 or 5 members.

A five member panel must be constituted with two members from each of the categories of school governors and Principals.

- . A lay member to chair the panel who has not worked in any school in a paid capacity, disregarding any experience as a school governor or volunteer.
- . School governors who have served as a governor for at least 12 consecutive months in the last five years, provided they have not been teachers or Principals during this time.
- . Principals or individuals who have been a Principal within the last five years.

All panel members, including the clerk, must have received training within the two years prior to the date of the review. The DFE statutory guidance details what this training must have covered (page 33).

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

- . They are a member / director of the local authority / Academy Trust or governing body of the excluding school,
- . are the Principal of the excluding school or anyone who has held this position in the last five years,
- . are an employee of the local authority / Academy Trust, or the governing body, of the excluding school (unless they are employed as a Principal at another school),
- . have, or at any time have had, any connection with the local authority / Academy Trust; school; parent or student; or the incident leading to the exclusion, which might reasonably be taken to raise doubts about their

impartially (though an individual must not be taken to have such a connection simply because they are a Principal at another school) or

- have not had the required training within the last two years (see paragraph 116 of Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and student referral units in England guidance)

Request for a SEN Expert

If requested by the parent, the person convening the panel must appoint a SEN Expert to attend the independent review panel. The parent has a right to the above, regardless of whether their child has recognised or identified SEN.

10. Role of the Clerk to the Independent Review Panel

It is strongly advised that the independent review panel has a Clerk. The Clerk, if appointed, provides an independent source of advice on procedures and law for all parties.

11. Conduct and role of the Independent Review Panel

The role of the panel is to review the Behaviour Committee's decision not to reinstate a permanently excluded student. The panel must take account of the circumstances of the excluded student and all others in the school. The panel must apply the civil standard of proof (the balance of probabilities).

1. Reaching a decision

Information on what the panel should consider when coming to their decision can be found in section 9 of the [DfE Guidance on Exclusions](#)

2. The decision

An independent review panel can decide to:

- uphold the Behaviour Committee's decision;
- recommend that the Behaviour Committee reconsiders reinstatement; or
- quash the decision and direct that the Behaviour Committee reconsiders reinstatement.

The panel's decision can be decided by a majority vote. The panel can request that a copy of the decision letter is placed on the student's record and the school must comply with this request.

The panel may only quash a decision and direct reconsideration where it considers that the exclusion was flawed when considered in the light of one or more of the principles applicable on an application for judicial review, which are illegality, irrationality and procedural impropriety.

3. Financial Penalties

Where a panel directs the LGB to reconsider its decision it has the power to order that a readjustment of the academy budget be made if the governing body does not offer to reinstate the student within 10 school days of receiving notification. The sum of this adjustment must be £4000, payable within 28 days, and will be in addition to other monies that follow permanently excluded students.

4. After the Independent Review Panel

The independent review panel's decision is binding on the parent, the LGB and the Principal. The panel cannot revisit its decision once made.

The panel must let all parties know its decision without delay. The decision letter should give the panel's reasons for its decision in sufficient detail for the parties to understand why the decision was made.

The summary of the findings from the IRP must be given due consideration by Governors.

If the panel upholds the permanent exclusion, the Clerk should immediately report this to the Local Authority. If the student lives outside the area of the Local Authority, the Clerk should make sure that the home Authority is also informed immediately of the position. If the student is of compulsory school age, it is for the Local Authority in whose area the student lives to make arrangements as quickly as possible for the student to continue in suitable full-time education.

Where the permanent exclusion is upheld the Clerk should also advise the parent to contact the appropriate person at the home Local Authority about arrangements for their child's continuing education. The Principal should remove the student's name from the school roll the day after the conclusion of the independent review panel.

5. Reconvening a Behaviour Committee

If the independent review panel directs or recommends that the LGB reconsider the exclusion, the LGB must meet to reconsider within 10 school days of notification. This can be the same panel, if all members are available. Where the LGB has reconsidered an exclusion decision it must inform the relevant person, the Principal and the Local Authority of its reconsidered decision and the reasons for it without delay.

6. Remedies after the Independent Review Panel

A parent can complain to the Secretary of State via the Education and Skills Funding Agency at the Department for Education.

7. Claims of Discrimination in relation to exclusion

A parent can also apply to the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) on grounds of disability discrimination. In addition, they may bring a claim on other discriminatory grounds in the County Court under the Equality Act 2010. The First-tier Tribunal has a wide range of potential remedies it could order, if it finds discrimination has occurred, including reinstatement if appropriate.