



Suspension and Exclusion Policy

September 2026

Version 2.1

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Governors and the Headteacher of Sonning Common Primary School are committed to the promotion of good behaviour so that pupils are able to follow the curriculum and achieve their full potential. Suspension and Exclusion are the most drastic step that the school can take because it runs against a **commitment to inclusion**. It is therefore used sparingly for the most serious cases of unacceptable behaviour:
- *to protect the education or welfare of the pupil or others,*
 - *to support school discipline,*
 - *to act as a clear statement to all pupils that certain behaviour is unacceptable,*
 - *to ensure that parents/carers know of the behaviour and are involved in controlling it.*
- 1.2 This policy sets out how Sonning Common Primary School will use suspension and permanent exclusion lawfully, reasonably, and fairly—only as a last resort, and within a wider behaviour culture that promotes a calm, safe, and supportive environment for pupils and staff.
- 1.3 The school will not operate a ‘no exclusion’ policy and will seek early intervention and proportionate responses; however, suspension and permanent exclusion remain essential tools to maintain safety and high standards where other strategies have not succeeded.
- 1.4 It aligns fully with the DfE statutory guidance (August 2024).
- 1.5 Only the Headteacher (or a named senior member of staff in the absence of the Headteacher) may exclude a pupil. **Local Authority procedures and the law on suspension and exclusions are followed at all times.**

2 Legal Framework and Definitions:

- 2.1 This policy has regard to and must be read alongside:
- *Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and PRUs in England, including pupil movement (DfE, August 2024) (the “statutory guidance”).*
 - *Relevant legislation referenced within that guidance (Education Acts 1996/2002/2006; the School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012; Equality Act 2010; Children and Families Act 2014; School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024).*
- 2.2 A suspension is an exclusion for a fixed period (not open-ended). A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year. Lunchtime suspensions count as half a school day each for all legal thresholds.

- 2.3 A permanent exclusion means the pupil is no longer allowed to attend the school unless reinstated by the governing board (or following an Independent Review Panel and reconsideration).

3 Types of Suspension and Exclusion:

- 3.1 **Lunchtime** - Pupils whose behaviour at lunchtime is disruptive may be suspended from the school premises for the duration of the lunchtime period. In such cases the legal requirements in relation to suspension, such as the headteacher's duty to notify parents, still apply. Lunchtime suspensions are counted as half a school day for statistical purposes and in determining whether a governing body meeting is triggered.
- 3.2 **Fixed Term Suspension** – when the pupil's date of return is decided in advance of the suspension and the parents/carers are told in advance the reason and the date on which the pupil is expected to return to the school. The Headteacher can suspend a pupil for up to 45 days in any one school year.

Permanent Exclusion - when a pupil who presents a significant Health and Safety risk is not allowed to return to the school. Permanent Exclusion is usually the final step in the process for dealing with disciplinary offences. It is an acknowledgement by the school that it has exhausted all available strategies for dealing with the pupil. Following a fixed-term suspension, the headteacher can decide that a new permanent exclusion may be appropriate.

4 Roles and Responsibilities:

4.1 Headteacher:

- *May suspend or permanently exclude only on disciplinary grounds, following a fair investigation using the civil standard of proof ("balance of probabilities").*
- *Must not "extend" an existing suspension or "convert" a suspension to a permanent exclusion; where new evidence arises, the headteacher may issue a new suspension or a new permanent exclusion to start immediately after the current period.*
- *Must inform parents without delay and give written notice with the required information.*
- *Must notify the local authority of all exclusions (suspensions and permanent exclusions) without delay.*
- *Must notify the governing board where required by law.*
- *Must notify the social worker (if the pupil has one) and the Virtual School Head (VSH) for looked-after pupils, without delay.*

4.2 Governing Board:

- *Monitors fair, lawful use of suspensions and permanent exclusions and the impact across pupil groups; considers reinstatement in the circumstances set out in Section 10.*
- *Ensures suitable full-time education from day 6 for suspensions over five school days (the LA does so from day 6 after a permanent exclusion).*

4.3 Local Authority:

- *Arranges suitable full-time education from day 6 following a permanent exclusion; manages IRPs for maintained schools; oversees any financial readjustment following IRP directions.*

5 Reasons for Suspension and Exclusion

5.1 The following are considered as reasons for suspension and/or exclusion:

- *Disruptive behaviour*
- *Offensive language – racist, sexist, swearing – to staff and/or pupils*
- *Physical violence to staff and/or pupils*
- *Unwillingness to accept sanctions*
- *Persistent bullying*
- *Leaving school premises without permission*
- *Damage to property – vandalism, arson, theft*
- *Substance abuse – tobacco, alcohol, drugs, solvents.*

5.2 Suspension or Exclusion is not appropriate for dealing with minor behaviour incidents or poor educational performance.

6 Avoiding Suspension / Exclusion:

6.1 At Sonning Common Primary School staff use a range of strategies to avoid the need for suspension and exclusion. These include:

- *Time out from class*
- *Time out in another class*
- *Alternative sanctions*
- *Interviewing the pupil and the parents/carers*
- *Identifying special educational needs*
- *Issuing a formal warning*
- *Drawing up a Pastoral Support Plan with help from the Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Outreach Service or the Educational Psychology Service*
- *Consulting the Education Social Work Service and other support agencies*

7 Before considering suspension or exclusion:

7.1 Before reaching a decision to suspend or exclude, the Headteacher will consider:

- *all the relevant facts and available evidence to support the allegations made, taking into account the school's Values, Behaviour and Equal Opportunities Policies and the need to apply them consistently;*

- *proportionality and the pupil's circumstances (including SEND, disability, and equality duties);*
- *whether reasonable adjustments and best endeavours (SEN) have been applied;*
- *whether earlier interventions, off-site direction (time-limited) or a managed move have been considered where appropriate.;*
- *safeguarding considerations, including for child-on-child incidents;*
- *the pupil's version of events;*
- *whether the incident may have been provoked;*
- *the reports of witnesses and relevant staff.*

7.2 In addition to the above considerations, headteachers should also consider the following: an off-site direction (a temporary measure that maintained schools and academies for similar purposes can use); or a managed move (permanent measure).

7.3 Use of Alternative Provision (AP):

- *At Sonning Common Primary School, any consideration of alternative provision will be based on a clear understanding of the support a pupil requires in order to improve their behaviour, alongside any identified SEND or health needs.*
- *Off-site direction will only ever be used as a strategy to support a pupil's future behaviour and engagement. It will not be used as a sanction for previous incidents or misconduct.*
- *The school will only use off-site direction when appropriate in-school interventions and/or external outreach support have either been exhausted or determined to be unsuitable for the pupil's needs. Any arrangement will be for a time-limited placement in alternative provision.*

7.4 The school will have regard to the *Alternative Provision: Statutory Guidance* when:

- *Arranging suitable education for a pupil unable to attend school for reasons under section 19 of the Education Act 1996.*
- *Making or reviewing an off-site direction under section 29A of the Education Act 2002.*
- *Arranging education for a suspended pupil under section 100 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.*

7.5 Planning and Monitoring:

- *Before a placement begins, the nature of the intervention, its intended outcomes, and the timescale for achieving those outcomes will be clearly defined and agreed between the school and the alternative provision provider.*
- *This plan will be monitored closely, reviewed regularly, and adapted as needed. Throughout any period in AP, the pupil must continue to receive a broad and balanced curriculum to support a successful reintegration back into mainstream school.*

7.6 If the Head teacher is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the pupil did what is alleged and that exclusion is the appropriate sanction, the Headteacher excludes the child.

8 Decision to suspend or permanently exclude:

- 8.1 A suspension may be for a set number of school days and may include lunchtimes (counted as ½ day). Total suspensions may not exceed 45 school days in an academic year.
- 8.2 A permanent exclusion should only be used for a serious breach or persistent breaches of the behaviour policy and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others.
- 8.3 Cancelling an exclusion: the headteacher may cancel an exclusion before the governing board meets; all parties must be notified and the pupil must return without delay; any days already out still count toward the 45-day annual cap.

9 When a pupil is suspended or excluded

- 9.1 Once the Headteacher excludes a pupil, the parents/carers are notified immediately, by telephone if possible. Within one school day, a letter follows to notify the parents/carers of
- *the reasons for the suspension or exclusion;*
 - *the nature and length of the suspension or exclusion;*
 - *the name and contact number of the Local Authority officer who can provide advice on the suspension and exclusions process;*
 - *how the parents/carers can make representations about the suspension or exclusion to the school governing board.*
 - *that for the first five school days of a suspension (or until the start date of any alternative provision where this is earlier) parents are legally required to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, and that parents may be given a fixed penalty notice or prosecuted if they fail to do so.*
 - *Parents must be informed where additional fixed-term suspensions or a new permanent exclusion are starting after the end of the original suspension. . In such cases the headteacher must write again to the parents explaining the reasons for the change and providing any additional information required.*
- 9.2 The governing board, comprising three of the school governors, meets following an exclusion when required by law. They review the incident and hear representations from parents/carers. The Headteacher is not a member but is entitled to be represented. The Clerk to the Discipline Committee makes detailed minutes which can be used later at an Independent Appeals Panel.
- 9.3 The Headteacher must inform the Discipline Committee and the Children, Young People and Families Directorate (Local Authority) of the type and length of a suspension or exclusion within one day of making the order to exclude.

- 9.4 Without delay, the headteacher must inform the child's social worker (if they have one) and the Virtual School Head (if the pupil is a child we care for).
- 9.5 Within the first five days of a suspension or exclusion, pastoral support will remain in contact with the child to complete welfare checks and to ensure the overall wellbeing and mental health of the child.
- 9.6 Governing board duties to consider reinstatement: The governing board (or a duly constituted committee of at least three governors) must meet and decide whether to reinstate the pupil within 15 school days of notice where::
- *The exclusion is permanent; or*
 - *A suspension takes the total to more than 15 school days in the term; or*
 - *The exclusion would cause the pupil to miss a public exam or national curriculum test (and the board should take reasonable steps to meet before the test date).*
 - *Within 50 school days if parents request it, for suspensions totalling more than 5 but not more than 15 school days in the term. (If parents do not request a meeting at this threshold, the board is not required to meet and cannot direct reinstatement.)*
 - *For suspensions totalling 5 days or fewer in a term, the board must consider any written representations but is not required to hold a meeting and cannot direct reinstatement.*

10 Governing board meetings to consider reinstatement:

- 10.1 The following parties will be invited to any reinstatement meetings:
- *Parents (and if 18 years +, the pupil),*
 - *The headteacher,*
 - *A Local Authority representative,*
 - *The pupil's social worker (if any),*
 - *The Head of the Virtual School (if the pupil is a child we care for).*
- 10.2 Remote access meetings: If requested correctly by parents, the governing board must hold the meeting via remote access, provided fairness and transparency can be assured; otherwise, meetings should be in person.
- 10.3 Decision and notification: The governing board must notify parents, the headteacher, and relevant parties (including the home LA where different) without delay, giving reasons and explaining IRP rights for permanent exclusions they decide not to reinstate.
- 10.4 The Committee considers written evidence clearly attributed and signed and may call witnesses to the incidents which caused the exclusion. The Headteacher attends the meeting to clarify points and answer questions relating to events leading to the exclusion. The representative of the Local Authority advises on arrangements for the continuing education of the child during the period of reinstatement. The Discipline Committee members only make the decision to uphold the exclusion or to reinstate the child.

Parents/carers or others attending are asked to withdraw while the decision is taken. Within one school day the Clerk to the Discipline Committee writes to the parents/carers to inform them of

- *the decision of the Discipline Committee to uphold the exclusion or to reinstate the child and the reasons for making it.*
- *the address of the Clerk to the Independent Appeals Panel of the Local Authority should they wish to make an appeal against the decision of the Discipline Committee.*
- *the date by which the appeal should be lodged to the Independent Appeals Panel, up to 15 school days after they receive the Discipline Committee's decision in writing.*

10.5 Minutes of the Discipline Committee meetings are confidential but will be forwarded to the Independent Appeals Panels of the Local Authority.

10.6 In exceptional cases further appeals may be heard in Judicial Reviews in the High Court.

11 Independent Review Panel (Permanent Exclusions Only):

11.1 Where the governing board upholds a permanent exclusion, parents may apply for an Independent Review Panel within 15 school days of receipt of the governing board's decision.

The panel can: uphold the decision; recommend the board reconsiders; or quash the decision and direct reconsideration (with potential £4,000 readjustment/payment if the board then declines to reinstate). Parents may require the appointment of a SEN expert at no cost to them.

12 The education of suspended pupils:

12.1 When a pupil is suspended for more than a day, work is set and marked by school staff.

12.2 For a suspension of more than five school days, the governing board must ensure suitable full-time education is arranged to begin no later than the sixth school day. Consecutive suspensions count cumulatively toward this threshold.

12.3 For permanent exclusions, the local authority must arrange suitable full-time education from the sixth school day.

13 Reintegration into school:

13.1 The Headteacher convenes a planning meeting to make the necessary preparations for the pupil's return to school after a prolonged suspension. Parents/carers and a representative

from the Local Authority are invited. A Support Plan, which may include the provision of additional support, is drawn up with targets and a review date.

- 13.2 Reintegration into another school or educational setting. If parents/carers apply to an Independent appeals Panel, an Individual Reintegration Action Plan is finalised at a Post Exclusion Case conference. The plan will, wherever possible, include steps to be taken to assess and integrate the pupil onto a new setting. The Education Officer allocated to the pupil is responsible for this plan.

14 Off-rolling and unlawful exclusions:

- 14.1 The school will never remove a pupil from roll or ask parents to remove a pupil as an alternative to a permanent exclusion, nor send pupils home informally ('cooling off') outside the statutory process. Such practices constitute unlawful exclusion/off-rolling.

15 Safeguarding and parallel criminal proceedings:

- 15.1 Where police involvement or parallel proceedings exist, decisions must still be lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair; neither the headteacher nor the governing board is required to postpone decisions, though they must proceed on the best available evidence and consider fairness.

16 Recording, data, and information sharing

- 16.1 The school will record each exclusion and the reason(s), and report to the LA as required.
- 16.2 Attendance registers in school mark suspended pupils using the correct attendance codes as per the 2024 School Attendance Regulations.
- 16.3 Where a permanent exclusion is confirmed, the governing board must remove the pupil's name from roll in the prescribed circumstances and make the required return to the LA.
- 16.4 Records relating to exclusions will be retained for at least six months (and longer where discrimination claims are possible).

17 Further Information:

17.1 This policy is based on

- [*DfE statutory guidance \(August 2024\): Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement — Definitions, thresholds, notifications, governing board and IRP processes, remote access meetings, SEND/social worker/VSH duties, day-6 education duties, unlawful off-rolling, cancellation of exclusions, and permanent exclusion register rules.*](#)

17.2 Requests for Independent Appeal Panel hearings should be sent to The Clerk to the Independent Appeals Panel, County Hall, New Road, Oxford. OX1 1ND.

18 Complaints:

18.1 General complaints about the application of this policy should follow the school's Complaints Procedure. This does not affect statutory rights to make representations to the governing board or to seek an Independent Review Panel where applicable.

19 Dissemination

19.1 The Policy is available on the school website and a paper copy can be obtained from the school office on request.

20 Reviewing the Policy

20.1 This policy will be reviewed every year by the Head teacher and monitored by the Chair of Governors to ensure that the Policy is relevant and up to date.