

Exclusion and Suspension Policy



COOMBE HOUSE
SCHOOL

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Contents

1	Policy Definitions	3
2	The Decision to Suspend / Exclude: Introduction.....	4
3	Factors considered before making a decision to suspend or exclude.....	5
4	Length and character of an exclusion or a suspension.....	7
5	Procedures for review and appeal.....	8
6	Admissions register procedure following permanent exclusion	8
7	Behaviour outside school.....	8
8	Disability and Equal Opportunity	9
9	Expectations of parents / carers and pupil during a period of exclusion or suspension ..	9
10	Version control.....	9

1 Policy Definitions

1.1 Exclusion and Suspension:

1.1.1 An exclusion is the required ending of a pupil's place at the School marked by the removal of their name from the School roll. For pupils who are placed by a local authority, an exclusion will be followed by an immediate termination of the contract that confirms the placement. Not every occasion when a pupil leaves the School is an exclusion. For example, a pupil may relocate so that attending is no longer viable, parents, carers or professionals may plan a managed move via the EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) Annual Review process, or for pupils who are placed by a local authority, the School may 'serve notice' as per the terms set out in the contract between the School and the Local Authority (LA).

1.1.2 A suspension is the formal requirement of Coombe House School (the School) for a pupil not to attend for a defined period of time, usually but not necessarily counted in full days.

1.2 'Informal' or 'unofficial'

1.2.1 The School does not adopt the practice defined as 'informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions / suspensions, such as requiring a pupil to go home 'to cool off.'

1.2.2 There are occasions where, to avoid exclusion or suspension, learning activities and learning venues change; for example, so that staff can undertake a restorative conversation with a pupil in the community, away from the main campus so that it is optimally effective. This is not an informal or unofficial exclusion or suspension and is recorded as 'educated off site' for registration purposes.

The Policy does not cover so-called "internal exclusions", where a pupil who is attending school is temporarily restricted in where they may be or what activities they may participate in.

1.3 Off-rolling

1.3.1 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."

1.3.2 The School is aware that off-rolling is unlawful and unethical. The School does not engage in such practice.

1.4 Exclusions / Suspensions and Independent Schools

1.4.1 For clarity, the Department for Education document 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' (updated August 2024) does not apply to independent schools.

1.5 Headteacher

1.5.1 When there are references to the 'Headteacher' in this document, it is understood to also include the Deputy Headteacher, unless otherwise specified.

2 The Decision to Suspend / Exclude: Introduction

2.1 Coombe House School is mindful that, nationally, young people with certain characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity or the presence of additional needs) experience a disproportionately high rate of school exclusion and suspension, and of the impact of this on pupils and their families and so seeks to avoid their use wherever possible.

2.2 Use of exclusion and suspension are not appropriate responses for matters such as failure to complete homework, poor academic achievement, lateness or truancy, breaching uniform expectations or for 'punishing' parents / carers for the behaviour of pupils, for example, by extending a fixed period exclusion until the parents / carers agree to attend a meeting.

2.3 The School believes that exclusions and suspensions should be considered only as a last resort and that the decision to suspend or exclude, even for short periods, is not one to be taken without full and detailed consideration.

2.4 Only the Headteacher can suspend or exclude a pupil.

2.5 Before deciding upon a an exclusion or a suspension, an investigation will take place by the Headteacher considering all available facts and evidence from the parties they consider relevant. This investigation will always take into account consideration of the School's policy on Equal Opportunities, checking whether the incident appears to be provoked by discriminatory practice and, if necessary, consultation with the relevant School policies or procedures.

2.6 The pupil(s) should be encouraged and allowed to give their account using a communication style that allows them to best share their version of events.

- 2.7 A decision to suspend or exclude a pupil is considered only:
- 2.7.1 In response to a serious concerns or repeated significant concerns related to the School's behaviour policy and procedures.
 - 2.7.2 If allowing the pupil to remain in School would significantly and unreasonably harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in School.
 - 2.7.3 Where there is no reasonably practicable alternative.
- 2.8 To consider excluding a pupil permanently is regrettable but is characteristically the final step in a sustained process of responding to significant matters of concern following a period where a wide range of other strategies, designed to stabilise and sustain the place in the school have been tried without success.
- 2.9 There may be rare circumstances where, in the Headteacher's judgment, it is appropriate to consider the permanent exclusion of a pupil for a highly significant first or 'one off' event.

3 Factors considered before making a decision to suspend or exclude

- 3.1 Pupil behaviours that may lead to an exclusion or a suspension being considered rarely occur 'out of the blue'. The School endeavours to identify and engage with the early stages of a pupil's presentation as part of its graduated response, with the aim of proactively modifying approaches to meet need.
- 3.2 In all cases of consideration of any exclusion or suspension, the Headteacher will consult within the School and beyond before making their decision. This consultation may include School and Board colleagues and relevant external professionals or agencies.
- 3.3 Particular attention is given where there are specific vulnerabilities (such as a child who is looked after by a Local Authority) that mean an exclusion or suspension will have a more significant impact upon the pupil and their family than is typical.
- 3.4 Whilst every effort will always be made to minimise exclusions and suspensions and to sustain every school place, where a pupils' needs change such that there is a prospect that their place in the School may or has become less appropriate, this will be addressed jointly with the pupil, parents / carers, the Local Authority and other appropriate professionals or agencies.
- 3.5 If it is concluded by the School that a place cannot be sustained, this should, where reasonably practicable, be managed in a planned and constructive way in advance of the requirement for an exclusion or a suspension.

- 3.6 Unless there is an immediate and / or significant risk to the safety or education of others in the School or of the pupil concerned, before deciding whether to consider the exclusion or suspension of a pupil, the Headteacher shall endeavour to:
- 3.6.1 Ensure that an appropriate investigation has taken place.
 - 3.6.2 Consider all the evidence available to establish the facts, including taking account of the School's behaviour and equality and diversity policies, and, where applicable, the Race Relations Act 1976 as amended, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended.
 - 3.6.3 Consider a pupil's EHCP (if applicable) and the way in which any of the needs outlined therein may have impacted the matter of concern.
 - 3.6.4 Allow the pupil the opportunity to give their version of events through their preferred method of communication, with support in line with their needs as necessary.
 - 3.6.5 Check whether the incident may have been provoked, for example by bullying or by racial or sexual harassment (it should be noted that, while provocation may sometimes result in an amended decision, it will not necessarily do so).
 - 3.6.6 Take into account both the best interests of the pupil concerned and the best interests of other members of the School community and the School community as a whole.
- 3.7 If satisfied that there is, in their judgement, sufficient evidence to make a decision, after due and careful process the Headteacher may decide to suspend or exclude a pupil.
- 3.8 The School is obliged to consider whether to inform the police where a criminal offence appears to have potentially taken place and has regard to "When to call the police, non-statutory guidance from the National Police Chiefs' Council."
- 3.9 Where there is a police involvement, the Headteacher need not postpone taking a decision on an exclusion or a suspension solely because a police investigation is underway and / or any criminal proceedings may be brought. In such circumstances, the Headteacher will take a decision on the evidence available to them at the time. Where the evidence is limited by a police investigation or criminal proceedings, the Headteacher shall consider any additional steps they may need to take to ensure that the decision to exclude is fair.
- 3.10 Where the incident has safeguarding implications, the School shall follow its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

4 Length and character of an exclusion or a suspension

- 4.1 Whilst exclusions and suspensions are a last resort at our School, regulations allow the Headteacher to exclude a pupil permanently or to suspend for one or more fixed periods not exceeding 45 school days in any one school year.
- 4.2 Suspensions shall be for the shortest time appropriate in the judgement of the Headteacher.
- 4.3 After a cumulative 45 days of suspension in any one school year, the School is required to either permanently exclude the pupil involved or readmit them.
- 4.4 It is unusual for the School to issue a suspension for longer than one or two days but in certain circumstances, the Headteacher has the right to do so.
- 4.5 A suspension shall not be viewed as a punitive action but rather is a formal marker of concern to the pupil and those with responsibility for them, and an opportunity for the pupil to reflect constructively upon and learn from their situation.
- 4.6 In all cases of more than a day's suspension, where practicable, suitable learning activities are arranged and assessed. It is the responsibility of the parents / carers to ensure that work sent home is completed and returned to School.
- 4.7 Where a suspension or an exclusion might impact upon a pupil's ability to engage with exams or other assessment for external accreditation, careful consideration will be given to the impact of this, which shall be balanced against the other factors of the case.
- 4.8 Following a suspension, the pupil, accompanied by a parent or carer, will have a reintegration meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- 4.9 The Headteacher may, at their complete discretion, attach conditions to a pupil's return to School. For example, they may decide that upon return, a pupil is not permitted to bring a mobile phone onto campus, will not have certain subjects / activities arranged for them, or that they must move class groups. The School will ensure that the reintegration plan is written with due regard to the needs and strategies outlined within the specific Education Health and Care Plan and will be planned to maximise the chances of success. The plan shall take note of the views of the pupil themselves. The plan will be monitored by the Headteacher to ensure its effective implementation and review.
- 4.10 A pupil who receives a succession of suspensions might reasonably expect to have the stability of their place at the School reviewed in more detail.
- 4.11 Any exclusion or suspension of a pupil, even for short periods of time, is formally recorded.

5 Procedures for review and appeal

- 5.1 Parents or carers of a suspended or excluded pupil have the right to appeal a permanent exclusion or an individual or cumulative suspension in excess of 15 days in any one academic year. The parents or carers must request the appeal, by writing to the Chair of the Board (the contact details of whom shall be shared in the exclusion letter), within five calendar days of the exclusion / suspension letter being sent from the School.
- 5.2 Upon receipt of an appeal, the Chair of the Board will nominate an appropriate person to consider the appeal and to consider the concerns raised. The nominated person shall commence this work within five school days and shall typically form a panel of people appropriate to the circumstances of the case in agreement with the Chair of the Board.
- 5.3 Their review may include making an assessment whether the Headteacher's decision to exclude the pupil was justified or whether to adjust any conditions attached to the return of a pupil to the School.
- 5.4 The Chair of the Board shall delegate to the nominated person the ability to reinstate the pupil if this they judge this to be appropriate.
- 5.5 Beyond the appeal process above, there is no further right to appeal. For the avoidance of doubt, the exclusion / suspension appeal process is separate from the School's general complaints procedures.
- 5.6 Regardless of whether an appeal is invoked, the Board shall review all exclusions at the School through their quality assurance processes that govern the school.

6 Admissions register procedure following permanent exclusion

- 6.1 In the case of a permanent exclusion the pupil remains on the School roll until:
 - 6.1.1 The outcome of an appeal process is determined.
 - 6.1.2 The time limit for the commencement of an appeal has expired without an appeal being brought.
 - 6.1.3 The parent or carer has informed the School that no appeal is to be brought.

7 Behaviour outside school

- 7.1 Pupils' behaviour outside School while under the authority of the School (e.g. on School business, School trips, "away" School sports events, or work experience placements) is subject to the School's behaviour policies and procedures. Behaviour in these circumstances can be considered as if it had taken place in School.

- 7.2 For behaviour outside School but not on School business, the Headteacher may exclude a pupil if there is a link between that behaviour and maintaining good order and discipline among the pupil body as a whole or parts thereof. For example, engaging in online activity out of the School that directly impacts the operations during School time. This is a matter of judgment for the Headteacher.
- 7.3 The School works in close collaboration with the LA transport team in relation to behaviour of pupils on LA provided transport routes to ensure the safety of all passengers and staff. Where appropriate the school will review and investigate behaviours presented and report back to the transport department in relation to any decisions and actions required around transporting to and from the School.

8 Disability and Equal Opportunity

- 8.1 The School is mindful of its duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 not to discriminate against disabled pupils by suspending or excluding them because of their disability.
- 8.2 This applies to exclusions and suspensions. The definition of disability under the Act covers pupils with certain physical, sensory, intellectual or mental impairments.
- 8.3 Discrimination means treating disabled pupils less favourably than other pupils without justification. It also means failing to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers.
- 8.4 What constitutes a reasonable step will depend on the circumstances of each case.

9 Expectations of parents / carers and pupil during a period of exclusion or suspension

- 9.1 Parents and carers have a duty to ensure that their child is safe and has suitable supervision during a period of exclusion.
- 9.2 The School will arrange suitable learning activities for the pupil to be completed on the days specified in the suspension notification. In order to support the pupil's engagement, the School asks that this be completed and returned promptly to the relevant member of staff for assessment purposes.

10 Version control

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