

# Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy

Behaviour and discipline

SMS Changing Lives School



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# Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy

Independent special school - Central, Thrive and Outreach

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| <b>School</b>              | SMS Changing Lives School                                              |
| <b>Policy owner</b>        | Headteacher                                                            |
| <b>Approved / reviewed</b> | September 2026                                                         |
| <b>Next review</b>         | September 2027                                                         |
| <b>Availability</b>        | School website and school office; paper copy free of charge on request |

**Independent-school context: SMS Changing Lives School is an independent special school. The statutory DfE suspension and permanent exclusion guidance for state-funded schools does not apply directly to SMS. The school nevertheless reflects relevant good-practice principles where appropriate and acts in accordance with its published policies, contractual arrangements and the Independent School Standards.**

## 1. Aims

SMS Changing Lives School is committed to maintaining a safe, calm and supportive learning environment. Suspension and permanent exclusion are serious disciplinary measures. They are used only where proportionate, following careful consideration of the pupil's circumstances, needs and the safety and welfare of the school community.

- Apply decisions fairly, consistently and without discrimination.
- Use permanent exclusion only as a last resort.
- Avoid informal or unlawful exclusion, including unofficial “cooling-off” periods.
- Consider SEND, disability, EHC plan provision, safeguarding and vulnerability before a decision is made.
- Support successful reintegration following suspension wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all pupils on the roll of SMS Changing Lives School across Central, Thrive and Outreach. It applies to behaviour in school, during school activities, while travelling to or from school where relevant, and to behaviour outside school where there is a clear connection to pupil safety, welfare, the school community or the orderly running of the school.

## **3. Legal and regulatory framework**

This policy has regard to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the requirements for a written behaviour policy, effective implementation, records of sanctions for serious misbehaviour, and publication of information about misbehaviour and exclusions. It also has regard to the Equality Act 2010, the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice, Keeping Children Safe in Education and current Ofsted inspection information for non-association independent schools.

The school will act consistently with its published behaviour policy and contractual arrangements with parents and carers. Any removal from the admission register will be made only where lawful and after required notifications have been completed.

## **4. Definitions**

Suspension is a formal, time-limited disciplinary removal from attendance at school. Permanent exclusion is the ending of a pupil's place at the school on disciplinary grounds. Neither term includes an agreed reduced timetable, medical absence or another individually agreed education arrangement that is not being used as a disciplinary sanction.

## **5. Authority to suspend or permanently exclude**

The Headteacher makes the final decision to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil. Senior leaders may gather evidence, manage an incident and make recommendations, but they do not make the final decision unless formally acting as Headteacher during the Headteacher's absence.

The proprietor will be informed of permanent exclusions and will monitor the use of suspension and exclusion as part of its oversight responsibilities. The proprietor does not substitute its own disciplinary decision for the Headteacher's decision.

## **6. When suspension may be considered**

Suspension may be considered where a pupil's behaviour represents a serious breach of the Behaviour Policy, creates a significant safety or welfare concern, or where a short formal period away from school is necessary to investigate, stabilise risk or put effective arrangements in place. It will not be used automatically for low-level behaviour.

Suspensions will be for a defined period and for the minimum period the Headteacher considers necessary. The school will not use indefinite suspensions or informal "cooling-off" periods.

## 7. When permanent exclusion may be considered

Permanent exclusion will only be considered as a last resort. It may be used in response to a serious breach, or persistent serious breaches, of the Behaviour Policy where the Headteacher concludes that allowing the pupil to remain at SMS would seriously harm the education, safety or welfare of the pupil or others, or where the school can no longer safely maintain the placement following reasonable intervention and review.

Examples of behaviour that may lead to consideration of permanent exclusion include serious violence, serious threats, possession or use of a weapon, serious substance-related incidents, serious or repeated criminal behaviour, or other conduct that creates an unmanageable risk. These examples do not create automatic exclusions: the individual facts and circumstances will always be considered.

## 8. Matters the Headteacher will consider

Before deciding on suspension or permanent exclusion, the Headteacher will consider all relevant information available at the time, including:

- the facts and evidence, applying the balance of probabilities;
- the pupil's account and, where needed, support to express their views;
- whether the behaviour may be connected to SEND, disability, trauma, communication, mental health, safeguarding or unmet need;
- the pupil's EHC plan, reasonable adjustments and whether agreed strategies were in place and used;
- whether the pupil is looked after, has a social worker or is otherwise especially vulnerable;
- the seriousness, context, intent, impact and previous pattern of behaviour;
- whether reasonable alternatives, interventions or risk-management measures are available; and
- the effect on the education, safety and welfare of the pupil and others.

A pupil will not be suspended or permanently excluded simply because they have SEND or a disability, because of poor academic attainment, or because the school considers their needs difficult to meet. The school will make reasonable adjustments and work with the commissioning local authority where changes to provision or an EHC plan review may be required.

## 9. Preventing informal exclusion and off-rolling

SMS will not remove or pressure a parent to remove a pupil from the school roll in the interests of the school rather than the pupil. The school will not prevent a pupil from attending normally without using a formal suspension or another lawful, agreed arrangement.

Reduced timetables, home-based education arrangements or temporary changes to a pupil's programme will not be used as disguised disciplinary sanctions. Where such an arrangement is educationally necessary, it will have a clear rationale, parent/carers involvement, safeguarding and risk consideration, review dates and an identified plan to increase access where appropriate.

## **10. Notification and recording**

Parents/carers will be informed as soon as practicable and on the same day that a suspension or permanent exclusion decision is made. Written confirmation will state the reason, start date, duration where applicable, arrangements for education and contact, and the next steps.

The school will notify the commissioning local authority and, where relevant, the pupil's home local authority, social worker and Virtual School without delay where the seriousness of the decision or the pupil's circumstances require this. Permanent exclusion will always be notified to the commissioning local authority. The SENDCO and DSL will be involved where appropriate.

All suspensions and permanent exclusions will be recorded on the school's systems. Serious behaviour sanctions will be recorded in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and the Independent School Standards.

## **11. Education and welfare during suspension**

During a suspension, the school will take reasonable steps to maintain the pupil's education. Work will be set and, where practicable, marked or reviewed. Reasonable adjustments will be made so the work is accessible. The school will also maintain proportionate welfare and safeguarding contact, taking account of the pupil's individual risk assessment and circumstances.

## **12. Reintegration following suspension**

A reintegration meeting will normally take place before or on the pupil's return. The purpose is to provide a clear fresh start, review what happened, identify support and risk-management measures, confirm expectations and agree any changes needed to the pupil's plan.

- The pupil and parent/carer will normally be invited.
- Relevant pastoral, SEND, safeguarding and teaching staff will contribute where appropriate.
- The reintegration plan may include increased check-ins, adapted routines, restorative work, intervention, changes to risk assessment or an urgent EHC plan review request.

## **13. Permanent exclusion and transition**

Where the Headteacher decides on permanent exclusion, the school will provide written reasons and the effective date, notify the relevant local authority and cooperate with the local authority, parent/carer and professionals to support a safe transfer of information and continuity of education. For a pupil with an EHC plan, the school will request or contribute to an urgent review where appropriate.

The pupil's name will only be removed from the admission register when the school is lawfully entitled to do so and after any required notifications have been made.

## **14. Concerns about the process**

The Headteacher's disciplinary decision is final within the school's suspension and permanent exclusion process. A parent/carers who believes that the school did not follow this policy, acted unfairly, or unlawfully discriminated may use the school's Complaints Procedure. The complaints process can consider the fairness and implementation of the procedure. If a complaints panel identifies a material procedural failure, it may recommend that the Headteacher reconsiders the decision in light of its findings; the final disciplinary decision remains with the Headteacher.

Nothing in this policy removes any legal right a parent or pupil may have under the Equality Act 2010 or other legislation.

## **15. Monitoring and review**

The school will monitor suspensions and permanent exclusions for frequency, reasons, repeat incidents, site/pathway, SEND and vulnerability, and protected characteristics where appropriate. Leaders will use the information to identify patterns, evaluate interventions and check that sanctions are fair and proportionate.

The Headteacher will review this policy at least annually and sooner where legislation, guidance or school arrangements change.

## **16. Related policies**

- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Risk Assessment Policy