Aspire Schools Suspensions and Exclusions Policy

This policy was adopted:	March 2026
Policy reviewed by	Executive Headteacher, Trustees To be ratified by Trustees Autumn 2026
Updates	09/26 – changes to legislation, definitions, decision to exclude. Addition to Section 8 – notification to other parties and codes. Additions to Section 9 – following a suspension. Additional sections added: 6, 7, 10, 11
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1. Purpose and context

Our Trust's aim is to ensure that:

- The suspensions (formerly known as exclusions) process is applied fairly and consistently
- The suspensions process is understood by governors, staff, parents, and students
- Students in school are safe and happy
- Students do not become NEET (not in education, employment or training).

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on statutory guidance from the Department for Education: Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools academies and pupil referral units in England including pupil movement - July 2026

It is based on the following legislation, which outline schools' powers to exclude students:

- Section 52 of the Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2011.
- The School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012.

In addition, the policy is based on:

- Part 7, chapter 2 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which looks at parental responsibility for excluded students;
- Section 579 of the Education Act 1996, which defines 'school day';
- The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended in 2014 and as modified and amended by The Education (Educational Provision for Improving Behaviour) (Application to Academies and Pupil Referral Units and Minor Amendments) Regulations 2026

3. Definitions

The DfE Exclusion guidance provides the following definitions:

- **Suspension** means an exclusion from school for a fixed period. A suspension may be for one or more fixed periods up to the statutory maximum permitted in an academic year.
- **Permanent exclusion** means the permanent removal of a pupil from the school on disciplinary grounds.
- **Exclusion** is used within this policy as a collective term for suspension and permanent exclusion on disciplinary grounds.
- **Off-site direction** means requiring a pupil to attend another education setting temporarily for the purpose of improving their behaviour.
- **Managed move** means a planned, voluntary process resulting in the permanent transfer of a pupil to another mainstream school, agreed by all parties and undertaken where it is in the pupil's best interests.
- **Separation for safeguarding purposes** means temporarily preventing a pupil from attending the school premises where separation from another pupil or pupils is essential for safeguarding reasons. This is not an exclusion on disciplinary grounds.
- **Parent** includes a person with parental responsibility for the pupil and any person who has care of the pupil. Where practical, all those with parental responsibility should be involved in the suspension and permanent exclusion process.
- **School day** means any day on which there is a school session. INSET and staff training days do not count as school days.

4. The decision to exclude

A suspension must be **'lawful, reasonable, fair, and proportionate'**, 'in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy' or 'where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school'. In making such decisions, Aspire Schools will refer to the Department for Education's statutory guidance: Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement - July 2026

The Trust will not use informal or unofficial exclusions – these are unlawful. We must formally record all suspensions, even if they only happen for a short period of time. This means that 'informal' suspensions, like sending a student home to 'cool off', still counts as a formal suspension. A pupil will not be sent home for disciplinary reasons without the formal suspension process being followed, regardless of the length of time involved.

Reduced or part-time timetables will not be used as a disciplinary sanction or as an alternative to suspension or permanent exclusion. Where a temporary part-time timetable is used for another lawful reason, it will be based on the individual needs and circumstances of the pupil, regularly reviewed and accompanied by a clear plan for returning the pupil to full-time education as soon as appropriate.

Aspire Schools will not remove a pupil from the school roll, or encourage a parent/carer to remove a pupil, where doing so would constitute unlawful off-rolling.

A suspension may be considered 'lawful, reasonable, fair, and proportionate' if we can answer 'yes' to the following questions:

- Have we established the facts and is there enough evidence that they are **more likely to have happened than not** (this is called the 'civil standard of proof')?
- Have we met our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010? and ensured that the decision does not discriminate against the student because of a protected characteristic?
- Where a pupil has **SEND or a disability**, have we considered whether reasonable adjustments have been made and whether the pupil's needs and current provision have been appropriately considered?
- Have we considered whether any external factors may have contributed to the behavioural incident? For example, the student may have suffered a bereavement or been subject to bullying.
- Have we considered whether the pupil has additional needs or vulnerabilities, or belongs to a group that may be disproportionately represented in suspension and permanent exclusion data, and whether further support, intervention or reasonable adjustment should be considered before a decision is reached?
- Have we given the student an opportunity to present their case **before** we decide to suspend them?

5. Assessment process

At Aspire, Heads of Schools or Services (HoS), manage all potential and actual behaviour incidents. Incidents that can be characterised by the following **may** be considered for a suspension:

- Physical aggression towards a peer or staff member.
- Discriminatory behaviour.

- Harmful sexual behaviour.
- Use of prohibited items on site, such as smoking paraphernalia, drugs, weapons.
- Intentional destruction of or damage to property.

This list is not exhaustive.

Immediately following an incident, HOS will undertake a risk assessment to establish if, with additional support, it is possible for the student(s) to remain on site **whilst** the investigation into the incident is carried out. Wherever possible, Aspire protocol is to carry out the investigation **whilst the student remains on site** before reaching a decision to suspend or not.

If the assessment concludes that allowing the student(s) to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the student(s) or others in the school, and that the student(s) must be sent home, **a suspension must be issued based on the evidence available**. This suspension **cannot be extended** unless, in exceptional cases, where further evidence has come to light, a further suspension may be issued to begin immediately after the first period ends.

All staff **must** ensure that both student and staff statements, plus any supporting evidence (such as photos of damage), are completed and recorded on Arbor **by 4.00pm on the same day**. Once the evidence has been gathered and submitted, the HOS will recommend next steps which **may or may not** include a suspension dependent on the evidence presented.

All suspensions above 1 day will be discussed with the Executive Headteacher.

6. Separation of pupils for safeguarding purposes

There may be circumstances where the school determines that it is necessary to temporarily separate students in order to manage an identified safeguarding risk. This may follow incidents involving child-on-child abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence or harassment, serious bullying, intimidation, exploitation, criminal behaviour or any other situation where the safety and wellbeing of one or more students may be compromised.

Safeguarding separation is a protective safeguarding measure and is not a disciplinary sanction.

Decisions to implement safeguarding separation arrangements will be based on an individual risk assessment and will be reviewed regularly. Consideration will be given to:

- the wishes and welfare of all students involved
- ongoing risks to safety and wellbeing
- educational access and continuity
- the impact on attendance and participation
- safeguarding advice from relevant professionals and agencies.

Safeguarding separation arrangements may include changes to timetables, supervised movement around the site, separate social times, restrictions on contact, amended transport arrangements, use of different entrances and exits, or other proportionate measures necessary to manage risk.

Parents/carers will be informed of the reason for the safeguarding separation and the arrangements being put in place, subject to any safeguarding considerations regarding the timing and manner in which information can appropriately be shared.

Where safeguarding separation prevents a pupil from attending an Aspire Schools premises, appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure continuity of education in accordance with statutory requirements. Aspire Schools will work with the pupil, parents/carers, the local authority and any relevant education provider to minimise disruption to the pupil's education and support their return to school as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so.

7. Off-site direction

Aspire Schools may use off-site direction as a preventative intervention where appropriate. Off-site direction is a temporary placement at another education setting for the purpose of improving a pupil's future behaviour. It must not be used as a sanction or punishment for previous misconduct.

Off-site direction will normally be considered where appropriate in-school interventions and/or outreach support have been unsuccessful or are considered inappropriate.

Before an off-site direction is made, Aspire Schools will have regard to the pupil's individual circumstances, including their behavioural, SEND and health needs. The pupil will be supported to express their views and will be kept informed about how those views have been taken into account.

The purpose of the intervention, its objectives and intended timescale will be clearly identified. The placement will provide a broad and balanced education and will be monitored and reviewed.

Relevant information will be shared with the receiving setting and, where appropriate, the local authority before the placement starts. This may include information about attainment, identified needs, risk assessment, risk management and appropriate pupil support strategies.

The governing board will keep the placement under review for as long as the off-site direction remains in effect. Reviews will consider whether the off-site direction is achieving its objectives and whether it should continue.

Where a pupil attends another school under an off-site direction, the appropriate attendance code will be used in accordance with current statutory attendance guidance.

Following an off-site direction, Aspire Schools will support the pupil's successful reintegration into school.

8. Statutory duties

Notifying parents
In the event of a suspension, parents must be notified without delay of:

- the period of the suspension and the reason(s) for it
- parents' right to make representations about the suspension to the governing board and how any representations should be made
- the days on which they must ensure that the pupil is not present in a public place at any time during school hours.

Notification should be in person or by telephone in the first instance to give parents an opportunity to ask any initial questions or raise concerns. A hard copy will be sent via post or, where consent has been gained, by email.

Notification to other parties
Aspire Schools will make all notifications required following a suspension or permanent exclusion within the timescales set out in statutory guidance and legislation.

In addition to notifying parents/carers, the Trust will notify the local authority and governing board where required. Where a pupil has a social worker, the pupil's social worker will also be notified as required. Where the pupil is a looked-after child, the relevant Virtual School Headteacher will be informed in accordance with statutory requirements.

Notifications will contain the information required by the statutory guidance and will be appropriately recorded by Aspire Schools.

Sending a student home following a suspension
If it is not possible for a student to remain on site, parents must be contacted and asked to collect the student from school. If parents are unable to collect, they may provide verbal or written permission to send the student home independently. They **must** confirm that there will be an adult present at home to supervise the student.

Parents are able to give permission for the student to travel home alone as long as the student usually travels home alone as part of a prior agreement with the school. Parents **must** still confirm that there will be an adult present at home.

Students' right to education
Our students' right to education is protected by the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 2, Protocol 1). Therefore, a student may **only** have this right removed (i.e. sent home from school) through the suspension process as set out in this protocol.

In the event of a *suspension*, the attendance code 'E' **must** be used for all sessions for which the student has been suspended. If a suspension occurs *before* afternoon registration is closed, a **half day** suspension may be issued, and an '**E**' code used to represent the suspension for the afternoon session. If a student has been suspended *after* afternoon registration has been closed, a note must be placed on the register indicating the time the student has left site and a minimum of one full day suspension **must start the following day** using the '**E'** code.

When separating students for *safeguarding* reasons, a '**Y7**' code should be used to reflect that it is impossible for the child to safely attend the site. Schools must also record the reason for the separation.

In addition, during this period, the school should take reasonable steps to set and mark work during the period of the suspension/separation.

When a student is required to attend another setting temporarily as an *off-site direction*, a '**B**' code should be used if attending an alternative provision, or a '**D**' code should be used when attending another school and the student is single registered with Aspire Schools.

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 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 are committed to following all statutory exclusions procedures to ensure that every child receives an education in a safe and caring environment.

9. Returning from a suspension, off-site direction or safeguarding separation

Aspire Schools is committed to supporting pupils to reintegrate successfully into school life following a suspension, cancelled exclusion, period of off-site direction or separation for safeguarding purposes.

The Trust seeks to employ a restorative approach to resolving conflict and preventing harm. Restorative practice focuses on building positive relationships based on responsibility, respect, fairness, and an understanding of the impact of your own behaviour on others.

Our reintegration process provides students with structured and skilled adult mediated opportunities to explore how parties involved in an incident relate to each other, and how they can find positive ways of repairing harm caused, rather than focusing solely on punishing poor behaviour or individuals avoiding taking responsibility for their actions. Students and adults are encouraged to put things right together.

Following a suspension, a re-integration meeting will be held involving the student, parents, and either the Head of School or a trusted member of staff chosen by the student. Should a student's parents fail to attend, the reintegration process will still take place with the student.

A reintegration strategy will provide the pupil with a fresh start and will seek to:

- help the pupil understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others;
- support the pupil to meet the Aspire Schools expectations for behaviour;
- restore a sense of belonging within the school community;
- rebuild engagement with learning; and
- identify appropriate academic, pastoral, SEND, health or multi-agency support where required.

The reintegration strategy will be clearly communicated at a reintegration meeting before, or at the beginning of, the pupil's return.

Wherever possible, parents/carers will be invited to participate. However, a pupil's return to education will **not be delayed or prevented because a parent/carer is unable or unwilling to attend a reintegration meeting**.

The reintegration strategy will be reviewed and adapted where necessary, in collaboration with the pupil, parents/carers and other relevant professionals.

The reintegration meeting will communicate clearly that the pupil remains a valued member of the Aspire Schools community and that previous behaviour should not be regarded as a barrier to future success.

The Trust’s restorative approach will form part of this process where appropriate.

Key questions that can help support the re-integration process:

1. What do I feel happened on the day of my suspension?
2. How do I feel following my suspension?
3. How would I like to feel?
4. Who has been affected?
5. How would I like these people to feel?
6. What might make things difficult to return?
7. Who would I like to help me return?
8. Things that I am already good at?
9. Things that will help me do well when I return?
10. What impact did the incident have?
11. What will support the student's return?

10. Pupils with SEND and additional vulnerabilities

Aspire Schools recognises that pupils with SEND, disabilities or other additional vulnerabilities may require additional support to prevent suspension or permanent exclusion.

Aspire Schools will comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and, where applicable, to use its best endeavours to secure appropriate special educational provision.

Where there are concerns about the behaviour or risk of suspension or permanent exclusion of a pupil with SEN, a disability or an EHC plan, the Trust will consider, with relevant partners, what additional support or alternative provision may be required and whether existing provision remains suitable.

Where a pupil has an EHC plan, the local authority will be contacted about significant behavioural concerns at an early stage and consideration will be given to whether an early annual review is appropriate.

For pupils with SEN who do not have an EHC plan, Aspire Schools will review whether the existing support remains appropriate and whether further specialist assessment or support is necessary.

11. Monitoring, oversight and review

Aspire Schools will monitor the use of suspension and permanent exclusion to identify patterns, trends and any areas of potential disproportionality.

The Trustees will have appropriate oversight of suspension and permanent exclusion and will consider relevant information and data as part of their responsibility for ensuring that the trust's policies and practices are lawful, fair and effective.

Monitoring will include consideration of the circumstances and characteristics of pupils who are suspended or permanently excluded, including pupils with SEND and other additional vulnerabilities, to help identify whether further support, reasonable adjustments or changes to provision may be required.

Aspire Schools will use this information to inform its behaviour strategy, early intervention, staff development and provision for pupils who may be at increased risk of suspension or permanent exclusion.