

EXCLUSIONS POLICY

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1. Underlying principles of this policy

LEAP is an inclusive Multi Academy Trust committed to equality of opportunity for all. We place the safety, wellbeing and education of our students at the centre of what we do each day and are committed to running a school where students feel safe, happy and can focus on their learning without distraction or disruption.

Where there are clear breaches of the Trust's behaviour expectations these will be addressed by staff. This policy deals exclusively with sanctions referred to as "exclusions". At a lower level, there is an extensive range of support and intervention available (as well as the teaching of clear and consistent expectations) to try and prevent incidents of poor behaviour. Where possible, when expectations are not met, we used a graduated approach to the issuing of sanctions – as detailed in our Behaviour policy. However, there are occasions, where breaches of rules are sustained, multiple or serious in nature, where using an exclusion is deemed the most appropriate sanction.

The sanction system is in place to deter students from repeating the same rule breaches/behaviours again.

There are three types of exclusion covered within this policy. These are referred to as:

Internal exclusions - where a student remains in school, but works in a separate room within school, for a set duration. Students in internal exclusion are supervised and have access to lesson work and wider learning for the duration of their sanction. There are strict expectations of students whilst in internal exclusions; not meeting these expectations could result in students needing to repeat a day, or other block of time, or a further sanction

Suspensions (Fixed term exclusions) - where a student is not allowed to attend school for a specific period of time as a result of a serious or sustained breach of behaviour expectations. Suspensions(Fixed term exclusions) may be issued when:

- actual / significant harm has been caused to the victim(s)
- the law has been breached
- the behaviour has placed others in school at risk of harm
- there have been repetitive behaviours displayed by a student (e.g. they have refused to follow instructions from multiple members of staff) and, as a result of the behaviour, there has been significant staff time wasted and/or the student has caused widescale disruption in school
- a student has repeatedly refused to comply with a lower level sanction (this being in response to an earlier, smaller breach of the behaviour policy).

Permanent exclusions

Where a student's behaviour (one-off serious incident or culmination of multiple and significant issues) is so severe that they are not allowed to return to the school.

Whenever an exclusion (internal or external) is issued the aim(s) is/are to:

- a) minimise short term risk to others/disruption to learning

- b) encourage and support a period of reflection from the student, requiring them to reflect and be able to articulate what they should have done differently, what the better choice in the situation would have been
- c) review any existing support in place for the individual student, and consider any additional support/approaches/provision that will help the student upon their return to lessons
- d) deter the student from any further breaches of school behaviour expectations.

2. Exclusion as a sanction:

If an exclusion is decided by the school to be the necessary sanction, the type and duration of this will be proportionate to the severity of the behaviour it is issued for. It is for the school alone to determine the appropriate sanction in response to a student's behaviour. A number of considerations are part of the decision-making process. These include

- Any history of previous similar behaviours
- The harm (actual or risk of) and nature of harm caused or likely to have been caused by the student's behaviour. Harm includes areas such as physical, emotional and reputational. It is also considered in terms of the scale and severity.
- The age of the student involved including any specific needs that may require that reasonable adjustments are made.
- The minimum time the school considers is necessary for the student to have effectively reflected on their behaviour and then be able to commit to behaviour change and re-join the main school learning environment.

Whilst we will always encourage students to participate in post-incident investigations the final decision on any sanction is made by the school. Due to GDPR we do not discuss any sanctions issued to other students.

3. Decision-making processes

It is for the school staff alone to make decisions in relation to sanctions including exclusions. The power to exclude is that of the Principal. The Trustees have agreed that for the purposes of permanent exclusions the Chief Executive must be consulted.

On the rare occasion that the Principal or Chief Executive are not in school the senior member of staff nominated as being in charge of the school site will deputise and assume the decision-making authority in relation to exclusions.

Parents/carers are not involved in the decision-making process regarding the sanctioning of their own or other students. However, in the interests of transparency and working together staff are always willing to explain the reason for an exclusion being issued.

4. Reasonable adjustments

If it is the case that a student has an identified Special Educational Need and/or Disability, and if it is considered that their diagnosed need may have contributed to the behaviour they exhibited, this will be considered in relation to the issuing of a sanction. Similarly, in cases where a student is identified as Looked-After or subject to significant social care involvement (eg: Child Protection Plan) this will be considered in relation to the issuing of a sanction.

In terms of anticipatory duty, it is the expectation that there is some clear evidence (for example professional involvement with the student) for this to be considered and then

reasonable adjustments to sanctions considered. This does not mean students will not be subject to exclusion if their behaviour necessitates it; it means that reasonable adjustments would be considered as part of the issuing of the sanction. It is for the school alone to determine what reasonable adjustments are both appropriate and possible in relation to sanctions. There will be no sharing of information regarding any other student involved in an incident leading to an exclusion due to GDPR.

5. The duration of exclusions

Internal exclusions: These generally range from 0.5 and 3 days in length (incident specific).

Fixed term exclusions / suspensions: The majority of exclusions are between 1 and 5 days in length. A student can be externally excluded multiple times and for a maximum of 45 days in a school year. Fixed term exclusions can also be used concurrently (for different reasons). Any single exclusion that is 6 days (or longer) in duration requires that the school provides an alternative education setting for the excluded student to attend from the 6th day.

Permanent exclusions: These are very rare and mean the student cannot ever return to the school, subject to a governors' hearing.

6. Communicating the decision to exclude with parents/carers

We will communicate any decision to exclude to parents/carers as soon as reasonably possible after the decision is made. Communication is normally verbal in the first instance with staff aiming to speak to parents/carers and explain the situation and the decision reached. For all forms of exclusion this will be followed up with a formal letter which details:

- The length of the exclusion
- The reason(s) the exclusion was issued
- The next steps the school, and student, need to take (including duty not to be in a public place during school hours if it is an external exclusion)
- Details of the formal readmission process upon return to lessons (internal and fixed term exclusions only).

7. Other types of absence from school that are not exclusions

There are occasions where a student may be legitimately sent home, this being for a specific issue to be addressed. Examples include:

- a) A student being sent home to address a breach of the uniform/personal presentation expectations. We will try, where possible to get parents/carers to bring in the correct uniform for the student to change into to avoid absence. This absence is not an exclusion and will be marked as authorised initially. In such cases, parents/carers will be informed before the student is sent off the school premises.
- b) If/when a situation arises where a student refuses to be screened/searched for any object that could cause harm to them or others. We will try to keep the student in school until a parent/carer/named contact can arrive to conduct the search on behalf of the school, however if this is not possible the student may be refused entry to the school. This is not an exclusion but an authorised absence.

8. Information specific to permanent exclusions

A decision to exclude a student permanently will only be taken in response to a serious breach, or persistent breaches, of the school's behaviour policy and if allowing the student to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the student or others in the school.

Prior to any decision to permanently exclude a student

- a thorough and timely investigation will have swiftly taken place led by an experienced and senior member of staff on the senior leadership team
- consideration will have been given to seeking an alternative to permanent exclusion (where this is considered a possibility and appropriate in the specific situation)

In the case that a permanent exclusion is issued on the basis of persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy it will be clearly shown that a range of strategies have been tried, and professionals engaged with, without sustained positive progress being made in relation to the student's behaviour.

In the case of a single serious breach of discipline the Principal (in consultation with the Chief Executive) may decide that it is a reasonable and proportionate action to permanently exclude a student without having tried a range of strategies.

In every case, all the evidence is carefully assessed and collated. Records are kept of all exclusion proceedings. A student is allowed and encouraged to give her/his account of events. Staff investigate the causes of the incident in detail.

9. Information sharing

All exclusions are treated in the strictest confidence on a 'need to know' basis. It is normal working practice for the school to share exclusion information with the staff in Local Authority statutory services teams as they have a responsibility in relation to excluded students.

Any student who is permanently excluded will not be removed from the school register until after a hearing of the governing body disciplinary committee.

10. The involvement of the Governing Body

For all external exclusions (and permanent exclusions) the chair of the governing body will be informed. This is in addition to the wider role that governors fulfil in monitoring standards and behaviour/exclusion data.

A Governors' Disciplinary Committee (minimum of 3 governors) will convene automatically in situations when:

- A permanent exclusion is issued
- A fixed term exclusion which would bring the student's total number of school days of exclusion to more than 15 in a term is issued.

The Chair of Governors will be informed of any exclusions meeting the criteria above, and convene a panel. The school will provide a copy of the letter sent to parents.

Rights of parental appeal and representation are detailed in section 13.

11. Managed Moves

One possible response to serious breaches of the Behaviour policy (including breaches which are serious enough to meet the guidelines for permanent exclusion) is a managed move to another school. This shared agreement between the two schools and parent/carer of the student, enables the student to have a fresh start in a new school setting.

Managed moves are organised at the discretion of the school and agreement is needed by the host school to offer a managed move. If it is the case that a managed move is used as an alternative to a permanent exclusion then the breakdown of the managed move (due to poor behaviour – single incident or persistent) could then be the reason for a permanent exclusion being issued.

12. Challenging the decision to exclude

There is a statutory process in place for parents/carers to follow should they wish to challenge an exclusion (fixed term or permanent). Details regarding the process are included with every exclusion letter as well as who to contact and how. A challenge made to a decision to exclude must be made within three weeks of the exclusion letter being received.

A Governors' disciplinary panel will be convened to consider the challenge. The following parties will be invited to a panel meeting:

- The Principal and/or his/her representative
- The parents/carer of the excluded student (who may be accompanied by a friend or representative)
- The excluded student (whose attendance is optional and subject to parental consent)

The panel will endeavour to meet within two weeks of receiving the request to review the decision to exclude. It is expected that any documentation that either the school or parents/carers wish the panel to consider will be circulated to all parties (normally 5 days) in advance of the meeting.

Following a panel meeting the governors will meet separately and decide whether

- to uphold the decision or
- to decline to uphold the decision.

There are separate follow up actions that are taken if option 2 above is the decision made.

In the case that any external exclusion takes an individual student to a total of more than 15 days of exclusion within a single school term or the exclusion is permanent, a Governors' panel will always meet. This is whether or not the student's parent/carers wish to challenge the decision the school has made.

13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

A number of monitoring systems and processes are in place to track the use, patterns and effectiveness of sanctions used in school. Data is analysed by senior staff regularly and reports are made to the governing body. The key focus is to reduce all forms of exclusion whilst at the same time improving school-wide behaviour.