

LOUDWATER COMBINED SCHOOL

Suspension and exclusion policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the procedures adopted by the governing board for the management of pupil suspension or permanent exclusion. It should also be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Teaching and learning.
- SEN.
- Equal opportunities.
- Health and safety.
- Behaviour for Learning and Positive Relationships.
- Anti-bullying.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding.
- Sex and relationships education.
- Admissions.

The school vision

Our school is committed to the philosophy and practice of inclusion. Therefore, we believe our policies should be true to the school's vision and aims. Consequently, all policies set out to make clear the importance of:

- Leadership.
- The culture within the school.
- Policy and practice.

The leadership and management team has agreed that the shared vision will be given high priority and all stakeholders will be aware of our whole school commitment.

We aim to provide a stimulating learning environment that varies according to the age of the learner across the whole curriculum. We recognise that the curriculum is subject to imposed and developing change. We also aim to be in a position to maximise individual potential and ensure that pupils of all ability levels and staff at differing stages in their career are well equipped to meet the challenges of education, work and life.

This will be achieved by:

- Designing a curriculum to promote a full range of learning, thinking and life skills.
- Providing a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.
- Using flexible and responsive teaching and learning styles.
- Equipping pupils with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to succeed as responsible and valued members of society.
- Developing a close partnership within and with the whole community, including all stakeholders.

We aim to be an inclusive school and offer equality of opportunity and diversity when needed to all groups of pupils within school. These groups include:

- Boys and girls.
- Pupils from minority faiths, ethnicities, travellers, asylum seekers, refugees.
- Pupils who have English as an additional language.
- Pupils who have special educational needs.
- Pupils who are academically more able.
- Pupils who are looked-after children.

- Pupils who are at risk of disaffection or exclusion, young carers, children who are not able to attend school due to medical reasons, children from families under permanent or temporary stress.

We aim to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, individuals and groups by:

- Setting suitable learning challenges.
- Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs.
- Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment.

We aim to provide a happy, healthy and safe school by:

- Recognising, reflecting and celebrating the skills, talents, contributions and diversity of all our pupils and staff members.
- Providing high quality pastoral care, support and guidance, driven by the leadership team.
- Safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff.
- Listening and responding to the concerns of learners and parents.
- Taking care to balance the needs of all members of the school community.

We will secure inclusive education for our pupils by constantly reviewing and evaluating what is done through the following questions:

- Does each pupil achieve as much as they can?
- Are there differences in the achievements of different groups of pupils?
- What is in place for pupils who are not achieving their potential?
- Are our actions effective?
- Are all our pupils happy to be in school?
- Are all our staff members happy to be in school?
- Are all members of our community valued, do they feel secure and are they offered opportunities to learn? Are structures in place to support inclusion if they cannot?

Suspension

We are mindful that the government does not regard suspension to be justified for:

- A breach of uniform or appearance, except for persistent defiance.
- Minor incidents, such as failure to complete homework or to bring in money owed.
- Poor academic work.
- Lateness or truancy.
- Pregnancy.
- Misdeeds by a child who has special educational needs, except for very serious offences.

We will do everything possible to avoid the need for suspension by:

- Carrying out early intervention strategies, especially in the case of a pupil with SEN to ascertain that the pupil is receiving appropriate provision and support.
- We will consider the use of multi-agency assessment of pupils who demonstrate persistent disruptive behaviour.
- We will check whether there are mental health or family problems.
- We may request an early review of a pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan – or we may ask for an interim/emergency review.

Duration of suspensions

The head teacher may suspend a pupil for one or more fixed periods not exceeding a total of 45 days in any one school year.

If a pupil is suspended for lunchtimes only, each lunchtime counts as a half day.

Permanent exclusion

The head teacher may exclude a pupil permanently if they judge that the circumstances warrant it. The current DfE statutory guidelines and regulations will be stringently followed.

Permanent exclusion will be used:

- For a major first offence, such as serious actual or threatened violence, sexual abuse or assault, supplying banned substances or carrying an offensive weapon, where allowing a pupil to remain in school would be seriously detrimental to the education of other pupils, to the welfare of other pupils, staff or of the pupil themselves.
- We need not postpone taking a decision on permanent exclusion solely because a police investigation is underway. Our decision will be taken on the evidence available to the school at the time. The head teacher will consider the fairness of permanent exclusion if they are aware that some evidence is being withheld by the police.
- More usually permanent exclusion follows a series of breaches of the school's disciplinary code. It would be considered after an exhaustive range of strategies including suspensions to resolve the pupil's disciplinary problems have been tried and have failed. Permanent exclusion is used when allowing a pupil to remain in school would be seriously detrimental to the education of other pupils, to the welfare of other pupils, staff or of the pupil themselves.
- When the behaviour of pupils outside school is such that it can be considered as grounds for permanent exclusion.

The principles of our suspension or permanent exclusion policy

- Only the head teacher can suspend or permanently exclude a pupil, and this will only ever be on disciplinary grounds.
- This power may not be delegated to anyone else.
- The head teacher can cancel an exclusion that has not been reviewed by the governing board, whether that exclusion has already started or not.
- In line with the principles of administrative law, (including the European convention on human rights) any decision the head teacher makes to exclude a pupil must be:
 - Lawful.
 - Rational.
 - Reasonable.
 - Fair.
 - Proportionate.
- When establishing the facts in relation to a possible permanent exclusion, the head teacher will always apply the civil standard of proof, that is, on the balance of probabilities.
- We will take care to ensure that a decision to suspend or permanently exclude does not involve any kind of discrimination as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- The school will always have due regard to its public sector equality duty.
- The school will be mindful of the prevent duty.
- We will not suspend or permanently exclude any pupil for non-disciplinary reasons.
- Suspension or permanent exclusion will never be used informally or unofficially. This is against the law.
- The school does not use the practice of off-rolling as a measure to deal with behavioural problems.
- The head teacher does, however, have the right to direct a pupil for education off-site to improve behaviour, or to arrange a 'managed move' for the same reason. This will only be considered when there has been full consultation and agreement with parents and the

receiving institution. The pupil will remain on the school roll. The threat of permanent exclusion will never be used to influence parents to remove their child from the school.

- Where practical, the head teacher will give the pupil an opportunity to present their case before taking the decision to permanently exclude.
- When considering permanent exclusion, the head teacher will take into account:
 - Possible short term mitigating circumstances, such as bereavement, mental health issues etc.
 - Where it comes to light that the pupil has been subject to bullying.
 - Whether the pupil comes into a category that is known to be a particularly vulnerable group (for example, pupils with SEN, free school meals (FSM) pupils; looked-after children; certain groups or a group with disproportionately high levels of exclusion; traveller children) and whether all preventative strategies have been fully used.
 - Whether a pupil has already had a number of suspensions which appear to have been ineffective.

Action following any suspension or permanent exclusion

Informing parents

Following any suspension of whatever duration or a permanent exclusion, the head teacher will:

- Inform parents of the period the suspension or that this is a permanent exclusion.
- Give the reasons for the suspension or permanent exclusion.
- Advise parents about rights of representation about the suspension or permanent exclusion to the governing board and how these representations may be made.
- Take account of their legal duty of care when sending a pupil home following suspension or a permanent exclusion. 'Holding' arrangements until the pupil can be collected may be necessary. (The school cannot force parents to collect a suspended or excluded child straightaway.)
- Inform parents what arrangements we have made to provide education for the pupil during the first five days of the suspension or permanent exclusion. The work provided will be accessible and achievable by pupils outside of school.
- We will make arrangements to provide suitable full-time education from the sixth day onwards for pupils who have been given a suspension or permanent exclusion lasting longer than five days. Once alternative provision has been arranged from the sixth day of the suspension, the head teacher must by law inform the parents without delay of the start date, times and venue of the provision. This must be done no later than 48 hours before the alternative provision is to start. It is then the responsibility of the parents to make sure the pupil attends the alternative provision.
- This information will be put in writing and will be sent either by email, by text, by delivering a letter directly to the parents, leaving it at their last known address or by posting it to this address. The information can also legally be sent home with the pupil, but in this case, we will always send a duplicate copy by a reliable alternative method. The information provided to parents will be clear and free of unnecessary jargon. Consideration will be given to translating the letter if the parent's first language is not English.

The school will explain to parents in writing that they have the right of appeal to the governing board concerning:

- Suspensions of more than five school days in a term or if any suspension will mean that the pupil misses a public examination or national curriculum test.
- Permanent exclusions.

If the governors decide not to reinstate the pupil before the end of a suspension or not to reinstate following a permanent exclusion, then the parents can appeal to the Local Authority. Parents may make a claim to a court or tribunal if they believe the pupil has been discriminated against. The Equality Advisory Service will supply help and advice.

Where the pupil is of compulsory school age, the school will also notify parents without delay and by the end of the afternoon session that for the first five days of a suspension they are legally required to ensure that their child is not in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification and that they may be given a fixed penalty notice if they fail to do so.

Parents will be informed where a second suspension has been initiated or if the school is considering initiating a process for permanent exclusion. In such cases, the head teacher will write again to the parents explaining the reasons for the change and providing any additional information required.

Informing other bodies

For any suspension of more than five days, be it in a single block of days, an accumulation of short suspensions of more than five days in any one term, or a permanent exclusion, the head teacher will also:

- Notify the Local Authority giving the details of the suspension or permanent exclusion and the reasons for it.
- Notify the governing board, giving the same details.

For a permanent exclusion, if the pupil lives outside the Local Authority in which the school is located, the head teacher must also inform the 'home authority' of the exclusion without delay. If any suspension of even one day would cause a pupil to miss a public examination or national curriculum test, the head teacher will inform the Local Authority and the governing board.

The head teacher will make a termly report to the governing board on all suspensions and permanent exclusions, covering:

- The number of suspensions and permanent exclusions.
- The reasons, gender, ethnicity and age of pupils and whether they were already on individual education programmes or pastoral support programmes.
- The number of cancelled suspensions and permanent exclusions and the reasons for the cancellation.
- Repeated suspensions and the school's response to them.
- Links with parents.
- Truancy, punctuality and attendance figures.
- Follow-up action, including what has subsequently happened to permanently excluded pupils.

In addition, within 14 days of a request, maintained schools must report to the Local Authority information about any suspension or permanent exclusion within the last 12 months.

The powers of the governing board

The governing board may review suspensions or permanent exclusions and will consider any representations made by the parents of the pupil.

The governing board has no power to increase the severity of suspensions. It can, however, uphold a suspension or permanent exclusion or direct the pupil's reinstatement, either immediately or by a particular date.

However, in the case of suspension that does not bring the pupil's total number of days of suspension to more than five days in a term, the governing board cannot direct reinstatement and is not required to arrange a meeting with parents.

Pupil Discipline Committee

The governing board has established a Pupil Discipline committee to which it delegates its functions in respect of suspensions and permanent exclusions (hereafter referred to as 'the committee').

- The committee consists of at least three governors in a maintained school.
- All governors who serve on a discipline committee receive training to help them discharge their duties. A clerk to the committee is also appointed, and the role is clearly outlined in the September 2023 DfE guidance document.
- The committee can hear more than one appeal at a single sitting, so long as it complies with the statutory time limits related to each one.
- If one of the committee has knowledge of the pupil(s) involved in the suspension or permanent exclusion, or of the incident that led to that suspension or permanent exclusion that could affect their impartiality, they should step down.
- The chair has a casting vote in all cases where an even number of governors are considering the case
- If the suspension or permanent exclusion could result in a pupil missing a public examination, the committee will make every effort to meet before the date of the examination. Should this not be possible, then the chair of governors of a maintained school may consider the suspension or permanent exclusion and decide whether to re-instate the pupil (these are the only circumstances in which the chair alone will review the suspension or permanent exclusion). When this occurs, the parents also have the right to make oral representations. If possible, the chair of governors will have the advice of the clerk or a Local Authority officer. The committee or chair of governors may agree to allow the pupil back on to the school premises for the sole purpose of sitting an examination, or make arrangements for the examination to be taken and invigilated off the school site, but they are not obliged to do so.

Convening an appeal meeting

Suspensions of 5–15 days

- If the parents of a suspended pupil make written representations, the committee will consider them.
- No statutory time limits apply to the consideration of such suspensions.
- The committee has the discretion to agree to a meeting to discuss the suspension, if this is requested by the parents.
- In the case of a suspension of more than five but not more than 15 school days, the committee, once having agreed to hold a meeting, will hold that meeting between the 6th and the 50th school day after receiving notice of the suspension from the head teacher.

Longer suspension and permanent exclusions

- Should the suspension be for more than 15 days, or the total of suspensions is more than 15 days that term, or if the exclusion is a permanent one, the committee normally has a duty to convene a meeting to be held between the 5th and the 16th school day after the date of receipt of a notice to consider the suspension or permanent exclusion. The governing board need not postpone a meeting if a police investigation of a potential crime associated with the reason for the permanent exclusion is underway.
- The parents, the head teacher and a Local Authority officer in the case of maintained schools will be invited to the meeting at a time and a place convenient to all the participants, within the statutory time limit. Parents have the right to request that the meeting should be held via

the use of remote access. This can only happen if the committee is satisfied that all participants have access to the necessary technology so that the meeting can be conducted fairly and transparently. The parent and the school may each be accompanied by a friend/advisor. The committee will ask for any written statements, including witness statements, in advance of the meeting.

- If the child has an EHC plan or is looked after, then the social worker and/or virtual head teacher will also be invited to the meeting. Their roles in the meeting are clearly defined in the September 2023 DfE guidance document.
- The clerk will circulate in advance of the meeting any written statements and a list of those who will be present at the meeting to all parties, including the pupil if it is known that they will be present.

Note: if a pupil has a number of lunchtime suspensions in any one term which add up to more than five school days, the rules above also apply.

Before the meeting

The governing board should:

- Not discuss the suspension or permanent exclusion with any party outside the meeting.
- Identify the steps they will take to enable and encourage the pupil to be present at the meeting and speak on their own behalf.

Conduct of the meeting

The meeting will be conducted as follows:

- No party to the review will be alone either in person or remotely with the committee before, during or after the meeting.
- The clerk makes all introductions and explains the reason for the meeting and the powers held by the committee either to uphold a suspension or permanent exclusion or re-instate the pupil.
- The school representative, usually the head teacher, will present the school's case.
- They can be questioned by all the other parties.
- The parents will be asked to give their reasons for appealing.
- Very often, the friend/advisor (who may well be a lawyer) presents the parents' case.
- The parents and the pupil, if present, will be asked if they have anything to add.
- The other parties may question the parent and/or comment on what the family has said.
- In maintained schools, a Local Authority representative will provide information on support for pupils in the Local Authority and how similar incidents have been dealt with by other schools, and can be questioned on these, but may not comment on the specific case being discussed.
- The school sums up its case.
- The parents or their representative sum up their case.
- All the parties except the committee and the clerk leave.

The committee will apply the 'balance of probabilities' standard of proof to the allegation of misconduct by the pupil. The more serious the allegation, the more convincing the substantiating evidence needs to be. This is not the same as requiring the criminal standard of 'beyond all reasonable doubt' to be applied.

The decision – suspension

The clerk may help the committee in making its decision by reference to notes taken, by reminding them of statutory procedures where relevant and by wording the decision letters afterwards.

In the case of suspension, it is possible that the suspension may already have expired and the pupil is back in school before the committee had met. In that case:

- The committee will decide whether or not, based on the evidence submitted, they would have reinstated the pupil during the suspension.
- The outcome should be added to the pupil's record for future reference.

In rare cases, the parents may have already decided that they do not want their child reinstated whatever the committee's decision. Under those circumstances, the committee should simply record whether or not they believed that the head teacher's decision was justified. This view should be recorded and sent to the parents.

If the suspension is still operative:

- The committee can either uphold the suspension, which will have to run its course, or
- Direct the pupil's reinstatement either immediately or on a named date.

The committee, through the clerk must inform the parents, the head teacher and the Local Authority of their decision in writing within one school day of the hearing, giving the reasons. They may not attach any conditions to any direction they have given the head teacher to reinstate the pupil. The school has in place, established procedures both for the return to school of a pupil whose suspension has been upheld, and for the reinstatement of a pupil whose permanent exclusion has been overturned. On their return, a pupil first has a meeting with the head teacher or another senior member of staff, responsible for the pupil's welfare, along with their parents.

The decision – permanent exclusion

We follow government guidance, which sets out reasons why it would normally be inappropriate to reinstate a pupil. These are:

- Serious actual or threatened violence against another pupil or a member of staff.
- Sexual abuse or assault.
- Supplying illegal drugs.
- Persistent and malicious disruptive behaviour, including open defiance or refusal to conform to school rules.
- Where allowing the pupil to return to school would be seriously detrimental to the education of other pupils, to the welfare of other pupils, staff or the pupil themselves.

When the committee decides to uphold a permanent exclusion, a letter to the parents will state:

- Their reason for the decision.
- The right of the family to refer the case to an independent review panel, together with the name and address of the person to whom any request for a review should be sent.
- The date by which any request for a review should be lodged.
- That any request for a review must set out the grounds on which the request is made.
- That any claims on grounds of disability discrimination can also be set out. If a case for discrimination is made, this will be referred to a first-tier tribunal or a county court.

If the committee decides to overturn the permanent exclusion, as with suspensions, the decision as to whether there is to be an immediate reinstatement or a later date for this to occur will be conveyed to all parties. A note of the governing board's views on the permanent exclusion will be placed on the pupil's school record with copies of relevant papers.

Independent review panels

We advise parents that they have the right to request a review of the decision by the governor's committee to uphold a permanent exclusion through an independent review panel and how this can be done. The request will normally be made to the clerk of the review panel. Parents will also be given:

- A link to the statutory guidance on permanent exclusions.
- A link to guidance on making a claim of discrimination to the first-tier tribunal.
- A link to the Coram Child Law Advice Service.
- A link to ACE Education Service.
- Links to special education needs information and support organisations.
- If needed, links to local services such as the traveller education service or the local parent partnership.

The Local Authority is responsible for managing and training independent panels concerning cases of permanent exclusion. An independent panel cannot overturn the decision of a governors' committee. They can uphold the decision or recommend that the governors reconsider. Further, if they have grounds for believing that the governors' decision was flawed in any way, they can quash the decision and direct the governing board to reconsider their decision.

The Local Authority may appoint a clerk to provide advice to the panel and parties to the review on procedure, legislation and statutory guidance on suspensions or permanent exclusions. There is statutory guidance on who is eligible to be an independent review panel clerk. Their duties both before and during the hearing are clearly stated. The Local Authority will ensure that all panel members and clerks have received training within the two years before the date of the review, and details are given in the guidance as to what that training must comprise.

If requested by parents in their application for an independent review panel (IRP), the Local Authority must appoint a SEN expert to attend the panel and cover the associated cost of this appointment.

The statutory guidance is also very specific concerning the role of the panel in reviewing the governing board's decision not to reinstate a permanently excluded pupil.

Parents may be present in person at the IRP review and they can also request that the review is held via the use of remote access. It is for the IRP to decide whether this can happen – they must be assured that all participants have access to the necessary technology so that the review can be conducted fairly and transparently.

The panel may decide to adjourn a hearing if there is an on-going police investigation and/or criminal proceedings associated with the permanent exclusion. The panel will reconvene at the earliest opportunity but may adjourn more than once if necessary.

Follow up

The head teacher will remove the name of a permanently excluded pupil from the school admissions register if:

- Fifteen school days have passed since the parents were notified of the governing board's decision to uphold the permanent exclusion and no application for an IRP review has been received.
- The parents have stated in writing that they will not be applying for an independent review.

If the parents go on to make a discrimination claim, which is upheld by either a first-tier tribunal or the county court, the pupil must be re-instated.

Parenting orders

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Local Authorities have powers to apply for a parenting order to help address children's behaviour. A parenting order is a court order that compels parents to attend parenting classes and to fulfil other requirements as determined necessary by the court for improving their child's behaviour.

We may consider asking the Local Authority to do this following a permanent exclusion or a second suspension within 12 months, particularly if parents have not responded to the opportunity to meet with us or the governors' committee.

Financial implications of permanent exclusion

Should a pupil be permanently excluded, the appropriate sum allotted for that child's education will be deducted immediately from the school budget. The money will remain in the school budget for a little longer if the parent chooses to appeal to a governors' committee and then an independent review panel.

If an independent review panel requires the governing board to reconsider a permanent exclusion but the governing board upholds that permanent exclusion, the school will be charged an additional £4,000 to the Local Authority in the case of a maintained school. The money will not be deducted if the parents decline a reinstatement offered by the school.

This is to ensure that the money follows the child to whatever form of education they receive after the permanent exclusion. Special arrangements can be made if the child moves to another Local Authority or would be about to move anyway from one phase of education to another, for example, at age 11.

Pupils excluded from other schools

Should the Local Authority place a permanently excluded pupil with us, we will not refuse to take such a pupil unless we are full. However, if the child has already been permanently excluded from two or more schools, then our governing board may refuse to take them.

December 2023