

THE SIR BERNARD LOVELL SCHOOL

PARENTS' GUIDE TO STAGES OF SUSPENSION AND EXCLUSION PROCEDURES

1. STAGES OF SUSPENSION

Rationale

Students are placed on a Stage of Suspension to monitor their behaviour. The Stages of Suspension are reviewed every two school terms, with feedback being sought from all of the student's teachers and tutors. If there has been no repeat of the incident or type of behaviour leading to the Stage of Suspension, and the student's general behaviour is of the standard expected, the Stage of Suspension will be reduced or removed. If there are ongoing concerns about the student's behaviour, the Stage may be reconfirmed. If a further incident occurs before or during the review period, the Stage of Suspension may be increased.

Stages of Suspension are used in conjunction with other sanctions, including the 'on report' system and internal and external exclusion. Students on a Stage II and above will be placed on an appropriate stage of the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs to indicate that they need additional support. A student at Stage III is at risk of permanent exclusion, and so will be given a Pastoral Support Programme detailing the support that will be given and how progress will be monitored and reviewed.

The following guidance outlines reasons why students may be placed at different stages, and the roles of staff involved in making recommendations and decisions. Parents will be kept informed by letter of decisions regarding the Stages of Suspension.

Guidelines

Stage I

Year Co-ordinators can place students at Stage I. Stage One Suspension may be accompanied by a short period of internal or external exclusion. Reasons for Stage I Suspension may include:

- The coloured 'on report' system has not modified the student's behaviour
- A first offence of verbal or physical bullying
- Continued low-level rudeness or disobedience towards staff
- One-off serious rudeness or disobedience towards staff
- Failure to comply with other sanctions such as detentions or community service

Stage II

Year Co-ordinators can place students at Stage II, following discussions with the Deputy Head. Stage II Suspension is normally accompanied by a period of up to five days' internal or external exclusion. Reasons for a student being placed on Stage II may include:

- A Stage I Suspension has not improved the student's behaviour
- Continued or serious verbal or physical bullying
- Continued rudeness or disobedience towards staff
- Fighting
- Continued failure to comply with other sanctions

Stage III

A student may be placed at Stage III Suspension by the Deputy Head or Head Teacher. Stage III Suspension is normally accompanied by a period of external exclusion and indicates that the student is at risk of permanent exclusion if there are further serious incidents of poor behaviour. Reasons for Stage III Suspension may include:

- Serious or repeated acts of violence against other students
- Extreme rudeness or threats towards a member of staff
- Dangerous, aggressive and/or anti-social behaviour
- Persistent refusal to comply with sanctions, such as 'red card' detentions

Students on a Stage III Suspension will be given a Pastoral Support Programme, written in conjunction with the student and parents either by the Year Co-ordinator, or in the case of students known to the behaviour support team, by the Behaviour Consultant.

2. INTERNAL EXCLUSION

We try at all times to avoid external exclusion and to use the skills centre provision which excludes students from lessons as an alternative. Detailed guidelines exist outlining expectations of students whilst they are internally excluded, and these are sent to parents as part of the letter informing them of the decision to exclude internally.

Students can be placed in the skills centre in negotiation with the Behaviour Consultant by Year Co-ordinators, Curriculum Leaders or the Deputy Head. Reasons for internal exclusion may include:

- A 'cooling off' period whilst a serious incident is investigated
- To remove a student from a lesson where they have been offensive or disobedient towards a member of staff
- As a punishment for poor behaviour, in conjunction with the Stages of Suspension
- Failure to attend the curriculum leaders' detention
- Repeated failure to respect the rules regarding lunchtime arrangements
- As part of a reintegration process, following an external exclusion
- To catch up on work missed through truancy or failure to work in lessons

The internal exclusion centre works closely in conjunction with the study skills centre to ensure that students are appropriately prepared for their return to mainstream lessons.

3. SUPPORTED TRANSFERS

Within South Gloucestershire there is now an alternative to permanent exclusion which still results in the student being moved to another school. There are three stages at which parents meet with senior staff within the school and staff from the LA Pupil Referral Unit. Further interventions are discussed and the student is given opportunities to correct their behaviour. If the behaviour does not improve after the first two stages and meetings a Stage Three meeting may lead to the headteacher choosing to exclude permanently or apply to the LA for a supported transfer to another school.

4. EXTERNAL EXCLUSION

The school follows the detailed Guidance set out by the DCSF in September 2007. The Guidance encourages early intervention with behaviour difficulties through, for example, engaging with parents and putting in place support strategies for the student. It recommends alternatives to excluding students from school such as restorative justice, the use of internal

exclusion, alternative curriculum provision at KS4, and managed moves to other schools. At The Sir Bernard Lovell School we use all of these alternatives.

The Guidance goes on to detail the circumstances in which students can be excluded on a temporary or permanent basis. It states that only the Headteacher can exclude a student and that a decision to exclude permanently will normally be the final step in a process for dealing with disciplinary offences.

The Headteacher may permanently exclude in cases where a student has placed themselves beyond the care and control of the school. In such cases, a significant range of interventions will have been put in place but will not have mediated the student's behaviour. The Guidance also states that the Headteacher can exclude permanently for a first or 'one off' offence in exceptional circumstances such as:

- Serious actual or threatened violence against another student or member of staff
- Sexual abuse or assault
- Supplying an illegal drug
- Carrying an offensive weapon.

The Guidance goes on to state that 'In cases where a Headteacher has permanently excluded a student for one of the above offences or for persistent and defiant misbehaviour including bullying (which would include racist or homophobic bullying) or repeated possession and/or use of an illegal drug on school premises the Secretary of State would not normally expect the Governors to reinstate the student.'

The Guidance stresses that exclusion should not be imposed 'in the heat of the moment unless there is an immediate threat to the safety of others or the student concerned.' The Headteacher should ensure that a thorough investigation has been carried out, including allowing the student to give his or her version of events. If the student refuses to give a written statement, the Headteacher may proceed to make a decision in the absence of the student's account. The standard of proof to be applied must be the 'balance of probabilities'; i.e. if it is more probable than not that the student did what he or she is alleged to have done, the Headteacher may exclude the student. However, the more serious the allegation, the more convincing the evidence substantiating the allegation needs to be. This is not the same as requiring the criminal standard to be applied but it does mean that when investigating more serious allegations, Headteachers will need to gather and take account of a wider range of evidence (extending in some instances to evidence of the student's past behaviour), in determining whether it is more probable than not that the student has committed the offence.

Schools are not allowed to use exclusion for failure to do homework, poor academic performance, lateness, truancy, pregnancy, breaches of school uniform except where these are 'persistent and in open defiance of such rules', or for their parents' behaviour. Schools can exclude students for poor behaviour off-site whilst on school business. They must pay due regard to legislation covering equalities issues as embodied in the Race Relations and Disability Discrimination Acts. Detailed guidance is given on the need to avoid excluding students on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, especially where they have statements.

Length of exclusion

There is very detailed guidance on this and on meetings involving parents. To summarise:

- Headteachers may exclude students for one or more fixed periods not exceeding 45 days in any one school year.
- Exclusions should be for as short a time as possible, normally for 1-3 days.
- If an exclusion is for 6 days or more, a referral must be made to the LA Pupil Referral Unit, whose staff will contact parents. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child stays at home during school hours throughout the first six days of the exclusion.
- In all cases of more than one day's exclusion, work must be set and marked.

- A reintegration meeting must be held with parents for all exclusions over 6 days; the term of the exclusion cannot be extended if the parent cannot attend the meeting.
- A lunchtime exclusion is deemed to be the equivalent of exclusion from school for one half day.
- If a parent does not comply with an exclusion, the school must have due regard for the student's safety in deciding what action to take; the Guidance suggests contacting the Education Welfare Service and the Local Authority (LA) for advice as to possible legal remedies.

Procedures for review and appeal

Governing bodies must review all permanent exclusions, exclusions of more than 15 days in any one 'old' term and any exclusions leading to students missing a public examination. They must review exclusions of between 6 and 15 days where parents request this.

They must decide whether the Headteachers decision was justified, and whether to reinstate the student. They cannot extend the period of an exclusion or make a fixed term exclusion permanent.

This function can be delegated to a committee of at least 3 Governors, known at The Sir Bernard Lovell School as 'the Governors' Discipline Committee'.

The LA must make provision for an Independent Appeals Panel to hear appeals against permanent exclusions where the Governing Body upholds the exclusion.

Parents who require further detail of procedures for excluding students should consult the DCSF website www.dcsf.gov.uk and look at Parts 3 - 7 of 'Improving behaviour and attendance: guidance on exclusion from schools and pupil referral units'.