



FIRST STEPS TOGETHER
SKILLS FOR LIFE

SUSPENSION POLICY

2023-2024

Last Update: September 2023

Next Update: September 2024

This policy should be read alongside our Behaviour Policy, including Rewards and Sanctions.

At First Steps Together, we provide inclusive, inspirational education and care. This creates positive, life changing experiences, countless stories of success and excellent outcomes for students. We value diversity and equality of opportunity, creating an environment in which students, parents, carers, and staff are treated fairly and with respect.

Our school is inclusive. We have specialist teams, resources, policies, and procedures in place to:

- secure the day-to-day health, safety and well-being of everyone in our school community.
- support students to achieve and succeed by maintaining an environment where learning can take place.
- use a range of strategies to promote positive attitudes, behaviour, and appropriate conduct.

We know that learning and development take place more effectively and rapidly when students are in school. However, there may be occasions when it is not in someone's best interests to be in school for a short period of time and the Head Teacher may make a decision to exclude a student.

What is suspension?

Suspension means that a student is not allowed to attend school and must remain at home during school hours, under the supervision of a parent or carer.

There are two types of suspension:

- Suspension: a short period of time; commonly between half a day and three days. A pupil may be excluded for one or more of these fixed term periods, up to a maximum of 45 school days in any single academic year.
- Permanent Suspension: is when a student is not allowed to return to school and their name will be removed from the school roll or Admission Register.

Who can exclude?

Suspension can only be authorised by the Head Teacher. In their absence, the Head Teacher can delegate the decision to the Deputy Head Teacher or another senior leader. This process enables a period of reflection and discussion about suitable, inclusive alternatives.

Reasons for suspension

Keeping everyone in school safe sometimes means that a student will need to be removed from a situation or excluded from school. We use suspension only as a last resort. Sometimes this is the only suitable response available to a Head Teacher if all other internal strategies and approaches in our Behaviour Policy have been exhausted or will not be appropriate.

A decision to exclude will usually be taken if allowing a student to remain in school would:

- cause serious harm to the health, safety, or welfare of others in the school.
- cause serious harm to the education of the student or others within the school.

Suspension is an extreme sanction and an absolute last resort. The following examples of unacceptable or dangerous conduct may lead to suspension:

- physical assault, serious actual or threatened violence against others.
- misuse, supply, or intent to supply drugs or alcohol in school.
- carrying or use of an offensive weapon* in school.
- fire starting or arson.

There may be other situations where the Head Teacher decides that suspension is the only appropriate action and sanction. Whilst we would not wish to criminalise students, we may consider police involvement for any of the above incidents.

** Offensive weapons are defined in the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 as “any article made or adapted for causing injury to the person; or intended by the person having with him for such use by him”.*

Procedure for a Suspension for a Fixed-Term

Please note that where a pupil is attending via an alternative provision route; they remain the responsibility of the referring institution; so, suspensions via First Steps Together, may trigger further action from the commissioning partner (pupils’ mainstream school).

- The Head Teacher will review all available evidence, speak to all concerned, including the student (where appropriate), before reaching a decision to exclude.
- The Head Teacher should consider all the relevant facts and verified evidence to support the allegations made and take into account the First Steps Together policy on equal opportunities and whether any incidents were provoked by racial or sexual harassment.
- Parents/ Carers will be contacted immediately to discuss the situation and reasons for suspension.
- A letter will be sent to Parents/ Carers and the commissioning partner giving details of the suspension, length, and date the suspension will end. The letter will remind Parents/ Carers that for the first five days of any suspension, they are legally responsible for the whereabouts of their child. If their child is found in a public place during school hours, they could be issued with a penalty notice. Parents/ carers can designate a responsible adult, for example, an aunt, to fulfil this duty.

- The suspension letter will provide information about the right to challenge a decision and how to make representation about the decision to the provision, using the 'First Steps Together Complaints and Representations Policy and Procedure'.
- Reasonable steps will be taken to set and mark work for the first five days of suspension.
- Any fixed-term suspension should be appropriately recorded on the student's file.
- From the sixth day of an suspension, the School will provide suitable education in a place of learning, which may not be on the School premises.

Return to School Meeting

- A Return to School Meeting will be held at the end of the fixed-term suspension period.
- The meeting will be attended by the Head Teacher or other senior leaders, the Parents/ Carers, the student, and commissioning partner SPOC.
- An integrated and multi-disciplinary approach should be considered where there are ongoing concerns about placement due to presentation.
- Strategies will be agreed to support a smooth and appropriate return to school.
- It is best practice to review the situation leading to suspension with the student and discuss how they could have managed things differently. Staff will identify supportive and restorative mechanisms to help the student with modifying their behaviour and avoiding the need for further suspension. Adaptations to risk assessments where this may include a more restrictive approach due to safety concerns should also be discussed.

The Procedure for Permanent Exclusion

- The Head Teacher should follow the steps outlined in the process for fixed-term suspension above, setting out clearly that permanent exclusion is being considered due to serious and/ or persistent breaches of the school's policies.
- Where there have been multiple previous fixed-term suspensions, then the Head Teacher will have ensured regular communication with Parents/ Carers and commissioning partners about potential next steps.
- The Head Teacher will discuss the rationale with the Governing Board before the decision is made or communicated to Parents/ Carers and the Local Authority.
- The suspension letter will provide information about the right to challenge a decision and any right to appeal through the First Steps Together Complaints Policy. The letter will contain the name and contact details of the appropriate person/s with whom an appeal can be lodged.

Terminating a Placement at our School

In rare circumstances, the Head Teacher might agree that the provision can no longer meet the needs of a student. Sometimes a student's needs and personal situation may change significantly, leading them to require a very different type of provision. In these situations, exclusion is not usually considered but a well-managed placement move might be appropriate.

Professionals' meetings will take place, where possible including Parents/ Carers. Either First Steps Together or a commissioning partner may give notice to terminate the placement. If a placement move is considered to be in the best interests of the young person, then giving formal, written notice to the relevant commissioning partner is usually a final decision. Fundamentally this process will be managed with all relevant parties' involvement to ensure a supportive move from the school.

During this time, the Head Teacher will try to maintain a full-time programme of education for the student. If this is not possible, then work will be provided, remote learning or alternate provision may be put in place, depending on individual risks and needs.

References and Legal Context

- The Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2011
- The School Discipline (Pupil Suspensions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998, as amended by the Human Rights Act 2004
- Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010
- Suspension from Maintained schools, Academies and pupil referral units in England: A guide for those with legal responsibilities in relation to suspension (Department for Education 2012; updated 2017)
- Part 3, Para 9 and Suspension element of Part 6 (24) (3)a of the Education (Independent School Standards Compliance Record) 2014 (England (Amendment) Regulations.