UNITY

SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy

Trust-wide policy for all Unity Schools Partnership schools/academies

Policy owner	Chief Education Officer (SEND)
Approved by	Unity Schools Partnership Board of Trustees
Effective from	September 2026
Review cycle	Annual, or earlier following statutory change

Policy status and application

Mandatory Trust policy
This policy applies to every Unity Schools Partnership school. Each school must refer to and align with this policy in its Behaviour Policy. Academies **must not** create a separate local suspension or permanent exclusion policy that conflicts with this policy.

This policy sets out the Trust-wide framework for lawful suspensions, permanent exclusions, off-site direction, managed moves, safeguarding separation, reintegration, governance review and independent review. Local behaviour policies may describe school-specific expectations and interventions, but this policy takes precedence.

1. Aims and principles

Unity Schools Partnership is committed to applying suspension and permanent exclusion lawfully, fairly, consistently and proportionately, while protecting the right of pupils and staff to learn and work in safe, calm and supportive environments. As a result:

- permanent exclusion will be used only as a last resort;
- suspension and permanent exclusion decisions will be made only by the Headteacher or Acting Headteacher and only on disciplinary grounds;
- decisions must be lawful, reasonable, fair and proportionate and based on the balance of probabilities;
- pupils will be heard and supported to express their views, taking account of age and understanding;
- SEND, disability, safeguarding, social care and looked-after status will be considered throughout;
- the Trust will monitor patterns, disproportionality, repeat suspension, pupil movement, and alternative provision.

Off-rolling and unlawful exclusion

No school may tell or force a pupil to leave, prevent attendance for disciplinary reasons, send a pupil home, use a part-time timetable for behavioural reasons, pressure a family towards elective home education or a managed move, or place a pupil in alternative provision contrary to their best interests without following the lawful process. A pupil must not be prevented from returning because a reintegration meeting has not occurred.

2. Legislation and linked guidance

This policy has regard to the Department for Education statutory guidance ‘Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement’ (July 2026). It is also informed by:

- Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2011;
- School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 and Education Act 1996;
- Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) Regulations 2007 and amendments;
- Education (Educational Provision for Improving Behaviour) Regulations 2026;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2024;
- Equality Act 2010 and Children and Families Act 2014;
- SEND Code of Practice, Behaviour in Schools, Keeping Children Safe in Education, Working Together to Improve School Attendance and Arranging Alternative Provision.

3. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Suspension	Removal from the school for a fixed period on disciplinary grounds.
Permanent exclusion	Permanent removal, subject to governing board consideration and any independent review.
Off-site direction	A temporary requirement to attend another setting to improve behaviour.
Managed move	A voluntary permanent transfer to an alternative educational setting, agreed by all parties.
Cancelled exclusion	An exclusion cancelled before the Local Governing Board considers reinstatement.
Parent(s)	Should be taken to mean any parent/ carer in relation to a pupil.
Safeguarding separation	A temporary restriction from premises for safeguarding, not disciplinary, reasons.

4. Trust requirements and responsibilities

4.1 Headteacher

- Only the Headteacher or Acting Headteacher may suspend or permanently exclude.
- The Headteacher must consult with the relevant Education Director before any permanent exclusion is confirmed.
- For a pupil with an EHC plan, the school must also consult with the Chief Education Officer for SEND before confirming permanent exclusion.
- The Headteacher remains the statutory decision-maker and must record their independent decision and reasons.
- The Headteacher must ensure notifications, education arrangements, records, and evidence are complete and timely.

4.2 Local Governing Board and Trust

- The Board of Trustees is the accountable governing board and may delegate review functions in accordance with the Trust Scheme of Delegation and Articles.
- A committee considering reinstatement must be properly constituted, impartial and supported by a governance professional.
- The Trust will arrange Independent Review Panels when lawfully requested.
- Trustees and local governors will receive appropriate information on patterns and compliance.
- The Trust will ensure that any committee considering reinstatement is independent of the original decision-making process. Trustees, local governors or Trust officers who have provided pre-decision advice on a specific case must not sit on the reinstatement committee for that exclusion.

5. Decision-making before suspension or permanent exclusion

Headteachers will:

- consider all relevant evidence and apply the civil standard of proof;
- consider the pupil's account, contributing factors, provocation, and reasonable adjustments;
- consider the school's Behaviour Policy, previous interventions and whether repeated suspension remains effective;
- for permanent exclusion, establish that the statutory two-part test has been met: there has been a serious or persistent breach of the school's Behaviour Policy; and the pupil remaining in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others;
- consider off-site direction or a managed move as preventative interventions, not punishment;
- record safeguarding, support, SEND support, provision and assessment and reasonable adjustments;
- before deciding to suspend or permanently exclude, the Headteacher must consider whether the behaviour may be linked to SEND, disability, unmet need, trauma, safeguarding concerns, mental health, bullying or other relevant contextual factors, and whether further assessment, reasonable adjustments, early help, or an early annual review has been considered and discussed with the LA or additional support should be put in place.

SEND and vulnerable pupils

Where a pupil has SEN, a disability or an EHC plan and is at risk of suspension or exclusion, the school will review provision, support, reasonable adjustments and any unmet needs before a decision is made wherever practicable. For an EHC plan, the school should contact the local authority early and consider requesting an early annual review. For pupils receiving SEND support, leaders will consider whether further assessment or specialist advice is required. The Headteacher will involve the social worker, DSL, Designated Teacher and Virtual School Headteacher as applicable, including review of the Personal Education Plan and Pupil Premium Plus for looked-after children.

Police investigations and parallel proceedings

The Headteacher need not postpone a decision solely because of a police investigation or criminal proceedings, but must decide fairly on the evidence available at the time and consider additional steps where evidence is restricted.

6. Safeguarding separation

In exceptional circumstances, a school may temporarily prevent a pupil from attending its premises to separate pupils for safeguarding purposes. This is not a disciplinary exclusion. The decision must be case-specific, led by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or their deputy, supported by a risk assessment and consistent with equality, human rights, safeguarding and public law duties. In addition:

- this form of separation should be used only where separation is essential and cannot practically be achieved on site;
- parents should be informed and the link Education Director, Trust Safeguarding Lead and governing board must be notified without delay;
- the school should work with safeguarding partners as appropriate;
- once a safeguarding separation is deemed necessary, the parent and LA need to be notified. The LA should use its Section 19 powers to make provision for the child whilst they cannot attend school;
- the school must arrange education and keep the arrangement under review;
- the school must plan for reintegration;

- safeguarding separation must be used only for the shortest necessary period, recorded separately from disciplinary suspension or exclusion, reviewed frequently, and ended as soon as the safeguarding reason no longer justifies separation;
- it must not be used where a suspension or permanent exclusion would be the proper legal route, and must not be used to avoid exclusion safeguards, attendance duties or parental rights.

7. Notifications and education during exclusion

The Headteacher will notify parents, or the pupil if aged 18 or over, without delay, initially by telephone or in person where practicable, and then in writing. The notice will include reasons, duration or permanence, representation rights, meeting rights, remote access rights and pupil involvement. Communication must be accessible. They will also:

- notify the local authority of every exclusion and the home authority for an out-of-area permanent exclusion;
- notify the governing board at the statutory thresholds (see section 10);
- notify the social worker and Virtual School Head (VSH) where applicable and invite them to the relevant pupil discipline hearing, held by governors;
- issue a fresh notice for any subsequent suspension or permanent exclusion;
- set and mark accessible work during the first five days;
- seek first-day provision for looked-after children and children with a social worker;
- ensure full-time provision begins by the sixth day where required. (For suspensions of more than five school days, the school or academy trust is responsible for arranging education from day six; for permanent exclusions, this responsibility passes to the local authority);

8. Cancelling an exclusion

The Headteacher may cancel an exclusion before the Local Governing Board has met. All required parties must be notified without delay and given the reason. Parents must be offered a meeting and the pupil must be allowed to return without delay. Any school days already missed before the cancellation must be recorded accurately, but they do not count towards the pupil's 45-school-day suspension limit.

Cancelled exclusions will be included in Trust monitoring and reported to the Local Governing Board, local authority and other relevant parties where required, so that cancellation does not mask patterns, repeated incidents or compliance concerns.

9. Off-site direction and managed moves

9.1 Off-site direction

Off-site direction is temporary and may be used only to improve future behaviour where in-school intervention or outreach has been unsuccessful or inappropriate. It must not be used as punishment. The Headteacher, who is the proprietor of the Academy, must:

- define in advance the objectives of the off-site direction, its duration, the curriculum that will be followed and the support and review arrangements that will be in place;
- give the required written notice to parents and, in cases where the pupil has an EHC plan, the local authority:
- include the address, the person to which they must report, the number of days and session times, the reasons for the off-site direction and its objectives;
- provide the statutory right to request a review;
- invite parents and the local authority where applicable at least six days before reviews;
- record review decisions and notify parents within the statutory timescale;

- ensure all reviews consider whether the placement is achieving its stated objectives, including behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, curriculum access, SEND provision, wellbeing, progress and reintegration planning;
- maintain a broad and balanced curriculum, SEND support and reintegration plan;
- share attainment, safeguarding, risk and support information before placement;
- review the direction at appropriate intervals to ensure it remains temporary, proportionate and focused on reintegration unless a lawful alternative route is agreed.

The school will quality assure any alternative provision or off-site placement before and during use. This will include checks on safeguarding, attendance monitoring, curriculum breadth, qualifications or accreditation where relevant, SEND support, suitability of placement, information sharing, risk assessment, named school oversight and arrangements for reviewing progress and reintegration.

9.2 Managed Moves

A Managed Move is an agreement made between two schools and the parents/ carers for a pupil to move school, to support positive change to behaviour and attendance. Schools will:

- only use Managed Moves as a voluntary planned permanent move if it is in the pupil's best interests;
- not use trial managed moves;
- share relevant information with the new school and check that they have an integration strategy;
- not exclude because a parent or pupil refuses a managed move;
- comply with admissions, registration and Fair Access requirements;
- for an EHC plan, involve the local authority and follow the amendment process;
- complete information sharing and review any PEP;
- agreement must be voluntary and informed. Parents and pupils must not be pressured to accept a managed move, elective home education or any arrangement that would avoid the statutory exclusion process.

10. Local Governing Board consideration and reinstatement

A Pupil Discipline Committee (PDC) made up of trained local governors from across the Trust will meet to consider whether a pupil should be reinstated following a suspension or permanent exclusion, in line with the statutory requirements in Part Seven of the Department for Education guidance. It must meet to consider reinstatement for every permanent exclusion; for any suspension that would result in the pupil missing more than 15 school days in a term; and for any suspension or permanent exclusion that would result in the pupil missing a public examination or national curriculum test. Where a suspension results in the pupil missing more than five but not more than 15 school days in a term, the Committee must meet if parents request this. Where the suspension is five school days or fewer in a term, the school's Local Governing Body must consider any parental representations but it cannot direct reinstatement.

When the PDC meets, it will review the Headteacher's decision, the evidence relied upon, the pupil's circumstances and the impact on the school community. The Headteacher will provide the evidence required for a fair and procedurally sound review.

The detailed review process below applies to all committee meetings where reinstatement must be considered:

- invite parents, the pupil as appropriate, the Headteacher, social worker, VSH and other required parties;
- actively seek the pupil's views and share them with the committee, with support with communication or reasonable adjustments where needed;
- circulate evidence where possible at least five school days in advance;
- make reasonable adjustments and enable pupil participation;
- consider the interests of the pupil and the school community;
- apply the balance of probabilities and test whether the Headteacher's decision was lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair;

- take clear minutes, give reasons and notify all required parties;
- letters must be appropriately detailed and provide sufficient reasons to allow the parties to understand the decision;
- all parties need to be clear on why the Head's decision was lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair;
- where permanent exclusion is upheld, provide full IRP and discrimination rights information.

11. Independent Review Panels and reconsideration

Parents, Carers and Guardians have the right to request a review of a PDC decision by an Independent Review Panel (IRP). Where a valid application is made, the Trust will arrange an independent review at its expense and within the statutory timetable. The panel will be properly constituted, impartial and trained. Where reconsideration is recommended or directed, the PDC will reconvene within ten school days and notify the required parties.

All IRP members and clerks will have received appropriate training covering legislation, statutory guidance, procedural fairness, equality duties, the role of the chair and clerk, and the principles of judicial review.

Parents have the right to request that an appropriately qualify SEN expert attends the Independent Review Panel, whether or not the school recognises that the pupil has SEN. Should this be agreed, the Trust will organise this and meet the reasonable costs of the SEN expert and will explain this right clearly when notifying parents of their right to request an independent review.

12. Admission registers and information transfer

The school will:

- not remove or backdate removal from the admission register until the lawful condition is met, including expiry of the deadline to request an Independent Review Panel or completion of any IRP and any required reconsideration;
- wait for any IRP and required reconsideration;
- use correct attendance codes and make the prescribed local authority return;
- transfer the Common Transfer File and child protection file securely within applicable timescales;
- retain evidence and IRP records as required;
- manage any required financial readjustment or payment following permanent exclusion in accordance with local authority arrangements and statutory requirements.

13. Reintegration

Following suspension, cancelled exclusion, off-site direction or safeguarding separation, the school will implement and review a reintegration strategy offering a fresh start, rebuilding belonging and engagement, addressing lost learning and identifying unmet SEND or health needs. Failure of a parent to attend a meeting will not prevent return although all efforts must be made to re-arrange this reintegration meeting.

14. Remote meetings

- Parents or pupils aged 18 or over may request remote access to a review meeting. In-person meetings remain the default where no preference is expressed.
- Remote meetings must be fair, transparent, accessible and allow full participation.
- Safeguarding concerns may justify refusal to grant a remote meeting, following a risk assessment.
- Remote access will be provided only where it is lawful, practicable and fair, with secure access, appropriate identity checks, confidentiality safeguards, and clear arrangements for sharing papers and enabling all parties to hear, see and participate effectively.
- Social workers and Virtual School Heads may join remotely where effective participation is possible.

- In the case of unresolved technical failure, an in-person meeting will be arranged without delay.
- Meetings cannot be conducted solely in writing.
- Meetings cannot be recorded without the prior agreement of all parties.

15. Monitoring and reporting

The Trust and each Local Governing Board will review pupil movement and exclusion data at least termly, in line with statutory guidance and Trust assurance arrangements. This will include suspensions, permanent exclusions, cancelled exclusions, off-site direction, managed moves, safeguarding separation, removals from roll, repeat suspensions and reduced or part-time timetables. The review will also include informal exclusion risks, attendance coding, pupil characteristics, disproportionality, SEND and safeguarding factors, alternative provision quality, sixth-day provision, notification compliance, reintegration outcomes and evidence that off-site or alternative arrangements are achieving their stated objectives.

A review will be used to:

- identify patterns across schools, phases and pupil groups;
- challenge disproportionality or repeated use of suspension;
- assure compliance with statutory notification, review and education duties;
- check that off-site direction, safeguarding separation and alternative provision are appropriate, time-limited, reviewed and effective;
- monitor whether reintegration support reduces repeat incidents and improves attendance;
- identify where earlier intervention, SEND review, safeguarding action or Trust support is required;
- escalate concerns to Trust Board or relevant Trust leader where data indicates legal, safeguarding, equality, attendance or provision risk.

Schools must use Trust-approved templates and checklists for exclusion letters, evidence packs, off-site direction notices, managed move agreements, safeguarding separation records, reintegration plans and Local Governing Board or IRP documentation. The Trust will audit a sample of suspension, permanent exclusion, off-site direction, safeguarding separation and managed move files at least annually to test compliance, quality of evidence, equality considerations, pupil voice, SEND consideration, safeguarding context and reintegration effectiveness.

Reports will be shared through the relevant Local Governing Board and Trust Board reporting routes, with clear escalation where patterns indicate disproportionality, repeated suspension, overuse of off-site provision, informal exclusion risk or concerns about the quality of alternative provision.

16. Links with school Behaviour Policies

Each school's Behaviour Policy must explain local expectations, sanctions, support, reasonable adjustments and reintegration practice, and provide access to this Trust policy. It must not restate procedures in a way that creates inconsistency.

Each school must review its Behaviour Policy annually and following any statutory change to ensure it remains aligned with this Trust policy. The Trust will check alignment through the annual policy review cycle and may require amendments where local wording creates inconsistency, weakens statutory safeguards or does not reflect Trust expectations.

Appendix A: Trust permanent exclusion consultation process

- The Headteacher contacts the relevant Education Director before confirming permanent exclusion.

- The Headteacher provides the evidence file, chronology, pupil voice, Behaviour Policy evidence, interventions, SEND and safeguarding considerations and proposed rationale.
- For children and pupils with an EHC plan, the Chief Education Officer for SEND is consulted.
- For looked-after children and pupils with a social worker, VSH, social worker and DSL involvement is evidenced.
- The Headteacher records the final statutory decision. Trust consultation does not transfer decision-making power from the Headteacher.
- The Governance Team is notified immediately.

Appendix B: Parent information and impartial advice

Parent notification letters must include:

1. the Department's Guidance for parents and carers on behaviour, suspension and permanent exclusion, which can be found here:https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusions-guide-for-parents;
2. details of the local area SENDIAS service, which provides information, advice and support to children and young people with SEND, including on exclusions. Every exclusion letter should include details of the local service which can also be found here: https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/about-us-0/networks/information-advice-and-support-services-network;
3. Information on accessing Coram's Child Law Advice service, via their website: https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/school-exclusion/ or on 0300 330 5485 from Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm;
4. details of the Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (known as IPSEA – www.ipsea.org.uk) is a registered charity. It offers free and independent information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.