



SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION POLICY

Belfast High School

Date: September 2023

Date Ratified: 27 September 2023

Ratified by: Board of Governors

Responsibility: Board of Governors

Author: Principal/Vice Principal

Review Date: September 2026

Rationale

At Belfast High School we believe that through high aspirations, perseverance and commitment, every pupil can fulfil their potential in the caring, warm and inclusive atmosphere offered here. It is recognised that it is unfair and unreasonable to allow the educational experience and safety of pupils and staff to be compromised by unacceptable pupil behaviour. The School's Positive Behaviour for Learning Policy outlines the system that the School has in place for behaviour management and sanctions.

The Suspension and Expulsion Policy deals expressly with how the School will address breaches at Level 6 and Level 7 of the Positive Behaviour for Learning Policy.

Legal Context

The Board of Governors of the school has prepared and adopted this Scheme under article 49 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order of 1986, as substituted by article 39 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order of 1993, the Schools (Expulsion of Pupils) (Appeals Tribunals) Regulations (NI) 1994, the Schools (Suspensions and Expulsion of Pupils) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 as well as Schools (Expulsion of Pupils) (Appeals Tribunals) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 1998, Article 25 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003, the SEND (NI) Order 2005, Article 34 of the Education (NI) Order 2006, SEND (NI) Act 2016 and all relevant DENI circulars arising from these regulations.

Definitions

In this document, any reference:

- a. to "the Chair of the Board of Governors" includes, where the Chair is absent or unavailable, the member of the Board of Governors for the time being performing the duties of the Chair;
- b. to "the Principal" includes, where the Principal is absent or otherwise unavailable, a Vice Principal or other person for the time being performing the duties of the Principal;
- c. to "Parent" is based on the definition in Article 2 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 as amended by Article 128 of Schedule 9 of the Children (NI) Order 1995. It shall also include, in the case of a pupil who has attained the age of eighteen years, the pupil themselves.
- d. to "the School Day" includes, any day on which the School is in operation or when a pupil is representing Belfast High School for example an extra-curricular activity or on an educational visit.
- e. to "School premises" includes, on School property or anywhere where a pupil is representing Belfast High School, for example an extra-curricular activity or on an educational visit.

Procedures for the Suspension of Pupils

1. A pupil may be suspended from the School only by the Principal.
2. A suspension should not be considered without adequate investigation
3. The decision to suspend will be taken once the Principal has decided that suspension is the most appropriate sanction to be adopted. The decision to suspend will draw on all the information available eg SEN, previous incidents, conduct etc. The Principal reserves the right to exercise professional judgement when deciding which sanction to apply.
4. The initial period of suspension may not exceed five school days but extensions may run consecutively.
5. A pupil will not be suspended from school for a total of more than forty-five days in any one school year.
6. The pupil concerned and their parents will be invited to attend a meeting. Parents will be informed as to the nature of the meeting prior to their arrival at School. At this meeting, the Principal will outline the circumstances of the situation, make clear the reasons for suspension and seriousness of the situation and discuss any appropriate support that the pupil may require upon their return to School.
7. When a pupil is suspended from the School the Principal must immediately give written notice of the reasons for the suspension and the period of suspension to the parents of the pupil, to the Chair of the Board of Governors and to the Education Authority.
8. In the event of a suspension, the School continues to have responsibility for the provision of learning materials and should therefore ensure that appropriate work is made available during the period of suspension. It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure work is completed and returned to school.
9. If a pupil is at risk of missing a public examination due to a suspension, the School will make arrangements for the pupil to sit the examination.
10. At the end of the initial suspension the Principal will invite the parents and pupil to attend a meeting and advise the parents that if the visit does not take place, the Principal will, in the absence of the parents, decide either to end the suspension or to impose a further period of suspension.

At the return to school meeting, the pupil will discuss the key learning points from their period of suspension and will be offered appropriate support if required. The Principal must then inform the parents in writing of either of the following alternatives, whether or not the parents choose to visit the school:

- i) the period of suspension has been concluded, stating the agreement reached with the parents, if any and that the pupil should therefore return to school forthwith; or
- ii) the period of suspension is extended, the reasons for the extension and that the pupil must return to school at the stated time. A copy of this letter will be sent to the Chair of the Board of Governors and to the Education Authority.

11. The Principal shall not extend a period of suspension except with the prior approval of the Chair of the Board of Governors.
12. If a pupil does not return to School at the end of a period of suspension, the School will firstly contact the parents to ascertain the reason for the pupil not returning to School. Should the reason require a referral to the Education Welfare Service, the School will liaise with the Education Authority.
13. Following a protracted period of suspension, the School will identify a named member of staff to assist with the pupil's re-integration. This may involve advising teachers of the pupil's return, identifying areas where work needs to be completed, ensuring arrangements and strategies are in place to manage risk, sources of support for the pupil upon their return and to consider the need to place the pupil on the SEN Code of Practice or seek support from external agencies.

Other Points Regarding Suspension

14. In carrying out these suspension and expulsion procedures, the School will adhere to the SEND (NI) Order 2005 which states under Article 14(3) of SENDO 'it is unlawful for the body responsible for a school to discriminate against a disabled pupil by suspending or expelling him/her from the school', unless it is justified to do so.
15. There is no independent appeals system for suspensions. It is the responsibility of the Principal and the Chair of the Board of Governors to ensure the process is operated fairly.

Procedures for the Expulsion of Pupils

1. The Board of Governors is the expelling authority and the decision to expel rests with them.
2. A pupil may be expelled from the School only after serving a period of suspension.
3. The Board of Governors will act in line with the legal framework for expulsion, operational at that time.
4. When expulsion is being considered, a consultation meeting will be convened. This meeting will involve the Principal, the parent, the pupil, the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Chief Executive of the Education Authority or another officer of the Education Authority duly authorised by them.
5. A reasonable period of notice as to the date and purpose of the consultation meeting will be provided to the parents and any other relevant parties. Prior to the consultation meeting, parents will receive, in writing, copies of any records, statements or other documentation which will be referred to in the meeting, for example, the pupil's disciplinary record. At the consultation meeting, the parents and the pupil (if appropriate) will have the opportunity to give their version of events, either orally or in writing.
6. The refusal of parents to participate in the consultation meeting shall not prevent a pupil from being expelled.
7. The decision to expel is based on a judgement balancing the best interests of the pupil with the best interests of the School community, giving due consideration to the welfare and safety of other pupils and staff.
8. Following the consultation meeting, a meeting of the Board of Governors will be convened. The parents (and pupil, if appropriate), shall be invited to attend the meeting. Failure of the parents and/or the pupil to attend this meeting shall not prevent a pupil from being expelled. Once the Board of Governors has reached its decision the parents will be notified in writing of this decision by the Principal. Where the decision is to expel the pupil, this notification will include details of the parents' right to appeal the decision to an Independent Expulsion of Pupils' Appeal Tribunal, the relevant time limits for lodging an appeal and where the appeal may be lodged.
9. The decision of an Appeal Tribunal is not subject to further appeal to either the Education Authority or to the Department of Education.
10. If a pupil is at risk of missing a public examination due to an expulsion, alternative arrangements must be made to ensure that the pupil can sit the examination in an appropriate location.
11. The Education Authority has a responsibility to ensure the future provision of education for a pupil who has been expelled. The School will liaise with the Education Authority to ensure that this takes place.

Other Relevant School Policies

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Bring Your Own Device Policy
- Drugs Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- E-Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Examinations Policy
- Honours and Colours Awards
- Promoting Positive Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEN Policy

Review

This policy will be kept under review by the Board of Governors, in line with the School's Policy Review Schedule.

REASONS FOR SUSPENSION FROM SCHOOL OR FOR SUSPENSION LEADING TO EXPULSION

All suspensions will be classified under one of the following criteria with additional explanatory information added if deemed necessary.

- Substance abuse: possessing, using or dealing in illegal drugs or solvents on school premises
- Alcohol abuse: possessing, drinking or selling alcohol on school premises
- Bullying of pupil: all forms whether physical, verbal, threats or other
- Verbal abuse of pupil: of a personal nature including swearing, threatening behaviour and sexually explicit language
- Physical attack on pupil: with or without a weapon
- Disruptive behaviour in class: persistent or one-off incidents which occupy teacher time and/or distract other pupils
- Persistent infringements of school rules: smoking, non-co-operation with sanctions, etc.
- Significant damage to or misuse of property: belonging to School staff or other pupils in or outside school
- Stealing: from school, pupils, staff in school or outside school while in uniform
- Verbal abuse of staff: of a personal nature including swearing, threatening behaviour and sexually explicit language
- Physical attack on staff: with or without a weapon

SUSPENSION LETTER

Date

Address of parents/carers

Dear

RE: NOTIFICATION OF SUSPENSION
Name of pupil
DOB of pupil

In accordance with the disciplinary policy of the school, it has been decided to suspend your child from school from *insert dates* inclusive. During this time *name of pupil* will be regarded as being in your care.

The reason for this suspension is *insert reason for suspension here*.

The school is prepared to provide work for *name of pupil* during this period but it will be your responsibility to collect the work and ensure it is completed and ready for marking by the teachers.

The decision to suspend is regarded as a very serious matter. The Chair of the Board of Governors and the Education Authority (North-Eastern Region) have been informed of the suspension as required by regulation.

Yours sincerely

Principal