



Suspensions and Exclusions Policy

Last reviewed: September 2023

This policy applies to all schools and operations of the Vale Academy Trust

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For the purpose of this document, Parent refers to:

- All natural parents, whether married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e, lives with and looks after the child)

1. Introduction

The Vale Academy Trust ('the Trust') believes a positive, restorative and relational behaviour ethos in schools is essential to ensure that all pupils can achieve to their full potential. Therefore, the Trust recognises that school suspensions, exclusions, managed moves and off-site direction are essential behaviour management tools for headteachers and leadership teams in order to provide consistency and to establish the highest standards of behaviour in schools and maintain the calm, safe and purposeful school communities.

The Trust recognises that for the vast majority of pupils, suspensions and permanent exclusions will not be necessary, as other strategies are in place to manage challenging behaviours. However, if other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted, then suspensions and permanent exclusions will sometimes be necessary as a last resort. This is to ensure that all pupils and staff are protected from disruption/harm and can learn in safe, calm, and nurturing environments

2. Aims

The Vale Academy Trust Schools are committed to following all statutory suspension and exclusion procedures to ensure that every child receives an education in a safe and caring environment.

Each school aims to:

- Ensure that the exclusions process is applied fairly and consistently
- Help governors, staff, parents and pupils understand the exclusions process
- Ensure that pupils in school are safe
- Prevent pupils from becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training)
- Ensure all suspensions and permanent exclusions are carried out lawfully

A note on off-rolling

Our schools are aware that off-rolling is unlawful. Ofsted defines off-rolling as:

“The practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil.”

Trust schools will not suspend or exclude pupils unlawfully by directing them off site, or not allowing pupils to attend school:

- Without following the statutory procedure, contained in the [School Discipline \(Pupil Exclusions and Reviews\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#), or formally recording the event, e.g. sending them home to 'cool off'
- Because they have special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) that the school feels unable to support
- Due to poor academic performance
- Because they haven't met a specific condition, such as attending a reintegration meeting
- By exerting undue influence on a parent to encourage them to remove their child from the school

3. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on statutory guidance from the Department for Education: [Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement - from September 2023](#).

It is based on the following legislation, which outlines schools' powers to exclude pupils:

- Section 51a of the Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2011
- The School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012

In addition, the policy is based on:

- Part 7, chapter 2 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#), which sets out parental responsibility for excluded pupils
- Section 579 of the [Education Act 1996](#), which defines 'school day'
- The [Education \(Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#), as amended by [The Education \(Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2014](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Children and Families Act 2014](#)

4. Definitions

- Suspension – when a pupil is removed from the school for a fixed period. This was previously referred to as a 'fixed-term exclusion'.
- Permanent exclusion – when a pupil is removed from the school permanently and taken off the school roll. This is sometimes referred to as an 'exclusion'.
- Off-site direction – when a governing board of a maintained school requires a pupil to attend another education setting temporarily, to improve their behaviour.
- Parent – any person who has parental responsibility and any person who has care of the child.
- Managed move – when a pupil is transferred to another school permanently. All parties, including parents and the admission authority for the new school, should consent before a managed move occurs.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 The headteacher

Deciding whether to suspend or exclude

Only the headteacher, or acting headteacher can suspend or permanently exclude a pupil from school on disciplinary grounds. The decision can be made in respect of behaviour inside or outside of school. The headteacher will only use permanent exclusion as a last resort.

A decision to suspend or exclude a pupil will be taken only:

- In response to serious or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy, **and**
- If allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others

Before deciding whether to suspend or exclude a pupil, the headteacher will:

- Consider all the relevant facts and evidence on the balance of probabilities, including whether the incident(s) leading to the exclusion were provoked
- Allow the pupil to give their version of events
- Consider whether the pupil has special educational needs or disability (SEND)
- Consider whether the pupil is especially vulnerable (e.g. the pupil has a social worker, or is a child we care for CWCF (previously called Looked after child LAC))
- Consider whether all alternative solutions have been explored, such as off-site direction or managed moves

The headteacher will consider the views of the pupil, in light of their age and understanding, before deciding to suspend or exclude, unless it would not be appropriate to do so.

Pupils who need support to express their views will be allowed to have their views expressed through an advocate, such as a parent or social worker.

The headteacher will not reach their decision until they have heard from the pupil, and will inform the pupil of how their views were taken into account when making the decision.

Informing parents

If a pupil is at risk of suspension or exclusion the headteacher will inform the parents as early as possible, in order to work together to consider what factors may be affecting the pupil's behaviour, and what further support can be put in place to improve the behaviour.

If the headteacher decides to suspend or exclude a pupil, the parents will be informed of the period of the suspension or exclusion and the reason(s) for it, without delay.

The parents will also be provided with the following information in writing, without delay:

- The reason(s) for the suspension or permanent exclusion
- The length of the suspension or, for a permanent exclusion, the fact that it is permanent
- Information about parents' right to make representations about the suspension or permanent exclusion to the governing board and how the pupil may be involved in this
- How any representations should be made
- Where there is a legal requirement for the governing board to hold a meeting to consider the reinstatement of a pupil, and that parents (or the pupil if they are 18 years old) have a right to attend the meeting, be represented at the meeting (at their own expense) and to bring a friend
- That parents have the right to request that the meetings be held remotely, and how and to whom they should make this request

If the pupil is of compulsory school age, the headteacher will also notify parents without delay and by the end of the afternoon session on the first day their child is suspended or permanently excluded, that:

- For the first 5 school days of an exclusion (or until the start date of any alternative provision or the end of the suspension, where this is earlier), the parents are legally required to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without a good reason. This will include specifying on which days this duty applies
- Parents may be given a fixed penalty notice or prosecuted if they fail to do this

If alternative provision is being arranged, the following information will be included, where possible:

- The start date for any provision of full-time education that has been arranged
- The start and finish times of any such provision, including the times for morning and afternoon sessions, where relevant
- The address at which the provision will take place

- Any information the pupil needs in order to identify the person they should report to on the first day

If the headteacher does not have the all the information about the alternative provision arrangements by the end of the afternoon session on the first day of the suspension or permanent exclusion, they can provide the information at a later date, without delay and no later than 48 hours before the provision is due to start.

The only exception to this is where alternative provision is to be provided before the sixth day of a suspension or permanent exclusion, in which case the school reserves the right to provide the information with less than 48 hours' notice, with parents' consent.

If the headteacher cancels the suspension or permanent exclusion, they will notify the parents without delay, and provide a reason for the cancellation.

Informing the governing board

See section 5.2 for definition of governing board

The headteacher will, without delay, notify the governing board of:

- Any permanent exclusion, including when a suspension is followed by a decision to permanently exclude a pupil
- Any suspension or permanent exclusion which would result in the pupil being suspended or permanently excluded for a total of more than 5 school days (or more than 10 lunchtimes) in a term
- Any suspension or permanent exclusion which would result in the pupil missing a National Curriculum test or public exam

The headteacher will notify the Local Governing Body (LGB) once per term in their headteacher report, of any other suspensions of which they have not previously been notified, and the number of suspensions and exclusions which have been cancelled, including the circumstances and reasons for the cancellation.

Informing the local authority (LA)

The headteacher will notify the LA of all suspensions and permanent exclusions without delay, regardless of the length of a suspension. The LA will be informed by the school recording this on their MIS system (namely Bromcom) and for permanent exclusions on the OCC establishment portal and pex@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The notification will include:

- The reason(s) for the suspension or permanent exclusion
- The length of a suspension or, for a permanent exclusion, the fact that it is permanent
- A copy of the letter sent to parents

For a permanent exclusion, if the pupil lives outside the LA in which the school is located, the headteacher will also, without delay, inform the pupil's 'home authority' of the exclusion and the reason(s) for it.

The Headteacher must notify the LA without delay of any cancelled exclusions, including the reason the exclusion was cancelled.

Informing the pupil's social worker and/or virtual school head (VSH)

If a:

- Pupil with a social worker is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion, the headteacher will inform the social worker as early as possible
- Pupil who is a Child We Care For (CWCF) (previously LAC) is at risk of suspension or exclusion, the headteacher will inform the VSH as early as possible

This is in order to work together to consider what factors may be affecting the pupil's behaviour, and what further support can be put in place to improve the behaviour.

If the headteacher decides to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil with a social worker / a pupil who is looked after, they will inform the pupil's social worker / the VSH, as appropriate, without delay, that:

- They have decided to suspend or permanently exclude the pupil

- The reason(s) for the decision
- The length of the suspension or, for a permanent exclusion, the fact that it is permanent
- The suspension or permanent exclusion affects the pupil's ability to sit a National Curriculum test or public exam (where relevant)
- They have decided to cancel a suspension or permanent exclusion, and why (where relevant)

The social worker / VSH will be invited to any meeting of the governing board about the suspension or permanent exclusion. This is so they can provide advice on how the pupil's background and/or circumstances may have influenced the circumstances of their suspension or permanent exclusion. The social worker should also help ensure safeguarding needs and risks and the pupil's welfare are taken into account.

Cancelling suspensions and permanent exclusions

The **headteacher** may cancel a suspension or permanent exclusion that has already begun, or one that has not yet begun, but this will only be done where it has not yet been reviewed by the governing board. Where there is a cancellation:

- The parents, governing board and LA will be notified without delay
- Where relevant, any social worker and VSH will notified without delay
- The notification must provide the reason for cancellation
- Parents will be offered the opportunity to meet with the headteacher to discuss the cancellation, which will be arranged without delay
- As referred to above, the headteacher will report to the LGB once per term on the number of cancellations
- The pupil will be allowed back in school without delay

Providing education during the first 5 days of a suspension or permanent exclusion

During the first 5 days of a suspension, if the pupil is not attending alternative provision (AP), the headteacher will take steps to ensure that achievable and accessible work is set and marked for the pupil. Online pathways such as Teams, Google Classroom or Oak Academy may be used for this. If the pupil has a special educational need or disability, the headteacher will make sure that reasonable adjustments are made to the provision where necessary.

If the pupil is a Child We Care For (previously called Looked After Children) or if they have a social worker, the school will work with the LA to arrange AP from the first day following the suspension or permanent exclusion. Where this isn't possible, the school will take reasonable steps to set and mark work for the pupil, including the use of online pathways.

5.2 The Governing Board

Considering suspensions and permanent exclusions

In this document, 'governing board' refers to the Governors' Discipline Committee which is also known as the Behaviour Working Group, a sub-committee of the Trust's Board of Directors.

Responsibilities regarding exclusions are delegated to the Vale Academy Trust Governors' Discipline Committee.

The Governors' Discipline Committee has a duty to consider parents' representations about a suspension or permanent exclusion. It has a duty to consider the reinstatement of a suspended or permanently excluded pupil (see sections 5 and 6) in certain circumstances.

Within 14 days of receiving a request, the governing board will provide the secretary of state with information about any suspensions or exclusions within the last 12 months.

For any suspension of more than 5 school days, the governing board will arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil. This provision will begin no later than the sixth day of the suspension.

Secondary schools only - The governing board does not have to arrange such provision for pupils in their final year of compulsory education who do not have any further public exams to sit.

Monitoring and analysing suspensions and exclusions data

The LGB will challenge and evaluate the data on the school's use of suspension, exclusion, off-site direction to alternative provision and managed moves.

They will consider:

- How effectively and consistently the school's behaviour policy and procedures are being implemented
- The school register and absence codes
- Instances where pupils receive repeat suspensions
- Interventions in place to support pupils at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion
- Any variations in the rolling average of permanent exclusions, to understand why this is happening, and to make sure they are only used when necessary
- Timing of moves and permanent exclusions, and whether there are any patterns, including any indications which may highlight where policies or support are not working
- The characteristics of suspended and permanently excluded pupils, and why this is taking place
- Whether the placements of pupils directed off-site into alternative provision are reviewed at sufficient intervals to assure that the education is achieving its objectives and that pupils are benefiting from it
- The cost implications of directing pupils off-site

5.3 The local authority (LA)

For permanent exclusions, the LA will arrange suitable full-time education to begin no later than the sixth school day after the first day of the exclusion.

For pupils who are CWCF or have social workers, the LA and the school will work together arrange suitable full-time education to begin from the first day of the exclusion.

6. Considering the reinstatement of a pupil

The Governors' Discipline Committee will consider and decide on the reinstatement of a suspended or permanently excluded pupil within 15 school days of receiving the notice of the suspension or exclusion if:

- The exclusion is permanent
- It is a suspension which would bring the pupil's total number of days out of school to more than 15 in a term;
or
- It would result in a pupil missing a public exam or National Curriculum test

Where the pupil has been suspended, and the suspension does not bring the pupil's total number of days of suspension to more than 5 in a term, the Governors' Discipline Committee must consider any representations made by parents. However, it is not required to arrange a meeting with parents and it cannot direct the headteacher to reinstate the pupil.

Where the pupil has been suspended for more than 5 days, but not more than 15 days, in a single term, and the parents make representations, the Governors' Discipline Committee will consider and decide on the reinstatement of a suspended pupil within 50 school days of receiving notice of the suspension. If the parents do not make representations, the board is not required to meet and it cannot direct the headteacher to reinstate the pupil.

Where a suspension or permanent exclusion would result in a pupil missing a public exam or National Curriculum test, the Governors' Discipline Committee will, as far as reasonably practicable, consider and decide on the reinstatement of the pupil before the date of the exam or test. If this is not practicable, the Governors' Discipline Committee may consider the suspension or permanent exclusion and decide whether or not to reinstate the pupil.

The following parties will be invited to a meeting of the governing board and allowed to make representations or share information:

- Parents, or the pupil if they are 18 or over (and, where requested, a representative or friend)
- The pupil, if they are aged 17 or younger and it would be appropriate to their age and understanding (and, where requested, a representative or friend)

- The headteacher
- The pupil's social worker, if they have one
- The VSH, if the pupil is looked after

Governing Board meetings can be held remotely at the request of parents, or pupils where they are 18 or older.

The governing board will try to arrange the meeting within the statutory time limits set out above and must try to have it at a time that suits all relevant parties. However, its decision will not be invalid simply on the grounds that it was not made within these time limits.

The Governors' Discipline Committee can either:

- Decline to reinstate the pupil, or
- Direct the reinstatement of the pupil immediately, or on a particular date (except in cases where the board cannot do this – see earlier in this section)

In reaching a decision, the Governors' Discipline Committee will consider:

- Whether the decision to suspend or permanently exclude was lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair
- Whether the headteacher followed their legal duties
- The welfare and safeguarding of the pupil and their peers
- Any evidence that was presented to the committee

They will decide whether or not a fact is true 'on the balance of probabilities'.

The clerk will be present when the decision is made.

Minutes will be taken of the meeting, and a record kept of the evidence that was considered. The outcome will also be recorded on the pupil's educational record, and copies of relevant papers will be kept with this record.

The Governors' Discipline Committee will notify, in writing, the following stakeholders of its decision, along with reasons for its decision, without delay:

- The parents, or the pupil, if they are 18 or older
- The headteacher
- The pupil's social worker, if they have one
- The VSH, if the pupil is a child we care for (CWCF)
- The local authority
- The pupil's home authority, if it differs from the school's

Where an exclusion is permanent and the Governors' Discipline Committee has decided not to reinstate the pupil, the notification of decision will also include the following:

- The fact that it is a permanent exclusion
- Notice of parents' or pupil's (if they are over 18) right to ask for the decision to be reviewed by an independent review panel
- The date by which an application for an independent review must be made (15 school days from the date on which notice in writing of the governing board's decision is given to parents)
- The name and address to which an application for a review and any written evidence should be submitted
- That any application should set out the grounds on which it is being made and that, where appropriate, it should include reference to how the pupil's special educational needs (SEN) are considered to be relevant to the permanent exclusion
- That, regardless of whether the excluded pupil has recognised SEN, parents have a right to require the Local Authority to appoint an SEN expert to advise the review panel

- Details of the role of the SEN expert and that there would be no cost to parents for this appointment
- That parents must make clear if they wish for an SEN expert to be appointed in any application for a review
- That parents may, at their own expense, appoint someone to make written and/or oral representations to the panel, and parents may also bring a friend to the review
- That, if parents believe that the permanent exclusion has occurred as a result of unlawful discrimination, they may make a claim under the Equality Act 2010 to the first-tier tribunal (special educational needs and disability), in the case of disability discrimination, or the county court, in the case of other forms of discrimination. Also that any claim of discrimination made under these routes should be lodged within 6 months of the date on which the discrimination is alleged to have taken place

7. Independent review

If parents/pupil's (where 18 or older) apply for an independent review within the legal timeframe, the Trust will signpost parents to the LA who will arrange for an independent panel to review the decision of the governing board not to reinstate a permanently excluded pupil.

Applications for an independent review must be made within 15 school days of notice being given to the parents/pupil by the Governors Discipline Committee of its decision to not reinstate a pupil **or**, if after this time, within 15 school days of the final determination of a claim of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 regarding the permanent exclusion. Any applications made outside this timeframe will be rejected.

Independent reviews can be held remotely at the request of parents.

The panel's decision can be decided by a majority vote. In the case of a tied decision, the chair has the casting vote.

Following its review, the independent panel will decide to do 1 of the following:

- Uphold the Governors' Discipline Committee decision
- Recommend that the Governors' Discipline Committee reconsiders reinstatement
- Quash the Governors' Discipline Committee decision and direct that they reconsider reinstatement (only if it judges that the decision was flawed)

8. School registers

A pupil's name will be removed from the school admission register if:

- 15 school days have passed since the parents were notified of the Governors' Discipline Committee decision to not reinstate the pupil and no application has been made for an independent review panel, or
- The parents have stated in writing that they will not be applying for an independent review panel

Where an application for an independent review has been made within 15 school days, the Governors' Discipline Committee will wait until that review has concluded before removing a pupil's name from the register.

While the pupil's name remains on the school's admission register, the pupil's attendance will still be recorded appropriately. Where alternative provision has been made for an excluded pupil and they attend it, code B (education off-site) or code D (dual registration) will be used on the attendance register.

Where excluded pupils are not attending alternative provision, code E (absent) will be used.

Making a return to the LA

Where a pupil's name is to be removed from the school admissions register because of a permanent exclusion, the school will make a return to the LA. The return will include:

- The pupil's full name
- The full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides

- At least 1 telephone number at which any parent with whom the pupil normally resides can be contacted in an emergency
- The grounds upon which their name is to be deleted from the admissions register (i.e., permanent exclusion)
- Details of the new school the pupil will attend, including the name of that school and the first date when the pupil attended or is due to attend there, if the parents have told the school the pupil is moving to another school
- Details of the pupil's new address, including the new address, the name of the parent(s) the pupil is going to live there with, and the date when the pupil is going to start living there, if the parents have informed the school that the pupil is moving house

This return must be made as soon as the grounds for removal is met and no later than the removal of the pupil's name.

9. Returning from a suspension

9.1 Reintegration strategy

Following suspension, the school will put in place a strategy to help the pupil reintegrate successfully into school life and full-time education.

Where necessary, the school will work with third-party organisations to identify whether the pupil has any unmet special educational and/or health needs.

The following measures may be implemented, as part of the strategy, to ensure a successful reintegration into school life (this list is not exhaustive):

- Maintaining contact during the suspension or off-site direction, where appropriate
- Welcoming the pupil back to school during a positive reintegration meeting
- Pastoral support in place for the pupil on return
- Regular reviews with pupil and parents to praise progress and raise any concerns at an early stage
- Informing the pupil, parents and staff of potential external support

Part-time, reintegration and flexi timetables will not normally be used as a tool to manage behaviour and, if used, will be put in place for the minimum time necessary.

The strategy will be regularly reviewed and adapted where necessary throughout the reintegration process in collaboration with the pupil, parents, and other relevant parties.

9.2 Reintegration meetings

The school will explain the reintegration strategy to the pupil in a reintegration meeting before or on the pupil's return to school. During the meeting the school will communicate to the pupil to inform them that they are getting a fresh start and that they are a valued member of the school community.

The pupil, parents, a member of senior staff, and any other relevant staff will be invited to attend the meeting.

The meeting can proceed without the parents in the event that they cannot or do not attend.

Trust schools expect all returning pupils and their parents to attend a reintegration meeting as a positive step, but pupils who do not attend will not be prevented from returning to the classroom.

10. Remote access to meetings

Parents, or pupils if they are 18 or older, can request that a governing board meeting (Governor's Discipline Committee), or independent review panel be held remotely. If the parents/pupil do not express a preference, the meeting will be held in person.

In case of extraordinary, or unforeseen circumstances, which mean it is not practicable for the meeting to be held in person, the meeting will be held remotely.

Remotely accessed meetings are subject to the same procedural requirements as in-person meetings.

The Governing Board (Governor's Discipline Committee) and Vale Academy Trust should make sure that the following conditions are met before agreeing to let a meeting proceed remotely:

- All the participants have access to the technology which will allow them to hear, speak, see and be seen
- All the participants will participate fully
- The remote meeting can be held fairly and transparently

Social workers and the VSH always have the option of joining remotely, whether the meeting is being held in person or not, as long as they can meet the conditions for remote access listed above.

The meeting will be re-arranged to an in-person meeting without delay if technical issues arise that can't be reasonably resolved and:

- Compromise the ability of participants to contribute effectively, or
- Prevent the meeting from running fairly and transparently.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The school will collect data on the following:

- Attendance, permanent exclusions and suspensions
- Use of pupil referral units, off-site directions and managed moves
- Anonymous surveys of staff, pupils and other stakeholders on their perceptions and experiences

The data will be analysed termly by school staff and in turn by the Director for Pupil Inclusion & Wellbeing. School staff will report back to the headteacher and LGB. The Director for Pupil Inclusion and Wellbeing will report to the Behaviour Working Group and Trust's Education Committee.

The data will be analysed from a variety of perspectives including:

- At school level
- By age group
- By time of day/week/term
- By protected characteristic

The school will use the results of this analysis to make sure it is meeting its duties under the Equality Act 2010. If any patterns or disparities between groups of pupils are identified by this analysis, the school will review its policies in order to tackle it.

The Vale Academy Trust Director for Pupil Inclusion & Wellbeing will work with Vale Academy Trust Schools to consider this data, and to analyse whether there are patterns across the Trust.

This policy will be reviewed by the Director for Pupil Inclusion & Wellbeing annually. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Board of Directors.

12. Links with other policies

This exclusions policy is linked to our:

- Positive Behaviour Management policy
- SEN information report
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND policy