



# **Plymouth CAST Multi Academy Trust**

## **Exclusions Policy**

**March 2025**

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### **Introduction**

Plymouth CAST schools endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected, valued, listened to, and in which their self-confidence grows, and they achieve well academically and socially. Staff are alert to the signs of pupils experiencing difficulties and take prompt action to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Trust's Behaviour and SEND policies.

Plymouth CAST's Exclusions Policy reflects the government's ambition to create high standards of behaviour in schools so that children and young people are protected from disruption and are in a calm, safe, and supportive environment that brings out the best in every pupil.

Exclusions will always be a last resort.

## **Overview**

Plymouth Trust schools must ensure that exclusion procedures conform to statutory guidance set out by the Department for Education (DfE) Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England including pupil movement. September 2022

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

From September 2024, the September 2024 version of the DfE statutory Guidance must be followed:

### [Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance](#)

This policy must be read in conjunction with the above document.

Headteachers will ensure that all parties involved in exclusions, including parents, governing bodies and Independent Review Panels, have regard to this statutory guidance.

This policy aims to outline roles, rights and responsibilities around exclusion to ensure that all exclusion proceedings at Plymouth CAST schools are conducted in a fair and just manner, with appropriate notice to all, full participation of relevant parties, and within the statutorily designated timelines.

Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions can only be applied for a breach of a school's behaviour policy, which must be widely published to all pupils and parents, and available on the school website.

Schools must ensure that academic, pastoral and specialist provision are effectively planned and focused to ensure that wherever possible pupils' individual needs are met, and exclusion is avoided.

## **Types of Exclusion**

There are two types of exclusion: suspension and permanent.

There is a limit of 45 school days of suspensions in an academic year for an individual pupil.

The law does not allow for extending a suspension or 'converting' a suspension into a permanent exclusion.

In exceptional cases, usually where further evidence has come to light the school may, issue a further suspension to **begin** immediately after the first exclusion ends; or a permanent exclusion to begin immediately after the end of the suspension.

Permanent exclusions can only be in response to persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy or for a 'one-off' serious breach of the behaviour policy, where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil and/or others at the school.

The school must take reasonable steps to ensure that following a permanent exclusion the pupil has work set and marked where they are not attending an alternative provision.

On the sixth day of a suspension, the school (or local authority, in the event of a permanent exclusion) must arrange suitable full-time education for any pupil of compulsory school age.

Where a pupil receives consecutive suspensions, these are regarded as a cumulative period of suspension for the purposes of this duty.

A panel of Governors must review permanent exclusions and any suspensions which result in the pupil being suspended for more than 15 school days (singly or cumulatively) within one term.

Schools must record all suspensions and permanent exclusions on its Management Information System (MIS) in a timely manner and keep careful track of suspensions that total more than 15 days in a term.

All suspensions and permanent exclusions must be reported to Plymouth CAST using the appropriate form. The School Improvement Officer must be informed.

Suspensions and permanent exclusions must also be reported to the local authority in line with local arrangements. Permanent exclusions must be reported to the Local Authority immediately. This will enable the local authority to fulfil its duty to provide alternative educational provision from the sixth day of the exclusion.

If an exclusion requires review (i.e. suspension totalling more than 15 days in a term or permanent exclusions), schools should notify their School Improvement Officer (SIO) immediately, and ensure that the review meeting is held as soon as possible within the statutory time scales, and that arrangements are made for it to be appropriately chaired and clerked.

Exclusions, including an analysis of trends and context, must be reported to Governors in the Headteacher's Report.

### **Cancelling an Exclusion (from September 2023)**

The Headteacher can cancel any exclusion that has already begun (or one that has not yet begun), but this can only happen when the Local CAST Board has not yet met to consider whether the pupil should be reinstated.

Where an exclusion is cancelled:

- The Headteacher must notify the parents, the Trust, the Local CAST Board, the LA and the pupil's social worker and VSH as applicable, without delay. The notification must also provide the reason for the cancellation;
- The Local CAST Board's duty to consider reinstatement ceases, and there is no requirement to hold a meeting to consider reinstatement;
- Parents (or the excluded pupil if they are 18 years or older) should be offered the opportunity to meet the Headteacher to discuss the circumstances that led to the exclusion being cancelled which should be arranged without delay;
- The pupil must be allowed back into the school from which they were excluded without delay.
- Any days spent out of school as a result of any exclusion, prior to the cancellation will count towards the maximum of 45 school days permitted in any school year

A permanent exclusion cannot be cancelled if the pupil has already been excluded for more than 45 school days in a school year or if they will have been so by the time the cancellation takes effect.

### **The Headteacher's role in Exclusions**

Only the Headteacher or acting Headteacher can exclude a pupil.

Schools must not use 'informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions (e.g. sending a child off-site for a 'cooling down' period); these are illegal.

Where a pupil's behaviour at lunchtime requires a *lunchtime suspension* this must be dealt with in the same way as any other suspension.

Where a pupil has received multiple suspensions, or is approaching the legal limit of 45 school days of suspensions in an academic year, the Headteacher must consider whether suspension is providing an effective sanction, and must discuss the matter with the school's School Improvement Officer..

The Headteacher will ensure that staff have the knowledge, skills and understanding to be aware of pupils who are becoming vulnerable to exclusion.

Suspensions and permanent exclusions are illegal if they occur for non-disciplinary reasons, such as:

- additional needs or a disability that the school feels it is unable to meet;
- lack of academic attainment/ability;
- the actions of a pupil's parent(s); or
- failure of a pupil to meet specific conditions before reinstatement.

Permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort where all alternatives have been considered and all strategies to change behaviour have failed. The school must be able to demonstrate that every effort has been made to meet the child's needs and to modify behaviour.

The school must be able to demonstrate that allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.

When Headteachers suspend or permanently exclude a pupil they must notify the LA without delay regardless of the length of a suspension.

Where an excluded pupil has Special Educational Needs (SEN) or is on the SEN register, it must be demonstrated that the academy has regard for the SEN Code of Practice and has provided extensive means of support to help meet the pupil's needs. Where a pupil with an EHC Plan is at risk of permanent exclusion or has been issued with one or more suspensions, the school should contact the Local Authority to request an interim review to assess the suitability of provision for pupil.

Early intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour should include an assessment of whether appropriate provision is in place to support any SEN or disability that a pupil may have.

Any intervention strategies should be discussed with and involve the pupil's parents.

Where a pupil is becoming vulnerable to suspension or permanent exclusion, provision must be reviewed, and where necessary revised, and parents/carers, the school's School Improvement Officer, the Trust's SEND lead officer, outside agencies and the Local Authority involved as soon as possible.

If a Looked After Child is issued with a suspension or is at risk of permanent exclusion, the pupil's social worker should be contacted as soon as possible. If the social worker is not available, then this should be escalated to the social work manager as soon as possible. The head of the Virtual School should also be notified immediately for a Looked After Child.

Headteachers should ensure that the behaviour policy of the school is reviewed on an annual basis and approved by the Local CAST Board.

### **Duty to Inform Parents**

The parent(s) must be informed immediately and in writing of the length and type of exclusion, and of their right to make representations to the Governors.

Pupils over 18 have to be informed and have the right to appeal on their own behalf.

In line with the duty of care placed on schools to ensure the welfare of pupils, parent(s) must be advised of an exclusion prior to the pupil being sent off-site.

Schools should use Plymouth CAST's standard letters for notifying parents of exclusions.

### **Review of the Decision to Exclude**

In all cases of permanent exclusion and suspensions amounting to over 15 days in a term (cumulatively or singly), the decision of the Headteacher must be reviewed by a panel of Governors.

The panel should be constituted from members of the Local CAST Board (LCB) of the school and include a member of the Trust's School Improvement Team or the SEND Lead Officer. **The school's School Improvement Officer should not be a member of the panel, as she/he will be providing support to the Headteacher.**

The panel quorum is three Governors, with a clerk appointed by the school.

The member of the School Improvement Team or the SEND Lead Officer will chair the panel. In the event of a request for external independent review by parents (see section below entitled Independent Review Panel), he/she will represent the panel at that independent review meeting. The Headteacher cannot be a member of the panel.

Subject to the availability of Governors, review meetings should be held within a period of 15 days from the date of the exclusion.

It is important that the school's School Improvement Officer is advised of the exclusion without delay, and that the Headteacher makes arrangements for paperwork to be prepared immediately.

The Headteacher should liaise with the Local Authority Exclusion/Inclusion Officer and support her/his attendance as an observer/advisor where appropriate.

- For suspensions totalling **five or fewer school days** (or 10 or fewer lunchtimes or half days) in any one term must be reported to the Governors at each meeting and recorded on the MIS. The governing body must consider any representations made by parents, but it cannot direct reinstatement and is not required to arrange a meeting with parents.
- If suspension means that a pupil will miss a **public exam**, the panel should try to meet before the date of the exam. If this is not practicable, the Chair of Governors may use the emergency powers for Chair's action to review the exclusion alone.
- For suspensions of **6 to 15 school days**, if the parents make representations, the local governing board must consider within 5 school days of receiving the notice of

exclusion whether the excluded pupil should be reinstated. In the absence of any representations from the parents, the local governing board is not required to meet and cannot direct the reinstatement of the pupil.

- For suspensions that singly or cumulatively total more than **15 days in one term**, and for **permanent exclusions**, the panel must hold a formal hearing within 15 school days, whether or not the parent(s) make representations.

The review panel may confirm the exclusion or direct reinstatement of the pupil. There is no legal option to impose a lesser sanction, i.e. to commute a permanent exclusion to a suspension

The review panel may direct reinstatement for any pupils suspended for a fixed-term period of more than five days **or** pupils who would miss a public exam, **or** pupils who have been permanently excluded.

If the pupil is to be reinstated, a reintegration programme should be planned with the school.

If reinstatement is not practicable – because the pupil is already back in school or because the parent does not want it – the review panel must consider the representations made by the school and parent(s) and decide whether or not the exclusion was justified.

The decision should then be included in the pupil's record.

After the Governor review hearing, the clerk will inform the parties in writing about the result, with reasons for the decision.

Decisions must be communicated as soon as possible, and every attempt should be made to do this within 5 working days.

### **Remote Reinstatement and IRP Meetings (from Sep 2023)**

Local CAST Board reinstatement meetings and IRPs can be held via the use of remote access (for example, live video link) for suspension and permanent exclusions if requested by the parents, provided certain criteria are satisfied.

Meetings held via the use of remote access **should not be a default option** and face to face meetings should always be encouraged. Further information is set out in Part Eleven of the DfE Statutory Guidance document.

### **Principles of Natural Justice**

- All factual determinations are based on a balance of probabilities, both by Headteachers and at any subsequent review. This means that the Headteacher/reviewing panel should accept that something happened if it is more likely that it happened than that it did not happen.

In making their decisions to exclude, Headteachers must ensure that their decisions are fair, based on the facts of the incident and do not include any elements of discrimination.

- Members of the panel should be impartial, unprejudiced, have taken no previous part in the specific case, and have no personal or school interest in its result. Headteachers must not discuss individual exclusions with members of their local governing board as cases may be referred to the local governing board for review.
- Parent(s) should be informed of the case put forward by the school and have an opportunity to challenge it.
- Both parties should be allowed to present their case without unreasonable interruption. Aggressive, repetitive or unnecessarily over-long presentations hinder

the effectiveness of the review process, and the Chair will retain discretion to curtail any such presentation.

- Parent(s) should be able to bring a friend or adviser with them. An effective meeting, however, will not be able to accommodate large groups of people and the Chair retains ultimate discretion as to the attendance of invited parties beyond a reasonable number.
- All documents to be used in evidence should be distributed to all parties at least five working days before the hearing. If new material is introduced at the hearing, all parties must have time to consider it. Should such material be extensive, the Chair has the discretion to adjourn the meeting to allow proper review.
- No party to the hearing should be in the presence of the panel unless the other party is also present. Every party should feel that they have had a full opportunity to present their case and have it duly considered.
- Panel members should be effectively trained/briefed to ensure that they are aware of their legal and procedural roles and responsibilities.

### **Independent Review Panel**

If a permanent exclusion is upheld, parent(s) must be told of their right to seek an independent review of the decision reached by Governors and the deadline for seeking such a review.

Parents also have the right to request the attendance of a SEN expert at the Independent Review Panel meeting.

Decision letters sent by schools to the parent(s) must include these details of the right of independent review.

The parent(s) have 15 school days (from the date of receipt of the review panel's decision) to seek an independent review.

Within 15 school days of such a request, the school will engage the services of an external clerking agency to arrange and clerk the Independent Review Panel.

The independent review is normally attended by the Headteacher, lead school staff member on the case, and Chair of the original review panel.

The clerk of the original panel may attend but plays no formal part in proceedings.

Where the parent(s) has legal representation or it is considered appropriate on behalf of the school, it may be agreed that the school should also have legal representation. This will be arranged by Plymouth CAST.

The Independent Review Panel cannot direct a governing body to re-instate a pupil. It may:

- a) uphold the exclusion;
- b) recommend that the original panel reconsider its decision; or
- c) quash the original panel's decision and direct the panel to reconsider its decision. In such a case, the Independent Review Panel will then be expected to order that the school must make an additional payment of £4,000 if it does not offer to reinstate the pupil.

### **Parallel police proceedings**

The governing body has no power to delay a hearing beyond the statutory time limit because of police proceedings.

If a permanent exclusion is upheld in these circumstances, the parent has 15 days to request independent review in the normal way.

### **Guidance for Local CAST Boards and the Trust Board (governing boards) on using data on suspensions and permanent exclusions.**

Governing boards should already be challenging and evaluating what their school's data is telling them about their school or academy trust.

Boards should carefully consider the level of pupil moves and the characteristics of pupils who are moving on any permanent exclusions to ensure the sanction is only used when necessary, as a last resort.

Governing boards should review suspensions and permanent exclusions, those taken off roll and those on roll but attending education off-site. It is important to consider both the cost implications of directing children to be educated off-site in AP and whether there are any patterns to the reasons or timing of moves. For example, if high numbers of children with SEND are moving, the school, academy or trust may wish to consider reviewing its SEN support.

Plymouth CAST officers will work with schools to consider this information, and whether there are patterns across academies within a MAT, recognising that numbers in any one academy are often too low to allow for meaningful statistical analysis.

#### **Governing boards should consider:**

- effectiveness and consistency in implementing the school's behaviour policy
- 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 ensure 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
- understanding the characteristics of excluded pupils, and why this is taking place
- whether the placements of pupils directed off-site into AP are reviewed at sufficient intervals to assure that the education is achieving its objectives and that pupils are benefiting from it
- Further information can be found here:

[Understanding your data: a guide for school Governors and academy trustees - GOV.UK](#)

#### **Principle Documentation**

From 01/09/2024:

[Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance](#)

[A guide for parents on school behaviour and exclusion - GOV.UK](#)

[School Discipline \(Pupil Exclusions and Reviews\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

[The Education \(Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2014](#)