



AVANTI SCHOOLS TRUST

School Suspensions & Permanent Exclusions Policy



Spring 2024

Review date: Summer 2025

SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS POLICY

This Policy is a Category 1 Policy (Full Delegation)

This policy is in force until further notice from:	Spring 2024
This policy must be reviewed by no later than*: <i>*this refers to the term in which the Policy must be reviewed by the appropriate Committee for recommendation to the Board.</i>	Summer 2025
Policy Author(s):	Education Director
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There are three types of suspension and exclusion:

- Permanent Exclusion:
 - This means that the child is excluded permanently and is taken off the school roll.
- Suspension:
 - A suspension is for a set number of school days, between one and 45 days in an academic year.
- Lunchtime suspension:

This type of suspension is used to exclude a pupil for the lunchtime period only. A lunchtime suspension is treated as equivalent to half a school day.

Statement of Intent

At **Avanti Schools Trust**, we understand that good behaviour and discipline is essential for promoting a high-quality education.

Amongst other disciplinary sanctions, our schools recognise that the suspension or exclusion of pupils may be necessary where there has been a serious breach, or consistent breaches, of the school's Behavioural Policy. Excluding a pupil may also be required, in instances where allowing the pupil to remain in school would be damaging to the education and welfare of themselves or others; in all cases, excluding pupils should only be used as a means of last resort.

This policy defines the legal responsibilities of the Principal, SSC and LA when responding to pupil suspensions and suspensions or exclusions, to ensure that they are dealt with both fairly and lawfully, and in line with DfE statutory guidance.

This policy also aims to secure a pupil's right to an education despite having been suspended or suspended or excluded, by ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place.

1. Legal Framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to the related statutory legislation including, but not limited to the following:

- Education Act 2002.

- The School Discipline (Pupil suspension or exclusion and reviews) (England) Regulations 2012.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Education Act 1996.
- The Education (Provision of full-time education for suspended or excluded pupils Regulations 2007.
- The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- Equality Act 2010.

1.2. This policy also has due regard to statutory and non-statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2002) "School suspensions and permanent suspensions or exclusions."
- DfE (2016) "Behaviour and discipline in schools."
- DfE (2015) "Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years."
- DfE (2018) "Mental health and behaviour in schools."

1.3. This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. The MAT Board is responsible for:

- Arranging a suitable full-time education for any pupil or compulsory school age suspend or excluded permanently, in coordination with the school.
- Reviewing and reassessing pupils' needs in consultation with their parents, where they have an EHC plan and are suspend or excluded permanently, with a view to identifying a new placement.
- Arranging for an independent review panel hearing to review the decision of the SSC not to reinstate a permanently suspend or excluded pupil, where required.
- Arranging the hearing without delay at a time, date, and venue convenient for all parties.
- Ensuring the independent review panel consists of three or five members as appropriate, which represent the required categories.
- Appointing a clerk to provide advice to the panel and parties to the review on procedure, law, and statutory guidance on suspension or exclusions.

- Ensuring all panel members and the clerk have received training within the two years prior to the date of the review.
- If requested by parents, appointing a SEND expert to attend the panel, and covering the associated costs of this appointment.

2.2. The SSC is responsible for:

- Providing information to the Secretary of State and the MAT Board about any suspensions or exclusions within the last 12 months.
- Arranging suitable full-time education for any pupil of compulsory school age suspended on a fixed-term basis.
- Considering parents' representations about suspensions or suspensions or exclusions within 15 school days of receiving notice, if the appropriate requirements are met.
- Where a suspension or suspension or exclusion would result in a pupil missing a public examination or test, considering the suspension or suspension or exclusion before this date.
- Considering whether it would be appropriate for a pupil to be permitted onto the school premises to sit the public examination or test.
- Arranging the representation meeting at a time and date convenient to all parties, but in compliance with the statutory time limits.
- Adhering to its responsibilities to consider the reinstatement of pupils.
- Considering the interests and circumstances of the suspended or suspend pupils or excluded pupil, including the circumstances in which they were suspended or suspend or excluded, and have due regard to the interests of others at the school.
- Using the civil standard of proof (based on the "balance of probabilities", it is more than likely that the fact is true), when establishing the facts relating to a suspension or exclusion.
- Ensuring clear minutes are taken of the representation meeting.
- Noting the outcome of the representation meeting on the pupil's education record, along with copies of relevant papers for future reference.
- Notifying the pupil's parents, the Principal and LA of its decision and the reasons for it, without delay.
- Where appropriate, informing parents of where to apply for an independent review panel.
- Informing parents of relevant sources of information.
- Ensuring a pupil's name is removed from the schools' admissions register, where appropriate.
- Reconvening within 10 school days to reconsider reinstatement of a pupil, where directed to do so by the suspension or exclusion review panel.

2.3. The clerk to the suspension or exclusions review panel is responsible for:

- Making reasonable efforts to inform the appropriate individuals that they are entitled to:
 - Make written representations to the panel.
 - Attend the hearing and make oral representations to the panel.
 - Be represented.
- Making reasonable efforts to circulate copies of relevant papers at least five school days before the review to all parties.
- Giving all parties details of those attending and their role, once the position is clear.
- Attending the review and ensuring that minutes are produced in accordance with instructions from the panel.

2.4. The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementing good levels of discipline to ensure all pupils can benefit from the opportunities provided by education and to minimise potential suspension or exclusions.
- Applying the civil standard of proof, when establishing the facts in relation to a suspension or an exclusion.
- Complying with their statutory duties in relation to pupils with SEND, when administering the suspension or exclusion process, as outlined in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy.
- Considering any contributing factors that are identified after an incident of poor behaviour has occurred, e.g., if a pupil has suffered bereavement, bullying or has a mental health issue.
- Considering the use of multi-agency assessment for a pupil who demonstrates persistent disruptive behaviour.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of suspension or exclusions as a sanction, e.g. if a pupil has received multiple suspension or exclusions or is approaching the legal limit for suspension or exclusions in an academic year.
- Considering what extra support may be needed to identify and address the needs of individual pupils, particularly those with SEND, eligible for FSM, LAC, and those from certain ethnic groups.
- Engaging effectively with parents in supporting the behaviour of pupils with additional needs.
- Determining whether a pupil will be suspended or suspend or excluded on disciplinary grounds.
- Withdrawing any suspensions or suspension or exclusions that have not been reviewed by the SSC, where appropriate.

- Ensuring any decision to suspend or suspend or exclude is lawful, rational, reasonable, fair, and proportionate.
- Complying with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, when decided whether to suspend or exclude a pupil.
- Ensuring they have considered their legal duty of care, when sending a pupil home following a suspension or suspension or exclusion.
- Making the decision to suspend or exclude, based on the evidence available at the time, regardless of any police investigation and/or criminal proceedings.
- Notifying a pupil's parents without delay, where the decision is taken to suspend or suspend or exclude the pupil, including the days on which the parents must ensure the pupil is not present in a public place at any time during school hours, as well as any other necessary information statutorily required.
- Ensuring that all information provided to parents is clear and easily understood.
- Notifying the SSC and LA of their decision to suspend or exclude a pupil where appropriate, as well as the pupil's home authority, if required.
- Notifying the SSC once per term of any suspensions or suspension or exclusions not already notified.
- Organising suitable work for suspended or suspend or excluded pupils, where alternative provision cannot be arranged.

3. Grounds for suspension or permanent suspension or exclusion

- 3.1. The school will only suspend or suspend or exclude a pupil, where it is necessary, and where all other possible disciplinary sanctions, as detailed in the school's Behavioural Policy, have failed to be successful.
- 3.2. The following examples of behaviour may underline the school's decision to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil:
 - Any incident which poses a risk to other pupils or members of staff, e.g. bringing a weapon onto the premises.
 - Any incident which breaches the law.
 - Persistent and severe bullying.
 - Verbal and physical abuse.
 - Constant disruption.
 - A single, serious and major incident, e.g. serious assault on another individual leading to injury.

- 3.3. Pupils can be suspended on a fixed-period basis, i.e. up to 45 school days within a year, or permanently. Similarly, pupils can be permanently suspended or excluded following a suspension, where further evidence is presented.
- 3.4. In all cases, the Principal will decide which suspension or suspension or exclusion period a pupil will be subject to, depending on what the circumstances warrant.
- 3.5. The school has the power to direct a pupil off-site to improve their behaviour.

4. The Principal's power to suspend or suspend or exclude

- 4.1. Only the Principal has the power to suspend or suspend or exclude a pupil from the school and is able to decide whether this is a suspension or a permanent suspension or exclusion. All suspension or exclusions will only be issued on disciplinary grounds.
- 4.2. The Principal is able to suspend or exclude pupils from the premises where their behaviour is disruptive during lunchtime. All lunchtime suspension or exclusions will be counted as half of a school day.
- 4.3. The Principal is able to consider a pupil's disruptive behaviour outside of the school premises as grounds for suspension or exclusion, in accordance with the school's Behavioural Policy.
- 4.4. Any decision made to suspend or exclude a pupil will be lawful, proportionate, and fair, with respect to legislation relating directly to suspension or exclusions and the school's wider legal duties, including the ECHR.
- 4.5. All suspensions and exclusions will be formally recorded on the pupil information system.
- 4.6. When sending a pupil home following any suspension or suspension or exclusion, the Principal will ensure that they exercise their duty of care at all times and will always inform the parents.
- 4.7. The Principal will apply the civil standard of proof when responding to the facts relating to a suspension or suspension or exclusion, i.e. that "on the balance of probabilities" it is more likely than not that the facts are true.
- 4.8. The Principal may withdraw any suspension or suspension or exclusion that has not already been reviewed by the SSC.
- 4.9. At all times, the Principal will take into account their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the "Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years", ensuring that they do not discriminate on any grounds, e.g. race, sex,

disability, and will not increase the severity of a pupil's suspension or exclusion on these grounds.

- 4.10. The Principal will not issue any "informal" or "unofficial" suspensions or suspension or exclusions, e.g. sending a pupil home to "cool-off", regardless of whether or not the parents have agreed to this.
- 4.11. The Principal will not use the threat of suspension or exclusion as a means of instructing the parent to remove their child from the premises.

5. Factors to consider when suspending or excluding a pupil

- 5.1. When considering the suspension or suspension or exclusion of a pupil, the Principal will:
 - Allow the pupil the opportunity to present their case.
 - Take into account any contributing factors that are identified after a case of poor behaviour has occurred, e.g. if the pupil's wellbeing has been compromised, or they have been subjected to bullying.
 - Take into consideration whether a pupil has received multiple suspension or is approaching the legal limit of 45 suspension days per school year, and whether suspensions are serving as an effective solution.
 - Consider early intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour, including liaising with external agencies, to assess pupils who demonstrate consistently poor behaviour.
- 5.2. The Principal will consider what extra support may be available for vulnerable pupil groups, whose suspension or exclusion rates are higher, to reduce their risk of suspension or exclusion, including the following:
 - LAC.
 - Pupils eligible for FSM.
 - Pupils with SEND.
 - Certain ethnic groups.
- 5.3. The Principal will consider avoiding permanently excluding LAC pupils, those with SEMH issues or pupils with an EHC plan.
- 5.4. Where any member of staff has concerns about vulnerable pupil groups and their behaviour, they will report this to the Principal, who will instigate a multi-agency assessment to determine whether the behavioural issues might be a result of educational, mental health or other needs and vulnerabilities. The full assessment

procedures are outlined in the school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy.

- 5.5. Where SEND or SEMH issues are identified, an individual behaviour plan will be created using the graduated response outlined in the school's Behavioural Policy. If the pupil continues to endanger the physical or emotional wellbeing of other pupils or staff, despite exhausting the graduated response process, then suspension or exclusion may be considered.
- 5.6. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, under no circumstances will a pupil with identified SEND or SEMH issues be suspended or excluded before the graduated response process has been completed.
- 5.7. Where a pupil with SEND or SEMH issues is permanently suspended or excluded because of a SEND or SEMH related need that could not be met at the school, detailed records will be kept, highlighting that these pupils are closely tracked and showing that the school has a close relationship with the pupil's next destination.
- 5.8. The Principal will work in conjunction with the parents of any pupil with additional needs to establish the most effective support mechanisms.

6. Duty to inform parents

- 6.1. Following the Principal's decision to suspend or exclude a pupil, they will immediately inform the parents, in person or by telephone, of the period of suspension or exclusion and the reasons behind this.
- 6.2. The Principal will inform the parents in writing (electronically if written permission has been received from the parents for notices to be sent this way) of the following:
 - The reason(s) for the suspension or exclusion.
 - The length of the fixed-period suspension or exclusion or, for a permanent suspension or exclusion, the fact that it is permanent.
 - Their right to raise any representations about the suspension or exclusion to the SSC, including how the pupil will be involved in this and how the representations will be made.
 - Their right to attend a meeting where there is a legal requirement for the SSC to consider the suspension or exclusion, and the fact that they are able to bring an accompanying individual.
 - The arrangements that have been made for the pupil to continue their education prior to the organisation of any alternative provision, or the pupil's return to school.
 - Relevant sources of free, impartial information.

- 6.3. Where the pupil is of compulsory school age, the Principal will inform the parents by the end of the afternoon session that:
- For the first five days of the suspension or exclusion (or until the start date of any alternative provision or the end of the suspension or exclusion where this is earlier), parents are legally required to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without legal justification, and that parents may receive a penalty fine if they fail to do so.
- 6.4. Where the Principal has arranged alternative provision, they will also inform the parents of the following:
- The start and end date for any provision of full-time education.
 - The address at which the provision will take place.
 - Any information necessary for the pupil to identify the person they should report to on the starting date.
- 6.5. Where the Principal is unable to provide information on alternative provision by the end of the afternoon session, they will provide the information in a subsequent written notice without further delay, and within 48 hours of the pupil beginning the provision.
- 6.6. If the alternative provision is due to begin before the sixth day of the suspension or exclusion, the Principal is able to give less than 48 hours of notice, with parental consent.
- 6.7. If the Principal has decided to suspend or exclude the pupil for a further fixed period following their original suspension or exclusion, or to permanently suspend or exclude them, they will notify the parents without delay and issue a new suspension or exclusion notice to parents.

7. Duty to inform the SSC and LA

- 7.1. The Principal will inform the SSC and LA, without delay, of the following:
- Any permanent exclusion.
 - Any suspension or exclusions, which would result in the pupil being suspended or excluded for more than five school days in a term (or more than 10 lunchtimes).
 - Any suspension or exclusions, which would result in the pupil being absent from an examination or national curriculum test.

- 7.2. For any suspensions or exclusions, other than those above, the Principal will notify the SSC and LA once per term.
- 7.3. All notifications to the SSC and LA will include the reasons for suspension or exclusion and the duration of any fixed-period or exclusion.
- 7.4. If the pupil who is suspended or excluded lives outside the LA in which the school is located, the Principal will notify the pupil's "home authority."

8. Arranging education for suspended or suspend or excluded pupils

- 8.1. For any fixed-period suspension or exclusions of more than five school days, the SSC will arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil, which will begin no later than the sixth day of suspension or exclusion.
- 8.2. Where a pupil receives consecutive fixed-period suspension or exclusions, these will be regarded as cumulative, and full-time education will still have to be provided from the sixth day of suspension or exclusion.
- 8.3. For permanent suspension or exclusions, full-time education will also be provided for the pupil from the sixth day of suspension or exclusion.
- 8.4. The SSC will not arrange full-time education for any pupil who is currently in their final year of compulsory education, and who does not have any further public examinations to sit.
- 8.5. The SSC is aware that it is beneficial to suspend or excluded pupils to begin their alternative education arrangements before the sixth day of suspension or exclusion. The SSC will always attempt to arrange alternative provision before the sixth day of suspension or exclusion.
- 8.6. Where it is not possible to arrange alternative provision during the first five days of suspension or exclusion, the school will ensure that they take reasonable steps to set and mark work for the suspend or excluded pupil.
- 8.7. If a pupil with SEND has been suspend or excluded, the SSC will ensure that:
 - Any alternative provision is arranged in consultation with the pupil's parents, who are able to request preferences.
 - When identifying alternative provision, any EHC plan is reviewed or the pupil's needs are reassessed, in consultation with the pupil's parents.

9. Considering suspension or exclusions

- 9.1. The SSC will consider any representations made by parents in regard to suspension or exclusions (see detailed advice note in annex 1).
- 9.2. Parents and, where requested, a friend or representative, the Principal, and a member of the LA will be invited to attend any consideration of suspension or exclusions and will be able to make representations.
- 9.3. Any meeting to consider reinstatement of a pupil will be arranged at a date and time convenient for all parties, and in compliance with any statutory time limits.
- 9.4. The SSC will consider the reinstatement of a suspend or excluded pupil, where:
 - The suspension or exclusion is permanent.
 - The suspension or exclusion is fixed period and would bring the pupil's total number of suspend or excluded school days to more than 15 in any given term.
 - The suspension or exclusion would result in the pupil missing a public examination.
- 9.5. In the case of a fixed-period suspension or exclusion where the pupil's total number of suspend or excluded days is more than 5 but less than 15 school days within a term, if requested by the parents, the SSC will consider suspension or exclusions within 50 school days of receiving notification.
- 9.6. In the case of a fixed period suspension or exclusion, where the pupil's total number of suspend or excluded school days does not amount to more than five, in the absence of any such representations, the SSC is not required to meet and cannot direct the reinstatement of the pupil.
- 9.7. Where suspension or exclusion would result in a pupil missing a public examination, the SSC will consider the suspension or exclusion before the test to decide whether the pupil should be reinstated in time to take the examination.
- 9.8. If it is not practicable for a sufficient number of SSC to consider the decision before the examination, the chair of SSC will consider the suspension or exclusion alone and decide whether or not to reinstate the pupil.
- 9.9. In light of the above, the SSC will also consider whether it would be appropriate to allow the suspend or excluded pupil to enter the premises to take the examination.

9.10. When considering the reinstatement of a suspend or excluded pupil, the SSC will:

- Only discuss the suspension or exclusion with the parties present at the meeting.
- Ask for any written evidence prior to the meeting.
- Circulate any written evidence and information to all parties, at least five school days in advance on the meeting.
- Allow pupils and parents to be accompanied by a person of their choice to the meeting.
- Consider what reasonable adjustments need to be made to support the attendance and contribution of parties at the meeting.
- Identify the steps needed to enable and encourage the suspend or excluded pupil to attend the meeting and speak on their behalf, or how they may contribute personal views by other means, if attendance is not possible.
- Consider the interests and circumstances of the suspend or excluded pupil, including the grounds for suspension or exclusion.

10. Reaching a decision

10.1. After considering suspension or exclusions, the SSC will either:

- Decline to reinstate the pupil.
- Direct the reinstatement of the pupil immediately, or on a specified date.

10.2. If reinstatement would make no practical difference, e.g. if the pupil has already returned to school following a fixed-period suspension or exclusion or the parents make clear they do not want their child reinstate, the SSC will still consider whether the pupil should be officially reinstated and whether the Principal's decision to suspend or exclude the pupil was fair, lawful and proportionate, based on the evidence presented.

10.3. The SSC will apply the civil standard of proof when responding to the facts relating to a suspension or exclusion, i.e. that on the "balance of probabilities," it is more likely than not that the facts are true.

10.4. To reach a decision, the SSC will:

- Identify the steps they intend to take to ensure that all parties involved will have the opportunity to participate and present their views.
- Ensure that minutes are taken of the meeting as a record of the evidence that was considered.
- Ask all parties to withdraw from the meeting before concluding their decision.

- Consider whether the suspension or exclusion of the pupil was lawful, proportionate and fair, taking into account the Principal's legal duties and any evidence that was presented to the SSC in relation to the decision to suspend or exclude.
- Record the outcome of the decision on the pupil's educational records, along with copies, which will be kept for at least six months.
- Make a note of their findings, where they have considered a suspension or exclusion but cannot reinstate the pupil.

11. Notification of considered suspension or exclusions

- 11.1. The SSC will notify the parents of the suspend or excluded pupil, the Principal and the LA of their decision following the consideration of a suspension or exclusion, in writing and without delay.
- 11.2. In the case of a permanent suspension or exclusion, where the SSC decides not to reinstate the pupil, they will notify the parents:
 - That it is permanent, and their right for it to be reviewed by an independent review panel.
 - Of the date by which an application for review must be made.
 - Of the name and address of whom the review application should be submitted to.
 - That any application should set out the grounds on which it is being made and that, where appropriate, this should include reference to how a pupil's SEND is considered relevant to the suspension or exclusion.
 - That, regardless of whether a pupil has been identified as having SEND, the parents have a right to require the SSC to ensure a SEND expert attends the review.
 - Of the role of the SEND expert that will attend the review, and that the parents will not be charged for this.
 - That they are required to make it clear if they wish for a SEND expert to attend the review.
 - That they may appoint someone at their own expense to make representations to the panel.
- 11.3. The SSC will also notify parents that, if they believe a suspension or exclusion has been issued as a result of discrimination, then they are required to make a claim under the Equality Act 2010 to the First-tier Tribunal (SEND), and that this should be within six months of when the discrimination allegedly took place.
- 11.4. After any conclusion, the SSC will notify the parents, and all other parties involved, of the decision that was made and the reasoning for this, in sufficient detail.

12. Removing permanently suspend or excluded pupils from the school register

12.1. The Principal will remove pupils from the school register if:

- 15 school days have passed since the parents were notified of the SSC's decision not to reinstate the pupil and no application for an independent panel review has been received.
- The parents have stated in writing that they will not be applying for an independent panel review following a permanent suspension or exclusion.

12.2. If an application for an independent panel review has been made within 15 school days, the Principal will wait until the review has been determined, or abandoned, and until the SSC has completed any reconsideration that the panel recommended or directed it to carry out, before removing the pupil from the school register.

12.3. If a pupil's name is to be removed from the register, the Principal will make a return to the LA, which will include:

- All the particulars which were entered in the register.
- The address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides.
- The grounds upon which the pupil's name is to be removed from the register.

12.4. Any return to the LA will be made as soon as the grounds for removal are met and no later than the date in which the pupil's name was removed.

12.5. If a pupil's name has been removed from the register and a discrimination claim is made, the pupil may be reinstated following a decision made by the First-Tier Tribunal (SEND) or County Court.

12.6. Whilst a pupil's name remains on the admissions register, the appropriate code will be used to mark the pupil's attendance:

- Code B: Education off-site.
- Code D: Dual registration.
- Code E: Absent and not attending alternative provision.

13. Independent review panel (IRP) (see detailed guidance note in annex 1)

13.1. An IRP will review the SSC's decision not to reinstate a permanently suspend or excluded pupil if the parents submit their application for this within the required time frame.

- 13.2. Parents are required to submit their applications within:
- 15 school days of the SSC's notification of their decision.
 - 15 school days of the final determination of a discriminatory claim made under the Equality Act 2010.
- 13.3. Any application made outside of this time frame will not be reviewed.
- 13.4. Parents are able to request an independent panel review even if they did not make a case to, or attend, the SSC's initial consideration of the suspension or exclusion.

14. Appointing a SEND expert

- 14.1. If requested by parents in their application for an independent review panel, the MAT will appoint a SEND expert to attend the panel and covers the associated costs of this appointment.
- 14.2. The MAT will make arrangements to indemnify the SEND expert against any legal costs and expenses reasonably incurred as a result of any decisions or actions connected to the review and which are taken in good faith.
- 14.3. Parents have a right to request the attendance of a SEND expert at a review, regardless of whether the school recognises that their child has SEND.
- 14.4. The SEND expert's role is set out in section 15 of this policy.
- 14.5. An individual will not serve as a SEND expert if they have, or at any time had, any connection with the MAT, school, parents or pupil, or the incident leading to the suspension or exclusion, which might reasonably be taken to raise doubts about their ability to act impartially.
- 14.6. The SEND expert will be a professional with first-hand experience of the assessment and support of SEND, as well as an understanding of the legal requirements on schools in relation to SEND. Examples of suitable individuals might include educational psychologists, specialist SEND teachers, SENDCOs and behaviour support teachers.
- 14.7. Whilst individuals are not automatically taken to be partial simply because they are an employee of, or contracted by the MAT, they will not have had any previous involvement in the assessment or support of SEND for the suspend or excluded pupil, or siblings of the suspend or excluded pupil. The MAT will request that prospective SEND experts declare any conflicts of interest at the earliest opportunity.

- 14.8. The final decision on the appointment of a SEND expert is for the MAT to make, but it will take reasonable steps to ensure that parents have confidence in the impartiality and capability of the SEND expert. Where possible, this will include offering parents a choice of SEND expert. In order to meet its duties within the statutory time frame, the MAT will consider maintaining a list of individuals capable of performing the role of SEND expert in advance of a request.
- 14.9. The MAT will determine the amount of any payment in relation to the appointment of the SEND expert, such as financial loss, travel and subsistence allowances.

15. The role of the SEND expert

- 15.1. The SEND expert's role is analogous to an expert witness, providing (orally and/or written) impartial advice to the panel on how SEND might be relevant to the suspension or exclusion. The SEND expert will base their advice on the evidence provided to the panel. The SEND expert's role does not include making an assessment of the pupil's SEND.
- 15.2. The focus of the SEND expert's advice will be on whether the school's policies, which relate to SEND, or the application of these policies in relation to the suspend or excluded pupil, were legal, reasonable, and procedurally fair. If the SEND expert believes that this was not the case, they will, where possible, advise the panel on the possible contribution this could have made to the circumstances of the pupil's suspension or exclusion.
- 15.3. Where the school does not recognise that a pupil has SEND, the SEND expert will advise the panel on whether they believe the school acted in a legal, reasonable, and procedurally fair way with respect to the identification of any SEND that the pupil may potentially have, and any contribution that this could have made to the circumstances of the pupil's suspension or exclusion.
- 15.4. The SEND expert will not criticise a school's policies or actions simply because they believe a different approach should have been followed or because another school might have taken a different approach.

16. The duties of independent review panel members in the conduct of a review panel

- 16.1. The role of the panel is to review the SSC's decision not to reinstate a permanently suspend or excluded pupil. In reviewing the decision, the panel will consider the interests and circumstances of the suspend or excluded pupil, including the circumstances in which the pupil was suspended or excluded, and have regard to the interests of other pupils and people working at the school.

- 16.2. The panel will apply the civil standard of proof, rather than the criminal standard of “beyond reasonable doubt.”
- 16.3. Following the review, the panel will do one of the following:
- Uphold the decision.
 - Recommend that the SSC reconsiders reinstatement.
 - Quash the decision and direct that the SSC reconsiders reinstatement.
- 16.4. The panel’s decision does not have to be unanimous and can be decided by a majority vote. It is binding on the pupil, parents, the SSC, Principal, and the LA.

17. Reconsidering reinstatement following a review

- 17.1. Where the independent review panel instructs the SSC to reconsider their decision not to reinstate a pupil, they will do so within 10 school days of being given notice of the review panel’s decision. The school is aware that if, following an instruction to reconsider, the SSC does not offer to reinstate the pupil, then the school will be required to make a payment of £4,000 directly to the LA area in which the school is located.
- 17.2. Where the independent review panel recommends that the SSC should reconsider their decision not to reinstate a pupil, they will do so within 10 school days of being given notice of the review panel’s decision.
- 17.3. The school is aware that if, following a recommendation to reconsider, the SSC does not offer to reinstate the pupil, it will not be subject to a financial adjustment.
- 17.4. If, following reconsideration, the SSC offers to reinstate the pupil, but the parents decline, no adjustment will be made to the school’s budget.
- 17.5. Following reconsideration, the SSC will notify the parents, the Principal and the LA of their reconsidered decision and the reasons for this.

18. Criminal Investigations

- 18.1. The Principal will not postpone taking a decision to suspend or exclude a pupil due to a police investigation being underway, or any criminal proceedings that are in place.
- 18.2. The Principal will give particular consideration when deciding to suspend or exclude a pupil where evidence is limited by a police investigation, to ensure that any decision made is fair and reasonable.

- 18.3. If the SSC is required to consider the Principal's decision in these circumstances, they will not postpone the meeting and will make a decision based on the evidence available.

19. Monitoring and Review

- 19.1. The next scheduled review date for this policy is June 2025.
- 19.2. All members of staff will be required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.

Annex 1:

Extended School Stakeholder Committees delegations and Clerking Support Arrangements

Before taking a decision to suspend or exclude, Principals will wish to review the current regulations on these matters and in particular, the role of the SSC, in summary, the SSC is involved as follows:

- a) In relation to a suspension – the SSC **must** review the decision if –
- The suspension may mean the pupil will miss an examination or test; or
 - The suspension results in a total suspension for the academic year of more than 15 days.

The decision for the SSC Member Panel is to:

- Uphold the decision to suspend; OR
- Not to uphold (overturn) the decision to suspend.

- b) In relation to an exclusion –

The SSC **MUST** review the decision to exclude, the options being to uphold or not uphold (i.e. overturn).

In considering the exclusion the Panel has a **duty** to consider:

- The lawfulness of the exclusion
- The fairness of the decision
- The wider interests of the pupil, parent/carers, the school, the school staff, other pupils and the wider community.

The Role of the SSC – extended delegations

Consequent to the above and following a review of SSC delegations, the Board has extended SSC delegations to authorise SSCs to establish a Suspensions and Exclusions Panel.

The Chair of the SSC is authorised to appoint the three (non-staff) member panel provided no member appointed has any prior knowledge of the case or personal knowledge of the pupil or their family.

Exclusions – Independent Review Panels (IRP)

If the SSC agree to uphold an exclusion, the parent/carer has a right to require that the decision be reviewed by an independent review panel (IRP). Regulations require that the members of the IRP are wholly independent of the Trust and have received suspension and exclusion training within the previous two years; and the Governance Professional (Clerk) to the IRP is similarly trained.

Clerking Arrangements: the SSC Suspension and Exclusion Panel

The appointed Governance Professional (SSC Clerk) will support, attend and minute the meeting of the SSC Suspensions and Exclusion Panel. This includes, provided sufficient notice is given to the Clerk, administrative support to the Principal/Clerk in arranging the Panel meeting, distributing papers etc.

The meeting may be in person or remote.

Governor Hub should be used for distribution of Papers. (The Trust Governance Officer will arrange this in liaison with the Clerk). Where for whatever reason the SSC Clerk is unable to support the process/Panel meeting, early contact must be made with the Trust Governance Officer who, *provided sufficient notice is given*, will secure an alternative Clerk.

Experienced Clerking

Legal advice is clear: the minutes of the meeting and the Panel decision letter must evidence in a professional manner the proceedings of the Panel meeting, the issues considered and the rationale for the decision. (Hence the need for a Governance Professional). Should an IRP be called, Principals should immediately contact Clerks Associated direct and notify the Trust Governance Officer simultaneously. Charges for this service arise only where a request for an IRP is made. The charges would be met by the school.