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Suspensions and Exclusions Policy

2026-2029

Mission Statement

To inspire our family of schools to provide opportunities for our pupils, staff and leaders to be the best they can be; to create a passion for lifelong learning; to enable our pupils to become kind, confident and impactful world citizens.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Empower Learning Academy Trust's (ELAT) exclusion policy aims to set out the process that will be followed and the additional considerations around suspensions and exclusions that the Trust will apply. Good behaviour and self-discipline lead to effective learning and help prepare children and young people for life beyond the school gate.

1.2 Where the Trust's approaches towards behaviour management have been exhausted, then suspensions and permanent exclusions will sometimes be necessary as a last resort. This is to ensure that other pupils and teaching staff are protected from disruption and can learn in safe, calm and supportive environments.

1.3 The Trust will always have regard to the statutory guidance on suspensions and exclusions (Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement, July 2026) when making decisions on suspensions and exclusions and will follow the law as set out in the relevant School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the behaviour policy and the SEND policy for the Trust along with the local variations for the relevant academy.

2 Application of policy

This policy applies to all members of the Trust community. Each academy within the Trust will apply suspensions and exclusions in accordance with this policy and ensure that its contents are relayed to all staff, parents and pupils.

3 Types of exclusion

Suspensions and permanent exclusions are different:

3.1 Suspensions (previously called fixed-term exclusions) are where a pupil is prevented from attending the school for a fixed period. At the end of the period, they are expected to return to school following a reintegration meeting. A pupil may receive a maximum of 45 days of suspension in an academic year before being permanently excluded.

3.2 Permanent exclusions are where, subject to a decision of the governing board to reinstate the pupil to the school, the pupil is prevented from attending the school again. A decision to permanently exclude will only be taken in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the Trust's and/or the Academy's behaviour policy, and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others, such as staff or pupils, in the school.

4 Roles and responsibilities

All members of the Trust community are expected to follow this policy. Roles, responsibilities and expectations of each section of the Trust community are set out in detail below.

4.1 **The Headteacher/Principal**

All decisions to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil will be taken by the headteacher/principal of the relevant school after considering all the circumstances. Every decision made will be proportionate to the seriousness of the behaviour with reference to the Trust's and/or the Academy's behaviour policy.

4.2 **The Local Governance Committee (LGC)**

The individual academy's LGC is responsible for forming committees to review exclusions and suspensions when it is required to do so, it is requested by parents or it is, in its view, prudent to review an individual decision (an LGC Review Panel). In each case, the purpose of the LGC Review Panel will be to decide whether to uphold the exclusion or suspension or, instead, to reinstate the pupil to the school.

Specific arrangements for any LGC Review Panel meeting will be advised to the parents/carers in writing.

4.3 **Parents**

Parents will be informed without delay of any suspension or exclusion, and there is an ability to make representations in regard to any suspension or exclusion decision. Details will be provided on the rights parents have with every letter that is sent from the headteacher/principal regarding the suspension or exclusion.

4.4 **Pupils**

All pupils of the academies in the Trust are expected to follow the expectations regarding their behaviour to ensure that all pupils can learn and participate in school life effectively. Where those expectations are breached, the behaviour policy will apply.

5 **CCTV, witness evidence and pupil views**

5.1 The Trust uses closed circuit television (CCTV) within its premises. This is to provide a safe and secure environment for pupils, staff and visitors. If behavioural incidents are recorded on CCTV, the footage may be viewed as part of the investigation and the content considered before imposing a sanction. If CCTV is relied upon for a decision on a suspension or exclusion, then it will be shown in some format (redacted as necessary) at any LGC review meeting. Please see the Trust's CCTV policy and privacy notices for more information.

5.2 Where witness evidence is relied upon, whether that be from a pupil or a staff member, the statement(s) will be provided at any LGC review meeting. All statements will be signed and dated, unless the headteacher/principal has good reason to protect the anonymity of the relevant witness; reasons may include threats of reprisals.

5.3 Before taking a decision to suspend or exclude and where appropriate, the headteacher/principal will take the pupil's views into account, considering these in light of their

age and understanding, and inform the pupil about how their views have been factored into any decision made. Where relevant, the pupil will be given support to express their view, including through advocates such as parents or, if the pupil has one, a social worker. The headteacher/principal will also take account of any contributing factors identified after an incident of misbehaviour has occurred.

6 Reintegration strategy meetings following suspension or off-site direction

6.1 Where a pupil is suspended or is directed to be educated off site, upon return to the school, both the pupil and parents will be invited to a reintegration strategy meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- offer the pupil a fresh start;
- help them understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others;
- teach them to how meet the high expectations of behaviour in line with the school culture;
- foster a renewed sense of belonging within the school community; and
- build engagement with learning,

so that further suspensions are not needed. School staff will work with the pupil to understand what led to the behaviour, and to establish if any changes can be made or further support implemented from a pastoral or practical perspective that might reduce the chance of repeat behaviours. Previous behaviour is not seen as an obstacle to future success.

6.2 The individual academy will use various measures to support a pupil's successful reintegration including:

- Daily contact with a designated staff member in-school.
- Use of a report card with personalised targets leading to personalised rewards.
- Ensuring the pupil receives academic support upon return to catch up on any lost progress.
- Planned pastoral interventions.
- Mentoring by a trusted adult.
- Regular reviews with the pupil and parents to praise progress being made and raise and address any concerns at an early stage.
- Informing the pupil, parents and staff of potential external support.

6.3 Whilst reintegration meetings are highly encouraged by the Trust, pupils will not be prevented from being admitted to the school or being put in mainstream classes because a meeting has not taken place.

7 Cancelling a suspension or exclusion

7.1 A suspension or exclusion can be cancelled by the headteacher/principal as long as the suspension or exclusion has not been considered by the LGC members. In relation to an exclusion, it cannot be cancelled if the total time the pupil was excluded or suspended that academic year would be over 45 days at the point of the decision to cancel the exclusion.

7.2 Where a suspension or exclusion is cancelled, the relevant parties will be informed by the headteacher/principal in accordance with the statutory guidance on suspensions and exclusions.

8 Suspensions before a permanent exclusion

8.1 In exceptional circumstances, pupils may receive a suspension prior to a permanent exclusion. For each decision, the headteacher/principal will send the relevant letter setting out the rights of parents. A suspension cannot be converted into a permanent exclusion, so any subseqeunt permanent exclusion would be a fresh decision due to commence immediately after the suspension has ended. Exceptional circumstances may include where for example, further evidence has come to light, a further investigation has revealed that the behaviour is more serious than first thought or where the incident was serious and time is required to fully investigate the circumstances and consider alternatives.

9 Directing off-site and managed moves

9.1 Before taking any decision to permanently exclude a pupil, the headteacher/principal will consider whether a direction to attend alternative provision and/or a managed move as part of a planned intervention would be a reasonable alternative that should be considered.

9.2 In the case of directing a pupil off site to alternative provision, the aim of any direction is for it to be used as a short-term measure as part of the school's behaviour management strategy to improve a pupil's behaviour, where in-school interventions and/or outreach have been unsuccessful or are deemed inappropriate. While parental consent is not needed, discussions will take place with parents to feed in their views about the options. Any specific requirements in relation to an off-site direction will be followed.

9.3 For a managed move to take place, there needs to be agreement between the school, the parents and the new school that a managed move should occur. Before a managed move is agreed to, the pupil will often attend the new school as part of a direction off site, but any managed move will need to comply with the new school's admissions procedures. The relevant academy will share relevant information about the pupil with the new school and check that they have an integration strategy. At the end of this off-site direction period, the relevant

parties (including the parents) will review how it has gone before a decision is taken about whether it becomes a permanent managed move. A managed move will only be agreed to where it is in the pupil's best interests.

10 Independent review panels (IRPs)

10.1 If applied for by parents or carers within the legal time frame, the Trust will arrange for an IRP hearing to review the decision of the LGC not to reinstate a permanently excluded pupil. The Local Authority arranges IRPs on the Trust's behalf and requests where a permanent exclusion decision has been upheld should be made to the clerk of the relevant academy's LGC within 15 school days.

10.2 Further details on the role and powers of IRPs can be found in part ten of the statutory guidance on exclusions and suspensions.

11 Reconsideration by the Local Governance Committee

Where an IRP either recommends reconsideration or quashes the initial decision of the LGC, the decision will be considered within 10 school days; this may involve a rehearing with oral evidence given by the school and parents or may be a reconsideration, with only the LGC members and the clerk present.

12 Remote meetings

12.1 Any LGC review and/or an IRP meeting may be conducted remotely where the parents request it be conducted remotely and the meeting can be fairly held remotely, with all participants having access and able to make representations. A meeting may also take place remotely where there is an extraordinary event or unforeseen circumstance that means it is not reasonably practicable to hold the meeting in person; such events can include but are not limited to floods, fire, and an outbreak of an infectious disease.

12.2 In addition, where a child's social worker or the virtual school head are due to attend a meeting, they may join an in-person meeting remotely, as long as it can be fairly accessed, the technology is available, and everyone would be able to make representations.

13 Complaints

If parents have any concerns or complaints over the application or implementation of this policy or feel that they are being pressured into a managed move, they should raise their concerns with a staff member or the headteacher/principal in accordance with the Trust's complaints policy. If the concern relates to an exclusion or suspension decision, or matters relating to it, the procedure set out in the statutory guidance on exclusions and suspensions will be followed.

14 **Equality impact**

The Trust does all it can to ensure that its policies do not discriminate against pupils or others, either directly or indirectly, in line with any Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics; these include race, religion, disability, sexual orientation and sex.

15 **Monitoring arrangements**

The LGC member and trustees review data on suspensions and exclusions to ensure that the use of suspensions and exclusions is appropriate. This will form part of the Trust's governance Reporting Schedule. The following are monitored by the LGC members and trustees to ensure the processes and support for pupils are appropriate:

- The interventions put in place for pupils at risk of suspension and permanent exclusion.
- The processes in place for determining and reviewing directions off-site and for such placements to be reviewed at sufficient intervals to ensure that the education provided is achieving its objectives, and that pupils are benefiting from it.
- The full-time educational provision for pupils of compulsory school age from the sixth consecutive school day of a suspension; in particular, checking the provision is suitable and quality assured to ensure that:
  - Any previous placements have been evaluated, including support for any applicable SEND.
  - There is a process in place to monitor the pupil's attendance and behaviour at the provision.
  - The correct attendance code is being used.
  - The pupil's child protection file and any other information relevant to the pupil's safeguarding and welfare has been securely transferred to their new setting as early as possible.
- Whether there is any variation within the year on suspensions and permanent exclusions and the characteristics of pupils.
- The cost implications of directing children to be educated off site in alternative provision and whether there are any patterns to the reasons or timing of moves.
- Whether the school register and absence codes have been recorded correctly.
- How the behaviour policy is applied and, specifically, its consistency.
- The circumstances in which pupils receive repeat suspensions.
- Whether personal education plans for looked after children have been reviewed on a termly basis.