



BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL

Suspension and Exclusion Policy

Suspension

Examples of conduct that may lead to suspension or exclusion include serious violence, weapon possession, drug supply, serious bullying, child-on-child abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, discriminatory abuse, criminal activity, serious online abuse, sextortion, image-based abuse, AI-generated sexual imagery, deepfake abuse, malicious impersonation and repeated attempts to bypass filtering and monitoring systems. This list is not exhaustive.

The Head of Seniors (or Deputy Head (Pastoral & Operations) acting on behalf of the Head of Seniors) is responsible for discipline within the School. The School recognises that behaviour leading to suspension or exclusion may be an indicator of underlying safeguarding concerns. Before any decision is made, consideration will be given to whether behaviour may be linked to abuse, neglect, exploitation, child-on-child abuse, online harms, mental health needs, SEND, contextual safeguarding concerns or unmet welfare needs. Any suspension will be recorded on CPOMS.

Particular consideration will be given to children with a social worker, children in need, looked after and previously looked after children, young carers, pupils with SEND and other vulnerable learners. The Head of Seniors (or Deputy Head (Pastoral & Operations)) has the right to order a student to be suspended from the School. Students may be suspended for a fixed term either internally or externally. A student will be suspended from the School if, in the opinion of the Head of Seniors (or Deputy Head):

- The student persistently breaks the School Rules or falls short of expected behaviour/values
- The student has committed a grave breach of discipline
- The student's actions have brought the name of the School into disrepute
- Such a measure is necessary for the protection of other students or staff
- It is in the best interests of the wider School community.

Fixed Term Suspension - Internal

When a fixed term internal suspension is applied, the student will be removed from normal day to day lessons and activities for a defined period. Parents will be informed and it will be recorded in the student's file. During this period of time the student will remain on campus, usually in the Lodge or McAllester building, under regular supervision of the Deputy Head (Pastoral & Operations), Head of Year, Head of Seniors or an appropriately assigned member of staff. Arrangements will be made for work to be provided.

Fixed Term Suspension - External

When a fixed term suspension is applied, the student will be sent home for a defined period of time. Parents will be informed and it will be recorded in the student's file. Through excluding a student for a fixed term, the intention is to achieve one, or more, of the following outcomes:

- To remove the student(s) from a situation which requires further and unimpeded investigation
- To create breathing space for the student(s), parents and School, and, if necessary, allow time to consider alternative strategies for meeting the student's needs
- To remind students and parents about the consequences of serious breaches of conduct Staff will consider contextual safeguarding issues including online activity, peer relationships, community influences, criminal exploitation and wider environmental factors when assessing behaviour incidents.

In any investigation which may lead to suspension it is advisable to involve parents at an early stage and as fully as possible. This can speed up an investigation as well as helping to establish parental support for eventual disciplinary measures. Alternative strategies to suspension should be considered. Such strategies may include pastoral intervention, behaviour plans, mentoring, SEND support, Family Help, Early Help interventions, safeguarding support or internal suspension where appropriate.

Once it has been decided that a fixed-term suspension (external) is to take place, the following process should be adopted:

- Students should be sent home only if there is someone there to receive them, or parents/relatives come to collect them
- Parents of students facing suspension should be informed as soon as possible
- All relevant facts should be available, preferably in writing, and the reason for the suspension should be clear. For periods of external suspension, a letter, outlining the nature of the reason for the suspension and giving the exact date of return to school, should be sent home
- The letter should also provide any conditions for return and, when necessary, should indicate the consequences of any further breaches of discipline or serious misbehaviour

During a period of suspension for more than one day, it is important that the student receives work from the School to complete at home. Suspended students have a right to continued education under Human Rights legislation. For students facing external examinations, care must be taken, where possible, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the suspension. Following any suspension, a reintegration meeting will normally take place involving the student, parents and appropriate staff to review behaviour expectations, support measures, safeguarding concerns and any reasonable adjustments required.

Governors monitor suspensions, all of which are reported to them by the Head of Seniors on a regular basis. If parents wish to complain against any suspension decision, they may do so and Governors will review procedures.

Parents have a formal right of appeal against a fixed-term suspension of more than three days to a sub-committee of the Governing body convened for this purpose. The request for an appeal should be made to the Clerk to the Governors, Birkenhead School, The Lodge, 58 Beresford Road, CH43 2JD outlining the reasons for the appeal, within 5 working days of the written correspondence received from the Head of Seniors.

Permanent Exclusion

Permanent exclusion is the most serious sanction available to the Head of Seniors and will normally be used only when other methods have been tried and found to have failed e.g. periods of suspension. It will be considered only when a pattern of serious misbehaviour has been established, or, exceptionally, for very serious misconduct. Behaviour involving child-on-child abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, discriminatory abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, exploitation or serious online abuse will be managed in conjunction with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

In such extreme circumstances, it is, of course, normal for the Head of Seniors to consult fully with the relevant staff, to give the student a fair hearing and to meet with the student's parents before a final decision is taken. Where appropriate, students should be helped to find another school.

For a permanent exclusion by the Head of Seniors, the Chair of Governors should be informed as soon as possible; in such cases a full account of the investigation, along with the reasons for the exclusion should be given. Parents have a formal right of appeal against a permanent exclusion to a sub-committee of the Governing body convened for this purpose. The request for an appeal should be made to the Clerk to the Governors, Birkenhead School, The Lodge, 58 Beresford Road, CH43 2JD outlining the reasons for the appeal, within 5 working days of the written correspondence received from the Head of Seniors about the permanent exclusion. In the event of a student being permanently excluded, fees will not be refunded.

Reviewed: DSL, August 2026

To be reviewed: August 2027