



HOMEBROOK WOODS

Independent Special School

SUSPENSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS POLICY

Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014

Part 3 – Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

Part 6 – Provision of Information

Part 8 – Quality of Leadership and Management

DOCUMENT GOVERNANCE AND VERSION CONTROL

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Policy Purpose

This policy sets out the circumstances in which **Homebrook Woods** may consider the suspension or permanent exclusion of a pupil, together with the principles, procedures and safeguards that underpin any such decision.

As a specialist independent school, Homebrook Woods recognises that pupils with autism, speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and associated SEND may experience difficulties with emotional regulation, communication, social understanding and behaviour. The school therefore adopts a **therapeutic, trauma-informed and relational approach**, recognising that behaviour is a form of communication and that pupils require support to develop self-regulation and positive relationships.

Suspension and permanent exclusion are regarded as **exceptional measures of last resort**. They are not behaviour management strategies in themselves but protective measures used only where necessary to safeguard the welfare, safety or education of pupils and others.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- promote a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment;
 - ensure decisions are lawful, proportionate and fair;
 - safeguard the welfare of all pupils and staff;
 - support consistency in decision-making;
 - ensure that parents and carers understand the school's approach;
 - demonstrate compliance with the Independent School Standards and relevant statutory guidance.
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Scope

This policy applies to:

- all pupils enrolled at Homebrook Woods;

- all members of staff;
- volunteers;
- agency staff;
- contractors working within the school;
- parents and carers.

It applies to behaviour:

- during the school day;
- while travelling on school transport where managed by the school;
- during educational visits;
- during off-site activities organised by the school;
- where behaviour outside school has a direct impact on the safety, welfare or reputation of the school community.

Linked Policies

This policy forms part of Homebrook Woods' integrated safeguarding and behaviour framework and should be read alongside:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality Policy
- Admissions and Placement Suitability Policy
- Positive Handling Policy (where applicable)
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Behaviour refers to all forms of communication, interaction and conduct demonstrated by pupils.

Suspension means a temporary exclusion from school for a fixed period where attendance is not permitted.

Permanent Exclusion means the permanent removal of a pupil from the school roll.

Reasonable Adjustments are changes made to practice or provision to ensure disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage.

Restorative Practice refers to structured approaches that repair relationships, rebuild trust and support accountability following incidents.

Therapeutic Practice refers to approaches that prioritise regulation, understanding, emotional development and positive relationships.

1. Homebrook Woods Ethos

Homebrook Woods provides specialist education for children aged **5–11** with:

- Autism;
- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN);
- associated Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Many pupils joining Homebrook Woods may have experienced:

- disrupted educational journeys;
- placement breakdowns;
- heightened anxiety;
- adverse childhood experiences;
- unmet communication needs;
- difficulties regulating emotions and behaviour.

The school believes that every child deserves an opportunity to succeed within a nurturing, structured and therapeutic environment where adults seek first to understand rather than judge.

Behaviour is viewed as communication. Staff work proactively to identify unmet needs, reduce barriers to learning and teach positive strategies for emotional regulation and social interaction.

Consequently:

- relationships are prioritised over punishment;
- regulation is prioritised before consequence;
- restorative approaches are preferred wherever appropriate;
- positive behaviour is actively recognised and reinforced;
- sanctions are proportionate, educational and respectful.

The school aims to prevent situations escalating to the point where suspension or permanent exclusion becomes necessary.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- **The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014**
- **The Equality Act 2010**
- **The Children Act 1989**
- **The Children Act 2004**
- **The Human Rights Act 1998**
- **The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0–25 Years**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)** (current edition)
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children** (current edition)
- **DfE guidance relating to suspension and permanent exclusion**, where relevant to independent schools
- Any other relevant legislation or statutory guidance applicable to independent schools.

Where statutory guidance is written primarily for maintained schools and academies, Homebrook Woods adopts the underlying principles of fairness, proportionality, safeguarding and natural justice where appropriate to its status as an independent special school.

3. Principles Underpinning Decisions

Any decision to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil will be guided by the following principles.

Child-Centred

The welfare and best interests of the child remain central to decision-making.

Therapeutic

The school seeks first to understand the reasons behind behaviour and to identify appropriate support rather than relying upon punitive responses.

Proportionate

Any action taken will be proportionate to the seriousness of the incident, the level of risk presented and the individual needs of the pupil.

Individualised

Each case will be considered on its own merits, recognising the pupil's age, SEND, communication profile, developmental stage and personal circumstances.

Inclusive

The school recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that reasonable adjustments have been considered before decisions are made.

Lawful

All decisions will comply with relevant legislation, contractual obligations and the Independent School Standards.

Transparent

Parents and carers will be informed promptly of significant incidents and any decision relating to suspension or permanent exclusion. Records will clearly document the reasons for decisions made.

Safeguarding-Focused

The safety, welfare and wellbeing of all pupils, staff and visitors remain paramount. Where behaviour presents a serious risk to others, appropriate protective action will be taken without delay.

4. Preventative and Therapeutic Approaches

At Homebrook Woods, the most effective way to reduce the likelihood of suspension or permanent exclusion is through high-quality, proactive support. Staff work collaboratively to understand each pupil's strengths, needs and individual communication profile, enabling difficulties to be identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.

The school promotes positive behaviour through:

- warm, consistent and respectful relationships;
- clear routines and predictable expectations;
- emotionally available adults;
- trauma-informed and attachment-aware practice;
- autism-informed teaching approaches;
- communication-friendly classrooms;
- sensory-informed environments;
- positive reinforcement and encouragement;
- explicit teaching of emotional literacy and self-regulation;
- restorative conversations following incidents;
- close partnership working with parents, carers and external professionals.

Where a pupil experiences increasing difficulties, staff will seek to understand the underlying reasons rather than simply responding to the behaviour itself.

Support may include:

- review of the pupil's Behaviour Support Plan;
- review of individual risk assessments;
- additional emotional regulation support;
- sensory assessments and environmental adaptations;
- increased communication support;
- targeted pastoral intervention;
- meetings with parents or carers;
- multi-agency working where appropriate.

The school recognises that behaviour often reflects unmet need and therefore seeks to address the cause as well as the presentation.

5. Circumstances in Which Suspension May Be Considered

Suspension is regarded as an exceptional measure and will only be considered where it is necessary, proportionate and in the interests of safeguarding pupils, staff or the wider school community.

A suspension may be considered where a pupil has:

- seriously endangered the safety of another person;
- engaged in significant physical violence;
- committed a serious act of deliberate damage to property;
- displayed behaviour that presents an immediate and significant risk which cannot safely be managed within school;
- committed a serious breach of the Behaviour Policy despite appropriate support and intervention.

The decision will always take account of:

- the age and developmental stage of the pupil;
- the pupil's SEND and communication needs;
- known medical or mental health needs;
- any disability-related factors;
- previous patterns of behaviour;
- the effectiveness of previous interventions;
- any safeguarding concerns.

The Headteacher will normally consider whether additional support or reasonable adjustments could safely reduce the risk before deciding upon suspension.

Suspension Will Not Normally Be Used

Homebrook Woods will not normally suspend a pupil solely because:

- behaviour forms part of their identified SEND;
- communication difficulties have contributed to misunderstanding;
- the school lacks resources;
- staffing levels are reduced;
- parents disagree with school decisions;
- a pupil displays low-level disruptive behaviour;
- a pupil refuses learning tasks;
- attendance difficulties arise from anxiety or emotional distress.

The school recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that reasonable adjustments have been properly considered before any decision is made.

6. Circumstances in Which Permanent Exclusion May Be Considered

Permanent exclusion represents the most serious disciplinary sanction available to the school and will only be considered where no reasonable alternative remains.

Because Homebrook Woods exists specifically to support children with complex SEND, the threshold for permanent exclusion is exceptionally high.

Permanent exclusion may only be considered where:

- there has been a serious breach of the Behaviour Policy; **and**
- allowing the pupil to remain would seriously compromise the safety, welfare or education of others; **or**
- all reasonable adjustments, therapeutic interventions and available support strategies have demonstrably failed to reduce an unacceptable level of risk.

Each decision will take account of:

- the child's individual needs;
- safeguarding considerations;
- proportionality;
- professional advice where appropriate;
- the views of parents or carers;
- the long-term educational interests of the child.

Every effort will be made to identify alternative strategies before permanent exclusion is considered.

7. Decision-Making Process

Only the Headteacher (or the Proprietor where appropriate) may authorise a suspension or permanent exclusion.

Before making a decision, the Headteacher will normally consider:

- the facts of the incident;
- witness accounts;
- behaviour records;
- previous interventions;
- Behaviour Support Plans;
- risk assessments;
- safeguarding information;
- medical information where relevant;
- advice from appropriate professionals.

Where appropriate, the pupil will be given an opportunity to explain what has happened in a manner that is appropriate to their age, communication needs and level of understanding.

Parents or carers will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable and provided with:

- the reasons for the decision;
- the duration of any suspension;
- arrangements for continued education where appropriate;
- information about reintegration arrangements;
- details of any right to make representations or raise concerns.

All decisions will be fully documented using the school's behaviour recording systems.

8. Education and Support During Suspension

Where a suspension takes place, Homebrook Woods will seek to minimise disruption to the pupil's education and wellbeing wherever reasonably practicable.

Depending upon the individual circumstances, support may include:

- learning activities to complete at home;
- online learning where appropriate;
- regular communication with parents or carers;
- wellbeing check-ins;
- review of therapeutic strategies;
- planning for successful reintegration.

The school recognises that many pupils with SEND may experience heightened anxiety following a suspension. Consequently, communication with families will remain supportive, respectful and solution-focused.

9. Reintegration Following Suspension

A reintegration meeting will normally take place before, or as soon as reasonably practicable after, the pupil returns to school.

The purpose of the meeting is not to allocate blame but to ensure that appropriate support is in place to maximise the likelihood of future success.

The meeting may include:

- the pupil (where appropriate);
- parents or carers;
- the Headteacher;
- relevant members of staff;
- external professionals where appropriate.

Discussion may include:

- what happened;
- the pupil's views and experiences;
- factors contributing to the incident;
- successful strategies already identified;
- any reasonable adjustments required;
- updates to Behaviour Support Plans;
- review of risk assessments;
- agreed support strategies moving forward.

The school will seek to rebuild relationships through restorative practice wherever appropriate and will continue to work collaboratively with families to promote successful outcomes.

10. Working with Parents, Carers and Local Authorities

Homebrook Woods recognises that positive relationships with parents, carers and commissioning local authorities are fundamental to achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils.

Where behaviour concerns arise, the school will seek to work collaboratively with families and professionals to identify solutions before suspension or permanent exclusion is considered.

Parents and carers will normally be:

- informed promptly of serious behavioural incidents;
- involved in discussions regarding support strategies;
- invited to attend review and reintegration meetings where appropriate;
- provided with clear information regarding decisions made by the school;
- treated with dignity, respect and openness throughout the process.

Where a pupil has been placed by a local authority or other commissioning body, the school will notify the relevant authority in accordance with placement agreements, contractual requirements and safeguarding responsibilities.

The school recognises that partnership working is essential to supporting pupils whose needs are often complex and multi-faceted.

11. Recording, Monitoring and Governance

Accurate recording supports effective safeguarding, identifies emerging patterns and enables the school to evaluate the effectiveness of its therapeutic approaches.

The school will maintain appropriate records relating to:

- behaviour incidents;
- serious behaviour incidents;
- suspensions;
- permanent exclusions;
- restorative interventions;
- Behaviour Support Plans;
- risk assessments;
- reintegration meetings;

- communications with parents and external agencies.

Behaviour information is reviewed regularly by the Headteacher to identify:

- emerging behavioural trends;
- recurring triggers;
- locations or times where incidents are more likely to occur;
- effectiveness of interventions;
- staff training requirements;
- opportunities to improve provision.

The Proprietor receives termly reports summarising behaviour trends, suspensions and exclusions, enabling appropriate oversight and challenge while protecting individual confidentiality.

Where patterns indicate that particular groups of pupils may be disproportionately affected, further analysis will be undertaken to ensure equality duties are being met and that reasonable adjustments remain effective.

12. Equality, SEND and Reasonable Adjustments

Homebrook Woods is committed to ensuring that no pupil is treated less favourably because of disability, special educational needs, protected characteristics or additional vulnerabilities.

The school recognises that behaviour may arise directly from:

- autism;
- speech, language and communication needs;
- sensory processing differences;
- anxiety;
- trauma;
- attachment needs;
- developmental delay;
- medical conditions;
- other identified SEND.

Before any suspension or permanent exclusion is considered, the Headteacher will satisfy themselves, wherever reasonably practicable, that:

- appropriate reasonable adjustments have been considered;

- the Behaviour Support Plan has been reviewed;
- the Risk Assessment has been reviewed where appropriate;
- appropriate therapeutic strategies have been implemented;
- staff have followed agreed behaviour support procedures;
- further intervention would not reasonably reduce the immediate risk.

The school recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and seeks to ensure that disciplinary decisions are fair, proportionate and free from unlawful discrimination.

13. Complaints

Parents and carers who wish to raise concerns regarding the implementation of this policy should initially discuss the matter with the Headteacher.

Where concerns cannot be resolved informally, parents may follow the school's **Complaints Policy**.

The school will investigate concerns fairly, objectively and without delay.

The existence of a complaint does not automatically delay the implementation of decisions where immediate action is required to safeguard pupils or staff.

Policy Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

The Proprietor is responsible for ensuring that the policy remains compliant with legislation, reflects current best practice and supports the school's therapeutic ethos.

This policy will be reviewed:

- annually;
- following significant behavioural incidents where learning is identified;
- following changes in legislation or statutory guidance;
- following inspection recommendations;
- where school improvement priorities indicate a review is required.

Behaviour monitoring forms part of the school's wider safeguarding, quality assurance and continuous improvement framework.

Appendices

Appendix A

Suspension Decision Checklist

[FORM-BEH-05 Suspension Decision Checklist.docx](#)

Appendix B

Reintegration Meeting Record

[FORM-BEH-06 Reintegration Meeting Record.docx](#)