

FOOTSTEPS TRUST SUSPENSION, PERMANENT EXCLUSION AND GUIDANCE POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Footsteps Trust is committed to maintaining a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment in which all students can achieve their full potential.

The Academy recognises that suspension and permanent exclusion are serious interventions and will only be used where necessary, lawful, reasonable, proportionate and fair. Any decision to suspend or permanently exclude a student will be made in accordance with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026.
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance (DfE).
- Equality Act 2010.
- Independent School Standards.
- Alternative Provision statutory guidance.
- SEND Code of Practice.
- Footsteps Behaviour Policy.
- Footsteps Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Suspension and exclusion are not disciplinary sanctions in themselves, but protective measures intended to maintain safety, uphold standards and support positive behaviour change.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Promote positive behaviour and relationships.
- Ensure consistency and fairness.
- Protect the safety and welfare of students and staff.
- Reduce the need for suspension and exclusion.
- Ensure decisions are lawful and proportionate.
- Support vulnerable students.
- Consider safeguarding implications in all behaviour decisions.
- Promote successful reintegration following suspension.

3. Principles

The Academy will ensure that:

- Every incident is considered individually.
- Decisions are evidence-based.
- Students are treated fairly.
- Relevant circumstances are considered.
- Vulnerable students receive appropriate support.
- Equality duties are met.
- Safeguarding remains central to decision-making.

Suspension should normally be a last resort after appropriate support and intervention have been considered, except where immediate action is necessary to protect safety.

4. Definitions

Suspension

A suspension occurs when a student is temporarily removed from education provided by the Academy for disciplinary reasons.

Suspensions may be:

- Same-day suspensions.
- Fixed-period suspensions.
- Internal suspensions (where appropriate).

Permanent Exclusion

Permanent exclusion is the permanent removal of a student from the Academy's roll due to serious misconduct or where allowing the student to remain would seriously harm the education, welfare or safety of others.

Behaviour Support Measures

The Academy will also use non-exclusionary interventions including:

- Restorative approaches.
- Behaviour contracts.
- Report cards.
- Mentoring.
- Targeted interventions.
- Parental meetings.
- Risk assessments.
- Multi-agency support.

5. Vulnerable Students

Before making suspension or exclusion decisions, staff must consider whether the student:

- Has SEND.
- Has an EHCP.
- Has SEMH needs.
- Is Looked After.
- Is Previously Looked After.
- Has a social worker.
- Has experienced trauma.
- Is subject to safeguarding concerns.
- Is known to Youth Justice Services.

The Academy must ensure that reasonable adjustments have been considered where appropriate.

Suspension should never be used as a substitute for appropriate support.

6. Safeguarding Considerations

Suspensions can increase vulnerability.

Before, during and after suspension the Academy will consider risks including:

- Child Criminal Exploitation.
- County Lines.
- Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Missing Education.
- Online Harm.
- Gang involvement.
- Substance misuse.
- Mental health concerns.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead may be consulted before decisions are finalised.

7. Decision-Making Authority

Only the Principal (or delegated senior leader acting on behalf of the Principal) may approve a suspension or permanent exclusion.

Academy Leaders may:

- Investigate incidents.
- Gather information.
- Take witness statements.
- Make recommendations.

The final decision rests with the Principal.

8. Behaviour Incidents That May Lead to Suspension

The examples below are not exhaustive.

Suspension may be considered for:

Verbal Abuse Towards Staff

Including:

- Swearing directed at staff.
- Offensive language.
- Abuse.
- Intimidation.

Threatening Behaviour

Including:

- Threats of violence.
- Intimidation.
- Aggressive confrontation.

Physical Aggression

Including:

- Assault.
- Physical intimidation.
- Fighting.
- Physical challenges towards staff.

Damage to Property

Including:

- Deliberate vandalism.
- Significant damage to Academy property.
- Destruction of resources.

Theft

Including:

- Theft from students.
- Theft from staff.
- Theft of Academy property.

Bullying

Including:

Date of Issue: September 2026

Date of Review: September 2027

- Repeated bullying.
- Serious bullying incidents.
- Cyberbullying.

Substance-Related Incidents

Including:

- Smoking.
- Vaping.
- Possession of prohibited substances.
- Attendance under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Persistent Disruption

Including:

- Ongoing refusal to engage.
- Repeated disruption.
- Failure to follow behaviour expectations.

Defiance and Non-Compliance

Including refusal to:

- Attend lessons.
- Follow reasonable instructions.
- Leave classrooms when directed.
- Participate appropriately.

9. Behaviour Incidents That May Lead to Permanent Exclusion

Permanent exclusion may be considered where:

- Serious violence has occurred.
- A student brings a weapon onto site.
- Serious safeguarding risks exist.
- Serious drug supply offences occur.
- Repeated serious incidents continue despite intervention.
- A student's continued attendance would seriously harm the welfare or education of others.

Permanent exclusion will only be used in exceptional circumstances.

10. Factors Considered Before Issuing a Suspension

The Academy will consider:

Nature of the Incident

- Seriousness.
- Intent.
- Impact.

Student Circumstances

- Age.
- SEND needs.
- Vulnerabilities.
- Safeguarding concerns.

Previous Behaviour History

- Frequency of incidents.
- Previous interventions.
- Escalation patterns.

Impact on Others

- Safety.
- Wellbeing.
- Learning environment.

Mitigating Circumstances

Including:

- Trauma.
- Bereavement.
- Mental health issues.
- Identified additional needs.

11. Suspension Guidance Matrix

The Academy no longer operates rigid automatic suspension tariffs.

The historical protocol contained fixed responses ranging from same-day suspension to 5-day suspensions.

Current practice requires professional judgement and consideration of individual circumstances.

Indicative guidance may include:

Behaviour	Typical Response
Minor verbal abuse	1 day suspension or alternative sanction
Serious verbal abuse	1-5 day suspension

Threatening staff	Up to 5 day suspension
Physical aggression	Up to 5 day suspension
Serious assault	Consider longer suspension or exclusion
Bullying	Suspension and behaviour intervention
Vaping or smoking	Behaviour intervention and possible suspension
Persistent disruption	Graduated response including suspension
Serious safeguarding incidents	Suspension pending investigation

These are guidelines only.

12. Reintegration Following Suspension

A reintegration meeting will normally take place following suspension.

The purpose is to:

- Review the incident.
- Reflect on behaviour.
- Agree support strategies.
- Re-establish expectations.
- Promote successful reintegration.

Participants may include:

- Student.
- Parent/carer.
- Academy Leader.
- Principal.
- Learning Mentor.
- SEND staff.

13. Post-Suspension Support

Support may include:

- Behaviour support plans.
- Report cards.
- Mentoring.
- Restorative meetings.
- Counselling.

Date of Issue: September 2026

Date of Review: September 2027

- SEND review.
- Risk assessment updates.
- Multi-agency support.

14. Recording and Documentation

The Academy will maintain records including:

- Incident reports.
- Witness statements.
- Behaviour logs.
- Parental communication.
- Suspension letters.
- Reintegration records.

All documentation will be retained securely.

15. Parent and Carer Communication

Parents/carers will be informed:

- As soon as reasonably practicable.
- Of the reasons for suspension.
- Of the duration.
- Of reintegration arrangements.
- Of rights to make representations.

The Academy will seek to maintain positive working relationships with families throughout any disciplinary process.

16. Equality and Inclusion

The Academy will comply with the Equality Act 2010.

Decision-makers must ensure that suspension and exclusion decisions do not unfairly disadvantage students because of:

- Disability.
- Race.
- Religion.
- Gender.
- Sexual orientation.
- Other protected characteristics.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered where appropriate.

Date of Issue: September 2026

Date of Review: September 2027

17. Monitoring

The Principal and Trustees will monitor:

- Suspension rates.
- Permanent exclusions.
- Patterns and trends.
- Disproportionality.
- Impact on vulnerable groups.

Findings will inform behaviour and safeguarding practice.

18. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner following:

- Changes to legislation.
- DfE guidance updates.
- KCSIE updates.
- Significant behaviour or safeguarding developments.