



Suspensions & Exclusions Policy

for adoption by all CDAT schools

This policy is informed by the Christian values which are the basis for all of CDAT's work and any actions taken under the document will reflect this.

'Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right'

Psalm 106:3

Approved by	Date	Review Schedule	Date of next review
Education Effectiveness committee	September 2026	Annually	September 2027

1. Vision, Christian Ethos, and Guiding Principles

This policy is rooted in the Christian vision and values of the Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT). We are called to act justly and do what is right (Psalm 106:3). Our primary commitment is to create a calm, safe, and supportive learning environment where every pupil can thrive.

The Trauma-Informed and Inclusive Approach

CDAT recognises that all behaviour is a form of communication and may reflect a pupil's underlying needs, difficulties, or experiences, including adversity or trauma. This policy is designed:

- **Not to punish but to teach and restore safety.** Suspension is a pause for necessary reflection and for creating a supportive plan that enables a successful return to school.
- **To uphold boundaries**, which are essential for promoting predictability and safety for all members of the school community.

Exclusion (suspension or permanent) is a serious sanction and will only be used as a last resort, when the school can demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken and that the pupil's presence is seriously harming the safety, education, or welfare of themselves or others.

2. Statutory Context, Safety, and Safeguarding (KCSIE 2026)

This policy is written with full regard to the Department for Education's *Suspension and Permanent Exclusion* guidance (updated in July 2026, and any subsequent updates) and aligns with *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) 2026.

Headteacher's Duties and Safeguarding Notification

The Headteacher must, without delay, notify the following parties of a decision to suspend or permanently exclude, and the reasons for it:

- Parents/Carers
- CDAT – Inclusion Lead & CEO
- The Local Authority (regardless of the length of the suspension)
- The pupil's Social Worker (if applicable)
- The Virtual School Head (VSH) (if the pupil is Looked-After or Previously Looked-After)

In rare circumstances where an allegation of harm requires pupils to be physically kept apart (e.g. during an ongoing safeguarding or police investigation), the school may temporarily forbid a pupil from attending premises. In line with July 2026 DfE Statutory Guidance, this is a safeguarding measure led by the DSL and is not a disciplinary suspension or exclusion. The Local Authority, parent/carer, and LGC must be notified without delay, and educational provision arranged immediately.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and all staff must be alert to pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion or who have experienced multiple suspensions, as this may indicate a need for Early Help. In cases involving seriously harmful behaviour, such as reports of sexual violence or child-on-child abuse, the DSL or a deputy must make an immediate risk and needs assessment.

3. Inclusion, SEND Code of Practice, and Equality

CDAT is committed to inclusive practice and will ensure this policy is applied fairly, recognising that pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are disproportionately at risk of exclusion.

Statutory Duty / CDAT SEND Policy Link

Equality Act 2010

The school must not unlawfully discriminate against disabled pupils and has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to any provision, criterion, or practice. Failure to make reasonable adjustments may constitute discrimination.

SEND Code of Practice (0–25)

The school will use its 'best endeavours' to ensure appropriate special educational provision is made. Exclusion is not an appropriate or lawful response to a pupil's SEN or disability.

The Graduated Approach (CDAT SEND Policy)

Before any suspension, the school must be able to evidence that support and interventions have been delivered through the Graduated Approach (Assess, Plan, Do, Review). Repeated suspensions will prompt a review of the pupil's support plan and consideration of a formal multiagency assessment.

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

Where a pupil with an EHC plan is at risk of exclusion, the school will contact the Local Authority at an early stage and consider requesting an early annual review to ensure needs are being met.

Accountability

The Local Governance Committees (LGC) will regularly review the school's data on suspensions and permanent exclusions to ensure that the sanction is only used as a last resort and to monitor for any disproportionate impact on particular groups of pupils (e.g. those with SEND or protected characteristics).

4. The Trauma-Informed Framework: Boundaries and Logical Consequences

A trauma-informed policy ensures that consequences are linked to safety and the repair of harm.

Principle	Application in Policy and Communication
Boundaries for Safety	The boundary broken must always be linked to behaviour that caused serious harm or risk of harm to the education or welfare of the pupil or others. The decision to suspend is taken to restore and ensure safety for all pupils and staff.

Logical Consequence	Suspension is a logical consequence that provides the pupil with time away from the high-stress environment of the school to self-regulate. It also provides necessary space for the school to adapt the support plan.
Communicating with the Child	Communication with the child (and parents) must use objective, nonjudgmental language. We will make it clear that the child's feelings are always okay—but some actions can make things unsafe.
Principle	Application in Policy and Communication
No Punishment for Failure to Meet Conditions	It is unlawful to exclude a pupil for failing to meet specific conditions before reinstatement (e.g. failing to attend a reintegration meeting or agree to a specific term). The reintegration meeting is a supportive planning session, not a requirement for reinstatement.

5. Types of Exclusion and Procedures

Suspension (Fixed-Period Exclusion)

A suspension temporarily removes a pupil for one or more fixed periods, up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year.

Parents of a child who has been excluded for a total of **more than five but not more than fifteen** school days in a term may make representations to the LGC. In this case, the LGC is required to consider and decide, within 50 school days of receiving notice of the suspension, whether the pupil should be reinstated.

In the absence of any representations from the parents, the LGC is not required to meet.

The LGC must consider and decide on the reinstatement of a pupil whose total number of suspension days exceeds fifteen in a term.

The LGC must also consider a suspension if it results in the pupil missing a public examination or national curriculum test.

Decision to Suspend: Only the Headteacher (or Acting Headteacher) has the power to suspend a pupil. The decision must be based on the civil standard of proof ('on the balance of probabilities') that the pupil committed the action.

Education Provision: Suitable full-time education must be arranged from the sixth school day of any suspension. The school will set and mark work for the first five school days.

Permanent Exclusion

A permanent exclusion is the removal of a pupil from the school's roll. It will only be used:

- In response to a serious breach, or persistent breaches, of the school's behaviour policy;
and
- Where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others.

LGC Review: The Local Governance Committee (LGC) must convene a meeting to consider reinstatement within 15 school days of receiving notice of the permanent exclusion.

Independent Review Panel (IRP): If the LGC upholds a permanent exclusion, CDAT has a duty to arrange an Independent Review Panel (IRP) hearing if applied for by parents within the legal timeframe.

Managed Moves: A managed move to another school is a voluntary, permanent placement. A pupil must remain on roll until formally admitted to the receiving school. Threatening permanent exclusion if a parent refuses a managed move is considered off-rolling. Trial managed moves are explicitly **unlawful**; a managed move must be permanent from the outset once the pupil is admitted to the new school.

Off-Site Direction: Under the 2026 Regulations, off-site directions to improve behaviour must be provided with at least 2 school days' written notice to parents containing prescribed statutory details (location, objectives, session times) and subject to regular formal review.

Pupil Voice: Pupil views must be sought, recorded, and considered prior to any decision regarding suspensions, permanent exclusions, managed moves, or off-site direction

Off-Rolling

CDAT schools must not use 'informal exclusions', as this constitutes a form of off-rolling. The school must not retain a pupil on roll while preventing normal attendance without a formal suspension or permanent exclusion. Any short-term alteration to a pupil's attendance must be through a formal suspension or an agreed, short-term reduced timetable arrangement.

6. Reintegration and Support Planning

The process of reintegrating a pupil after a suspension is critical to our trauma-informed and inclusive approach, ensuring a fresh start.

Mandatory Reintegration Meeting: For every suspension, the school will invite parents/carers and the pupil to a Reintegration Meeting prior to or on the day of return. This meeting is a supportive conversation designed to:

- Review the incident and listen to the views of the parent/carer and pupil, considering their age and understanding.
- Review and/or adapt the pupil's support plan to ensure their needs are being met and to prevent future unsafe actions.
- Ensure that any underlying needs, particularly those related to SEND or Early Help, are addressed through the Graduated Approach.

Support Plan: The meeting will aim to create or update a support plan, including specific and reasonable adjustments to help the pupil feel calmer, safer, and settled upon return.

Communication with the Child: The school will communicate directly with the pupil to confirm that they are ready to welcome them back and to help them feel safe.

Headteacher's Suspension/Exclusion Checklist

The checklist below is for the Headteacher or decision-maker to use immediately before issuing any formal suspension or permanent exclusion. It ensures the decision is safe, legal, and truly a last resort.

Action	Check	Notes (Evidence, date, or justification)
Section 1: The "Last Resort" Test & Fairness		
1. Facts & Proof	Is the behaviour proven (more likely than not) to have happened?	
2. Serious Harm	Is the pupil's presence seriously harming the safety, welfare, or education of others (staff or pupils)?	
3. Pupil's Voice	Did we listen to and consider the child's version of events before making a decision?	
4. Contributing Factors	Have all potential underlying causes (trauma, undiagnosed needs, home stress, bullying) been considered as mitigation?	
5. Lawful Reason	Is the exclusion for a disciplinary reason only and due to not following the Behaviour Policy? *It is not acceptable to suspend or exclude as a result of pressure from staff and/or parents/carers.	
Section 2: Inclusion & SEND Duties		
6. Reasonable Adjustments	If the pupil is registered as SEND Support or has an EHCP have all necessary reasonable adjustments / best endeavours been made and reviewed?	
7. Graduated Approach	Can we show evidence that planned SEND support and interventions were implemented?	

8. Education, Health and Care Plan	Are all requirements of EHCP and provision in place and followed at all times, by all staff? Has the Local Authority been contacted regarding an emergency review?	
9. Behaviour Policy	Has the Behaviour Policy been appropriately adapted linked to need?	
Section 3: Safety and Notification (KCSIE 2026)		
10. DSL Consultation	Was the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) consulted to assess any risk (especially child-on-child abuse/exploitation)?	
11. LA Notification	Has CDAT and the Local Authority been notified without delay?	
12. Vulnerable Pupil Alerts	Have the Social Worker and/or Virtual School Head (VSH) been notified without delay (if applicable)?	
13. Early Help Review	If this is a repeat exclusion, has the need for an Early Help referral been assessed or initiated?	
Section 4: Reintegration & Fresh Start		
14. Communication Tone	Does the letter use trauma-informed language that focuses on the action and confirms the pupil is wanted back? See templates.	
15. Education Provision	Has suitable work been set for the duration of the suspension (and AP arranged from day 6 if needed)?	
16. Reintegration Meeting	Has a supportive Reintegration Meeting been formally offered to the parents/child to plan the "fresh start"? Depending on SEND, this may need to be adapted or timed to suit child.	
17. Unconditional Return	Is the pupil's return to school unconditional (i.e., not reliant on attending the meeting or agreeing to a condition)?	

Please ensure all suspensions / exclusions are communicated to CDAT.