

Suspension Policy

Adopted Date:	01/09/2026
Review Date:	01/09/2027

Equality and Inclusion Statement

Apex Specialist Education and all learning centres are committed to equality, inclusion, belonging and respect. This statement applies to every school policy and guides our work across all learning centres.

We promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and work to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, we provide an inclusive education that enables all pupils to participate fully, overcome barriers, develop their potential and achieve positive outcomes.

We recognise diversity as a strength to be respected, celebrated and reflected throughout school life. We strive to ensure everyone feels safe, valued, represented and that they belong. This commitment informs our governance, leadership, safeguarding, curriculum, provision and practice.

Our Commitment:

We are committed to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Putting our Commitment into Practice:

The Proprietor, Governing Board and Leadership Team will:

- Consider equality implications and the impact of decisions, policies and practice on people with protected characteristics.
- Embed equality, accessibility and inclusion in the development and review of curriculum, provision and policies.
- Identify and seek to reduce or remove barriers to participation, learning, attendance, wellbeing and engagement.
- Promote belonging, positive relationships and high aspirations, particularly for pupils experiencing disadvantage or additional barriers.
- Respond to prejudice-based and discriminatory behaviour, including through safeguarding procedures where relevant.
- Monitor the implementation and impact of equality and inclusion across all learning centres.

Our commitment encompasses the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

All members of our school community share responsibility for upholding equality, inclusion, belonging and respect in their conduct, relationships and implementation of school policies.

Contents

- 01. Purpose and Aims**
- 02. Scope and Legal Framework**
- 03. Definitions**
- 04. Responsibilities**
 - 4.1 Proprietor and Governing Board**
 - 4.2 Headteacher**
 - 4.3 Whole-school DSL and Centre Safeguarding Leads**
 - 4.4 SENCO, Centre Leaders and Staff**
 - 4.5 Administration**
- 05. Prevention and Early Support**
- 06. Deciding Whether to Suspend or Permanently Exclude**
 - 6.1 General Requirements**
 - 6.2 Suspension**
 - 6.3 Permanent Exclusion**
 - 6.4 Unacceptable Reasons**
- 07. SEND, Disability and Placement Concerns**
- 08. Safeguarding and Safe Handover**
- 09. Communication and Notifications**
 - 9.1 Parents and Pupils**
 - 9.2 Professionals and Commissioners**
- 10. Education During Suspension**
- 11. Cancelling or Shortening a Suspension**
- 12. Review of Suspension and Permanent Exclusion**
 - 12.1 Purpose**
 - 12.2 Requesting Review of a Suspension**
 - 12.3 Panel Review**
 - 12.4 Participation and Evidence**
 - 12.5 Outcomes**
 - 12.6 Position Pending Review**
 - 12.7 Complaints and External Rights**
- 13. Attendance and Admission Registers**
- 14. Commissioned Provision and Alternative Placements**
- 15. Reintegration**
- 16. Preventing Informal Exclusion and Off-Rolling**
- 17. Meetings and Accessibility**
- 18. Records, Monitoring and Review**
- 19. References**

1. Purpose and Aims

This policy explains how the school makes, communicates and reviews decisions about suspension and permanent exclusion.

Our aims are to:

- protect the safety, welfare and education of pupils and staff;
- prevent incidents through effective support and positive relationships;
- ensure decisions are fair, proportionate and supported by evidence;
- maintain education and safeguarding support during absence;
- support successful reintegration;
- give pupils and parents a clear opportunity to challenge decisions; and
- identify and address patterns of repeated suspension or unequal treatment.

Permanent exclusion is a last resort.

2. . Scope and Legal Framework

Healey Learning Centre is one independent school operating across Rochdale, Stockport and Altrincham. This policy applies consistently across all three centres.

It applies to disciplinary suspension and permanent exclusion of pupils registered at the school. Section 15 explains arrangements for pupils attending provision commissioned by another school.

The policy operates alongside:

- the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended;
- the Equality Act 2010;
- the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- relevant provisions of the Children and Families Act 2014;
- applicable safeguarding and data-protection legislation;
- the school's published policies; and
- relevant parent and commissioning agreements.

The Department for Education's statutory suspension and permanent exclusion guidance for maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units does not directly apply to Healey Learning Centre.

The school may adopt suitable practices from that guidance. Where it does so, these are school policy commitments and do not create the maintained-school statutory exclusion process.

This policy must be read alongside the:

- Behaviour and Positive Behaviour Support Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- SEND Policy;

- Attendance Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Complaints Policy; and
- relevant individual pupil plans and placement agreements.

3. Definitions

Suspension: A disciplinary decision preventing a pupil from attending school for a specified, temporary period. The pupil remains registered at the school.

Permanent exclusion: A disciplinary decision that the pupil's placement at the school should end, subject to the review arrangements in this policy and applicable registration requirements.

Parent: For this policy, a parent, person with parental responsibility or person caring for the child. The school will take account of relevant court orders and safeguarding restrictions when communicating.

School day: A day on which the school is open to pupils.

Working day: Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays. Working-day deadlines in the review process continue during school holidays.

Commissioner: The local authority, school or other body arranging or funding a placement.

EHC plan: An education, health and care plan maintained by a local authority.

A suspension does not include ordinary supported time away from a classroom where the pupil remains in school and continues to receive appropriate education and supervision.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Proprietor and Governing Board

The proprietor retains responsibility for ensuring that the school meets its legal obligations.

The proprietor and Governing Board will:

- approve and oversee this policy;
- ensure adequate resources for education, safeguarding and review arrangements;
- scrutinise suspension and exclusion patterns;
- ensure that complaints and challenges are handled fairly;
- arrange suitable reviewers without conflicts of interest; and
- monitor whether agreed improvements are implemented.

4.2 Headteacher

Only the Headteacher, or a formally appointed Acting Headteacher, may authorise suspension or permanent exclusion under this policy.

The Headteacher will:

- consider evidence, pupil views, SEND and safeguarding circumstances;
- record the decision and reasons;
- ensure parents and relevant professionals are informed;
- arrange education and reintegration;
- review whether a decision remains justified; and
- provide information required for an independent consideration of a challenge.

Centre leaders must not independently send pupils home as a disciplinary sanction.

4.3 Whole-school DSL and Centre Safeguarding Leads

Callan Glean is the whole-school Designated Safeguarding Lead and coordinates safeguarding across all three centres.

The Centre DSLs are:

- Nadine Sawicki — Rochdale;
- Joanne Taylor — Stockport; and
- Abbie Chadwick-Wood — Altrincham.

The DSL or an appropriate deputy will advise on risks arising from a proposed suspension, agree protective arrangements and coordinate necessary safeguarding referrals.

4.4 SENCO, Centre Leaders and Staff

The SENCO and relevant staff will provide information about the pupil's needs, provision, reasonable adjustments, individual plans and support already attempted.

Staff will report incidents accurately, preserve relevant evidence and contribute to prevention and reintegration.

4.5 Administration

Administration will support written notifications, accurate registers, secure records and timely arrangements for meetings.

Administrative staff must not remove a pupil from the admission register without the Headteacher's authorisation and verification of the applicable legal ground.

5. Prevention and Early Support

The school will seek to prevent suspension through:

- positive relationships and consistent expectations;
- accessible teaching and communication;
- reasonable adjustments;
- regulation and de-escalation strategies;

- individual Positive Behaviour Support Plans;
- assessment of triggers, unmet needs and environmental factors;
- pastoral and therapeutic support;
- partnership with families and professionals; and
- timely review of provision.

Repeated incidents will prompt a review of support rather than an automatic increase in sanctions.

Where a pupil is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion, the school will involve parents and relevant professionals early wherever circumstances allow.

6. Deciding Whether to Suspend or Permanently Exclude

6.1 General Requirements

Decisions will be individual, fair and proportionate. They will be based on the balance of probabilities: whether the available evidence indicates that the alleged behaviour was more likely than not to have occurred.

Before deciding, the Headteacher will consider:

- the incident and available evidence;
- the pupil's account, with appropriate communication support;
- relevant witness accounts;
- provocation, bullying, exploitation or safeguarding concerns;
- the pupil's age, development and individual needs;
- whether agreed provision and reasonable adjustments were implemented;
- previous interventions and their effectiveness;
- alternatives to suspension or exclusion;
- the effect of the decision on the pupil and others; and
- arrangements for education, safety and return.

Pupils will have a meaningful opportunity to explain what happened. Where immediate protective action is necessary, the school will obtain their account as soon as practicable and reconsider the decision in light of it.

Behaviour outside school, including online behaviour, may be considered where it has a relevant connection to school safety, welfare or education.

6.2 Suspension

Suspension may be used for a serious breach, or persistent breaches, of the Behaviour Policy where the Headteacher considers it necessary and proportionate after considering the matters above.

Every suspension must specify:

- its reasons;
- its start and end;
- the date and time of return; and
- education and safeguarding arrangements.

The period must be the shortest justified by the circumstances. Open-ended suspension is not permitted.

Any proposed extension requires a fresh, recorded decision, updated arrangements and written notification. A pupil must not remain absent simply because a meeting, investigation or placement discussion is incomplete.

6.3 Permanent Exclusion

Permanent exclusion will be considered only where:

- there has been a serious breach or persistent breaches of the Behaviour Policy; and
- allowing the pupil to remain would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others.

The Headteacher must explain why reasonable alternatives would not adequately address the situation.

The decision will be subject to the automatic review in section 13.

6.4 Unacceptable Reasons

The school will not suspend or permanently exclude a pupil:

- simply because they have SEND or a disability;
- because appropriate agreed provision has not been arranged;
- because of poor academic attainment;
- because a parent has complained;
- to improve school performance measures;
- to pressure a family into withdrawing the pupil; or
- because a reintegration meeting or other return condition has not been completed.

7. SEND, Disability and Placement Concerns

The Headteacher will consider whether behaviour arose from disability or unmet needs and whether suspension or exclusion would amount to unlawful discrimination.

The school will review:

- relevant EHC plan provision;
- reasonable adjustments;
- communication and sensory needs;

- Positive Behaviour Support Plans;
- health and therapeutic advice; and
- whether staff had the information and support needed to implement these arrangements.

Where concerns suggest that an EHC plan or placement requires review, the school will contact the commissioning local authority and request an urgent review where appropriate.

A concern about the suitability or sustainability of a placement must be addressed through an explicit placement-review process. It must not be disguised as disciplinary suspension.

Any non-disciplinary proposal to end a placement requires separate consideration of contractual arrangements, equality duties, safeguarding and continuity of education.

8. Safeguarding and Safe Handover

Before a suspended pupil leaves, the Headteacher and DSL or deputy will consider:

- whether the pupil can safely return home;
- available adult supervision;
- transport and collection;
- risks of exploitation, missing episodes, self-harm or domestic abuse;
- medication, health needs and essential support; and
- whether children's social care or another agency must be involved.

The school will agree a safe handover. A pupil must not simply be directed to leave where doing so would expose them to foreseeable harm.

If a parent cannot collect the pupil safely, staff will maintain appropriate supervision while alternative arrangements are agreed.

A named member of staff will coordinate contact during suspension. The frequency and method will reflect the pupil's needs and risks.

Urgent safeguarding action will not wait for completion of disciplinary paperwork.

9. Communication and Notifications

9.1 Parents and Pupils

The Headteacher will inform parents without delay, normally by telephone followed by written confirmation on the same working day.

The written notice will explain:

- the decision and reasons;
- the relevant Behaviour Policy provisions;
- the evidence relied upon, subject to lawful confidentiality restrictions;
- how the pupil's views and needs were considered;
- the duration and return arrangements, or that permanent exclusion is proposed;

- education and welfare arrangements;
- a named school contact; and
- how to request review and the applicable deadlines.

Information will be explained to the pupil in an accessible way. Interpretation or other communication support will be arranged where needed.

9.2 Professionals and Commissioners

The school will promptly inform the relevant commissioner of suspensions and permanent exclusion decisions, in accordance with placement arrangements and safeguarding needs.

Where applicable, the school will notify and involve:

- the pupil's social worker;
- the virtual school head;
- the EHC plan case officer;
- the placing or home local authority; and
- the commissioning school.

The Headteacher will notify the proprietor of permanent exclusions and promptly report repeated suspensions, significant safeguarding concerns and decisions affecting public examinations.

All legally required register returns and other notifications will be made separately from these operational communications.

10. Education During Suspension

The school will arrange accessible learning from the first school day of suspension.

A named member of staff will:

- explain the work and provide necessary resources;
- maintain suitable teaching contact and feedback;
- make reasonable adjustments;
- check participation and barriers to access; and
- liaise with the family and commissioner.

Sending work home will not, by itself, be treated as sufficient where the pupil cannot access it or requires additional teaching or support.

For any suspension extending beyond five school days, the school will secure a documented plan for suitable full-time education beginning no later than the sixth school day. This is an Apex commitment under this policy. The proprietor will ensure responsibility and funding are agreed; unresolved commissioning discussions must not leave the pupil without suitable provision.

For pupils with social workers or who are looked after, the school will seek appropriate

supported education from the first day with the relevant professionals.

Where a permanent exclusion is under review, the school will maintain suitable interim education arrangements and work urgently with the local authority or commissioner on continuity.

If a compulsory-school-age pupil is without suitable education, the school will alert the local authority promptly so that its responsibilities, including any duty under section 19 of the Education Act 1996, can be considered.

11. Cancelling or Shortening a Suspension

The Headteacher will reconsider a decision where new evidence or changed circumstances justify doing so.

If a suspension is cancelled or shortened:

- parents and the pupil will be informed promptly;
- relevant staff, commissioners and professionals will be notified;
- return arrangements will be confirmed;
- records will show the original decision, its revision and the reasons; and
- the pupil will receive appropriate support to return.

Records must remain accurate. Cancellation must not be used to conceal time spent away from school.

The Headteacher may withdraw a permanent exclusion decision before completion of review, with prompt notification and safe reinstatement arrangements.

12. Review of Suspension and Permanent Exclusion

12.1 Purpose

The school provides its own review procedure. It is not the statutory independent review panel process for maintained schools and academies.

The review considers the evidence, fairness, proportionality, support provided, equality considerations and compliance with this policy.

The timescales below are school commitments.

12.2 Requesting Review of a Suspension

A parent may request review within ten working days of receiving written notification.

Requests should be addressed to the Chair of Governors through school administration and marked confidential. Administration will forward them promptly and acknowledge receipt within two working days.

The decision notice will provide the current contact details.

The school will assist a parent who cannot submit a written request. Reasonable extensions

will be considered where disability, language needs, illness or other significant circumstances affect access.

A governor or proprietor representative with no previous involvement will review the suspension, normally within five working days of receiving the request. A written outcome will normally follow within two working days.

The reviewer may uphold, shorten or cancel the suspension and recommend changes to support or procedure.

A suspension may be reviewed after it has ended. An adverse finding will lead to appropriate correction or annotation of records.

12.3 Panel Review

Parents dissatisfied with the suspension review may request a panel hearing within ten working days of the outcome.

Every permanent exclusion will receive an automatic panel review, whether or not parents request it.

The proprietor will arrange a panel of at least three people who were not directly involved in the decision. At least one member will be independent of the school's management and running.

The panel will normally meet within ten working days of the permanent exclusion decision or request for a suspension panel hearing.

12.4 Participation and Evidence

Parents and the pupil will be invited to participate and may be accompanied. Communication support and reasonable adjustments will be available.

Relevant professionals may contribute with appropriate consent or another lawful basis.

The school will normally provide the evidence bundle at least three working days before the hearing. Where disclosure is restricted, it will explain the restriction and provide sufficient information for a fair response where possible.

The Headteacher will explain the decision. Parents and the pupil may present their account and challenge the evidence.

The panel may adjourn where necessary to secure fairness. Any delay must be explained in writing with a revised date and continuing education arrangements.

12.5 Outcomes

The panel may:

- uphold the decision;
- shorten or cancel a suspension;
- overturn permanent exclusion and direct reinstatement; and

- require changes to support, records or procedures.

The proprietor will give effect to the panel's decision.

The panel will issue written findings and reasons, normally within five working days of the hearing. Any reinstatement decision will specify a prompt return date and necessary support.

12.6 Position Pending Review

A suspension does not automatically continue because a review is pending.

Following a permanent exclusion decision, the written notice must explain interim attendance and education arrangements. These will be kept under review.

The school will not remove the pupil from roll on the basis of permanent exclusion before its automatic panel review concludes.

12.7 Complaints and External Rights

This procedure operates alongside the Complaints Policy. Parents will be told how any complaint about the process will be addressed without unnecessary duplication.

Nothing in this policy removes applicable contractual rights, the right to obtain independent advice or the right to bring a disability-discrimination claim to the appropriate tribunal.

Using the school's procedure does not suspend external legal time limits.

13. Attendance and Admission Registers

Pupils remain on the admission register during suspension.

Attendance will be recorded using the applicable national codes and their conditions. Staff must distinguish between absence due to suspension, attendance at another registered school and approved education elsewhere.

The Headteacher will ensure the legal ground for any deletion is verified under the current pupil-registration regulations.

Deletion must not occur merely because:

- a pupil has been suspended;
- a placement review is underway;
- a commissioner has been asked to find another placement; or
- parents have raised a complaint.

Before deletion, the school will make required returns and share relevant information with the local authority. Where a destination is unknown or suitable education is not secured, the school will actively cooperate with children-missing-education procedures.

Child protection information will be transferred securely and promptly to an appropriate receiving setting in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

14. Commissioned Provision and Alternative Placements

Where a pupil attends provision commissioned by another school, the school will establish:

- the pupil's registration arrangements;
- who holds disciplinary decision-making responsibility;
- notification and review arrangements;
- education responsibilities if attendance is interrupted; and
- safeguarding and information-sharing arrangements.

A decision about access to commissioned provision does not itself authorise exclusion from the commissioning school.

Immediate safety measures will be coordinated with the commissioner. They must not become an unrecorded or indefinite removal from education.

Healey will not claim statutory off-site-direction powers that do not apply to it. Any alternative placement must have a lawful basis, appropriate agreement, clear objectives, safeguarding checks and review arrangements.

Moving a pupil between Healey's centres must not be used to conceal exclusion or bypass review of their needs.

15. Reintegration

Every suspension will have a reintegration plan proportionate to the pupil's needs.

This may include:

- a named adult to support return;
- opportunities to discuss the incident without humiliation;
- review of communication, sensory or environmental adjustments;
- changes to teaching or pastoral support;
- restoration of relationships where appropriate;
- review of the Positive Behaviour Support Plan;
- support for other affected pupils; and
- agreed review dates.

The school will consider what adults and systems can change as well as what support the pupil needs to respond differently.

A reintegration meeting will normally take place before or on return. A parent's or pupil's inability to attend must not delay the pupil's return.

Part-time timetables must not be used as disciplinary sanctions or informal extensions of suspension. Any exceptional reduction for the pupil's individual needs must follow the Attendance Policy, be time-limited, include safeguarding and education arrangements, and have a planned return to full-time education.

16. Preventing Informal Exclusion and Off-Rolling

The school will not:

- ask parents to keep a pupil at home as an unrecorded disciplinary measure;
- pressure parents to withdraw or electively home educate;
- describe disciplinary send-homes as authorised absence to avoid this policy;
- keep a pupil away indefinitely while awaiting a new placement; or
- use centre transfers or reduced timetables to disguise exclusion.

Any disciplinary prevention of normal attendance must be considered and recorded under this policy.

Staff must report concerns about informal exclusion to the Headteacher or proprietor, using whistleblowing procedures where appropriate.

17. Meetings and Accessibility

Meetings may take place in person or remotely where participants can engage fairly.

The school will consider preferences, disability, communication needs, travel difficulties and access to technology.

If technical difficulties prevent a fair hearing, the meeting will pause or be rearranged promptly. Interim education and safeguarding arrangements will continue.

A pupil may contribute through an advocate, supported conversation, written account or another accessible method.

18. Records, Monitoring and Review

The school will keep secure records of:

- incidents and evidence;
- pupil and parent representations;
- support and reasonable adjustments;
- reasons for decisions and their duration;
- safeguarding assessments;
- notifications;
- education provided;
- review outcomes;
- reintegration; and
- repeated patterns or unmet needs.

The Governing Board will review anonymised information at least termly across all three centres. Serious concerns will be escalated sooner.

Monitoring will consider:

- frequency and duration;
- repeated suspensions;
- differences between centres and pupil groups;
- disability and SEND;
- looked-after status and social-care involvement;
- access to learning during absence;
- informal send-homes and reduced timetables;
- outcomes of reviews; and
- the effectiveness of prevention and reintegration.

The Headteacher will review this policy annually and after significant changes or learning from cases. The proprietor will approve revisions and ensure relevant staff understand them.

19. References

This policy is informed by:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended.
- Independent School Standards guidance, April 2026.
- Equality Act 2010 and DfE advice for schools.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Children and Families Act 2014, where applicable.
- Education Act 1996, including section 19.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Children missing education: statutory guidance, September 2025.
- Current DfE guidance on school attendance and behaviour.
- Current Ofsted inspection guidance for non-association independent schools.
- DfE suspension and permanent exclusion guidance effective July 2026, used as a reference for appropriate practice within its stated scope.
- Current local safeguarding procedures and relevant placement agreements.