

St Thomas' C of E VA Primary School



School Exclusion Policy

| Date Agreed | Review date | Changes |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| February 2022 | February 2024 | None |
| March 2024 | February 2026 | Awaiting ratification Feb'26 |
| | | |

Signed:

Chair of Governors

Date:

March 2024

Contents

Statement of intent

At St Thomas', we understand that good behaviour and discipline is essential for promoting a high quality of education. The Christian character of our school contributes to the academic achievement, personal development and wellbeing of all our learners. Children are taught to value one another, showing consideration for the needs and views of others. As a faith school we actively seek to promote the teachings of Jesus, upholding the principles of justice and compassion.

Amongst other disciplinary sanctions, the school recognises that exclusion of pupils may be necessary where there has been a serious breach, or consistent breaches, of the school's Behaviour Policy. Excluding a pupil may also be required in instances where allowing the pupil to remain in school would be damaging to the education and welfare of themselves or others; in all cases, excluding pupils should only be used as a means of last resort.

The school has created this policy to clearly define the legal responsibilities of the headteacher, governing board and Stockport Education Authority when responding to pupil exclusions, in order to ensure that they are dealt with both fairly and lawfully, and in line with DfE statutory guidance.

This policy also aims to secure a pupil's right to an education despite having been excluded, by ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place.

1. Legal framework, legislation and statutory guidance

At St. Thomas' CE VA Primary School, we follow the statutory exclusion guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) when making decisions regarding exclusion from school and carrying out the exclusion process.

The current version of the DfE exclusion guidance '**Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England: Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion**' can be found on the school exclusion page of the Gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>

All maintained schools in England must have regard to this guidance when carrying out their functions in relation to exclusions. The phrase 'must have regard', when used in this context, means that everyone involved in the exclusion process at St Thomas' will follow the sections of statutory guidance unless there is a good reason not to in a particular case, in which case the reason must be justified.

1.1. This policy has due regard to the related statutory legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 2002 (as amended by The Education Act 2011)
- The School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education Act 1996
- The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended 2014)
- The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)
- The Equality Act 2010

1.2. This policy also has due regard to statutory and non-statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2017) 'Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England'
- DfE (2016) 'Behaviour and discipline in schools'
- DfE (2015) 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years'

1.3. This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies and procedures:

- Relationships and Behaviour Policy

2. Grounds for exclusion

2.1 The school will only exclude a pupil where it is absolutely necessary, and where all other possible disciplinary sanctions, as detailed in the school's Behaviour Policy, have failed to be successful.

2.2 The following examples of behaviour may underline the school's decision to exclude a pupil:

- Any incident which poses a risk to other pupils or members of staff, e.g. bringing a weapon onto the premises
- Any incidents which breach the law
- Persistent and severe bullying
- Verbal and physical abuse
- Constant disruption
- A single, serious and major incident, e.g. serious assault on another individual leading to injury

2.3 Pupils can be excluded on a fixed-period basis, i.e. up to 45 school days within a year, or permanently. Similarly, pupils can be permanently excluded following a fixed-period exclusion, where further evidence is presented.

2.4. In all cases, the Headteacher will decide which exclusion period a pupil will be subject to, depending on what the circumstances warrant.

2.5. As a maintained school, the school has the power to direct a pupil off-site to improve their behaviour.

3. The Headteacher's power to exclude

3.1 Only the Headteacher, or acting Headteacher, can exclude a pupil from the school, and is able to decide whether this is on a fixed-period or permanent basis. All exclusions will only be issued on disciplinary grounds. A permanent exclusion will be taken as a last resort. A decision to exclude a pupil will be taken only in response to serious or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy, **and** if allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others

3.2. The headteacher is able to exclude pupils from the premises where their behaviour is disruptive during lunchtime. All lunchtime exclusions will be counted as half of a school day.

3.3. The head teacher is able to consider a pupil's disruptive behaviour outside of the school premises as grounds for exclusion, in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

3.4. Any decision made to exclude a pupil will be lawful, proportionate and fair, with respect to legislation relating directly to exclusions and the school's wider legal duties.

3.5. All exclusions will be formally recorded.

3.6. When sending a pupil home following any exclusion, the head teacher will ensure that they exercise their duty of care at all times and will always inform the parents.

3.7. The head teacher will apply the civil standard of proof when responding to the facts relating to an exclusion, i.e. that 'on the balance of probabilities' it is more likely than not that the facts are true.

3.8. The head teacher may withdraw any exclusion that has not already been reviewed by the governing board.

3.9. At all times, the head teacher will take into account their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years, ensuring that they do not discriminate on any grounds, e.g. race, sex, disability, and will not increase the severity of a pupil's exclusion on these grounds.

4. Factors to consider when excluding a pupil

4.1. When considering the exclusion of a pupil, the head teacher will:

- Allow the pupil the opportunity to present their case.
- Take into account any contributing factors that are identified after a case of poor behaviour has occurred, e.g. if the pupil's wellbeing has been compromised, or they have been subjected to bullying.
- Take into consideration whether the pupil has received multiple exclusions or is approaching the legal limit of 45 excluded days per school year, and whether exclusion is serving as an effective sanction.
- Consider early intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour, including liaising with external agencies, to assess pupils who demonstrate consistently poor behaviour.

4.2. The head teacher will consider what extra support may be available for vulnerable pupil groups whose exclusion rates are higher, in order to reduce their risk of exclusion, including the following:

- LAC
- Pupils eligible for free school meals
- Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Certain ethnic groups

4.3. In light of the above, the head teacher will consider avoiding permanently excluding LAC pupils or pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. For other vulnerable groups, additional support will be considered.

4.4. Where any member of staff has concerns about vulnerable pupil groups and their behaviour, they will report this to the head teacher who will consider what extra support or alternative placement is required.

4.5. The head teacher will work in conjunction with the parents of any pupil with additional needs, in order to establish the most effective support mechanisms.

5. Duty to inform parents

5.1. Following the head teacher's decision to exclude a pupil, they will immediately inform, in person or by telephone, the parents of the period of the exclusion and the reasons behind this.

5.2. The head teacher will inform the parents in writing (electronically if written permission has been received from the parents for notices to be sent this way) of the following:

- The reason(s) for the exclusion
- The length of the fixed-period exclusion or, for a permanent exclusion, the fact that it is permanent
- Information about parents' right to raise any representations about the exclusion to the governing board, including how the pupil will be involved in this and how the representations will be made
- Their right to attend a meeting where there is a legal requirement for the governing board to consider the exclusion, and the fact that they are able to bring an accompanying individual and any relevant sources of free, impartial information
- The arrangements that have been made for the pupil to continue their education prior to the organisation of any alternative provision, or the pupil's return to school

5.3. Where the pupil is of compulsory school age, the head teacher will inform the parents by the end of the afternoon session that:

- For the first five days of the exclusion (or until the start date of any alternative provision or the end of the exclusion where this is earlier), parents are legally required to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without justification, and that parents may receive a penalty fine if they fail to do so.

5.4. Where the head teacher has arranged alternative provision, they will also inform the parents of the following:

- The start and end date for any provision of full-time education
- The address at which the provision will take place
- Any information necessary for the pupil to identify the person they should report to on the starting date

5.5. Where the head teacher is unable to provide information on alternative provision by the end of the afternoon session, they will provide the information in a subsequent written notice without further delay, and within 48 hours of the pupil beginning the provision.

5.6. If the alternative provision is due to begin before the sixth day of exclusion, the head teacher is able to give less than 48 hours of notice, with parental consent.

5.7. If the head teacher has decided to exclude the pupil for a further fixed period following their original exclusion, or to permanently exclude them, they will notify the parents without delay and issue a new exclusion notice to parents.

6. Duty to inform the governing board and LA

6.1. The head teacher will inform the Chair of the governing board and LA, without delay, of the following:

- Any fixed term or permanent exclusions (including where a fixed-period exclusion is followed by a decision to permanently exclude the pupil)
- Any exclusions which would result in the pupil being excluded for more than five school days in a term (or more than 10 lunchtimes)
- Any exclusions which would result in the pupil being absent from an examination or national curriculum test

6.2. All notifications to the governing board and LA will include the reasons for exclusion and the duration of any fixed-period exclusion.

6.3. If the pupil who is excluded lives outside the LA in which the school is located, the head teacher will notify the pupil's 'home authority'.

7. Arranging education for excluded pupils

7.1. For any fixed-period exclusions of more than five school days, the governing board will arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil, which will begin no later than the sixth day of exclusion.

7.2. Where a pupil receives consecutive fixed-period exclusions, these will be regarded as cumulative, and full-time education will still have to be provided from the sixth day of exclusion.

7.3. For permanent exclusions, full-time education will also be provided for the pupil from the sixth day of exclusion.

7.4. The governing board will not arrange full-time education for any pupil who is currently in their final year of compulsory education, and who does not have any further public examinations to sit.

7.5. The governing board is aware that it is beneficial to excluded pupils to begin their alternative education arrangements before the sixth day of exclusion. The governing board will always attempt to arrange alternative provision before the sixth day of exclusion.

7.6. Where it is not possible to arrange alternative provision during the first five days of exclusion, the school will ensure that they take reasonable steps to set and mark work for the excluded pupil.

7.7. If a pupil with SEND has been excluded, the governing board will ensure that:

- Any alternative provision is arranged in consultation with the pupil's parents, who are able to request preferences.
- When identifying alternative provision, any EHC plan is reviewed/the pupil's needs are reassessed, also in consultation with the pupil's parents.

8. Considering exclusions

8.1. The governing board will consider any representations made by parents in regard to exclusion.

8.2. Parents and, where requested, a friend or representative, the head teacher and a member of the Local Authority will be invited to attend any consideration of exclusions and will be able to make representations.

8.3. Any meeting to consider reinstatement of a pupil will be arranged at a date and time convenient for all parties, and in compliance with any statutory time limits.

8.4. The governing board will consider the reinstatement of an excluded pupil, where:

- The exclusion is permanent.
- The exclusion is fixed-period, and would bring the pupil's total number of excluded school days to more than 15 in any given term.
- The exclusion would result in the pupil missing a public examination.

8.5. In the case of a fixed-period exclusion where the pupil's total number of excluded days is more than five but less than 15 school days within a term, if requested by the parents, the governing board will consider exclusions within 50 school days of receiving notification.

8.6. In the case of a fixed period exclusion, where the pupil's total number of excluded school days does not amount to more than five, in the absence of any such representations, the governing board is not required to meet and cannot direct the reinstatement of the pupil.

8.7. Where exclusion would result in a pupil missing a public examination, the governing board will consider the exclusion before the test to decide whether the pupil should be reinstated in time to take the examination.

8.8. If it is not practicable for a sufficient number of governors to consider the decision before the examination, the chair of governors will consider the exclusion alone and decide whether or not to reinstate the pupil. In light of the above, the governing board will also consider whether it would be appropriate to allow the excluded pupil to enter the premises to take the examination.

8.9. When considering the reinstatement of an excluded pupil, the governing board will:

- Only discuss the exclusion with the parties present at the meeting.
- Ask for any written evidence prior to the meeting.
- Circulate any written evidence and information to all parties, at least five school days in advance of the meeting.
- Allow pupils and parents to be accompanied by a person of their choice at the meeting.
- Consider what reasonable adjustments need to be made to support the attendance and contribution of parties at the meeting.
- Identify the steps needed to enable and encourage the excluded pupil to attend the meeting and speak on their behalf, or how they may contribute personal views by other means if attendance is not possible.
- Consider the interests and circumstances of the excluded pupil, including the grounds for exclusion.

9. Reaching a decision

9.1. After considering exclusions, the governing board will either:

- Decline to reinstate the pupil.
- Direct the reinstatement of the pupil immediately, or on a specified date.

9.2. If reinstatement would make no practical difference, e.g. if the pupil has already returned to school following a fixed-period exclusion or the parents make clear they do not want their child reinstated, the governing board will still consider whether the pupil should be officially reinstated, and whether the Headteacher's decision to exclude the pupil was fair, lawful and proportionate, based on the evidence presented.

9.3. The governing board will apply the civil standard of proof when responding to the facts relating to an exclusion, i.e. that 'on the balance of probabilities' it is more likely than not that the facts are true.

9.4. In order to reach a decision, the governing board will:

- Identify the steps they intend to take to ensure that all parties involved will have the opportunity to participate and present their views.
- Ensure that minutes are taken of the meeting as a record of the evidence that was considered.
- Ask all parties to withdraw from the meeting before concluding their decision.
- Consider whether the exclusion of the pupil was lawful, proportionate and fair, taking into account the head teacher's legal duties and any evidence that was presented to the governing board in relation to the decision to exclude.
- Record the outcome of the decision on the pupil's educational records, along with copies, which will be kept for at least six months.
- Make a note of their findings, where they have considered an exclusion but cannot reinstate the pupil.

10. Notification of considered exclusions

10.1. The governing board will notify the parents of the excluded pupil, the head teacher and the Local Authority of their decision following the consideration of an exclusion, in writing and without delay.

10.2. In the case of a permanent exclusion, where the governing board decides not to reinstate the pupil, they will notify the parents:

- That it is permanent, and their right for it to be reviewed by an independent review panel.
- Of the date by which an application for review must be made.
- Of the name and address of whom the review application should be submitted to.
- That any application should set out the grounds on which it is being made and that, where appropriate, this should include reference to how a pupil's SEND are considered relevant to the exclusion.
- That, regardless of whether a pupil has been identified as having SEND, the parents have a right to require the governing board to ensure a SEND expert attends the review.
- Of the role of the SEND expert that will attend the review, and that the parents will not be charged for this.
- That they are required to make it clear if they wish for a SEND expert to attend the review.
- That they may appoint someone at their own expense to make representations to the panel.

10.3. The governing board will also notify parents that, if they believe an exclusion has been issued as a result of discrimination, then they are required to make a claim under the Equality Act 2010 to the First-tier Tribunal (SEND), and that this should be within six months of when the discrimination allegedly took place.

10.4. After any conclusion, the governing board will notify the parents, and all other parties involved, of the decision that was made and the reasoning for this, in sufficient detail.

11. Removing permanently excluded pupils from the school register

11.1. The head teacher will remove pupils from the school register if:

- 15 school days have passed since the parents were notified of the governing board's decision not to reinstate the pupil and no application for an independent panel review has been received.
- The parents have stated in writing that they will not be applying for an independent panel review following a permanent exclusion.

11.2. If an application for an independent panel review has been made within 15 school days, the head teacher will wait until the review has been determined, or abandoned, and until the governing board has completed

any reconsideration that the panel recommended or directed it to carry out, before removing the pupil from the school register.

11.3. If a pupil's name is to be removed from the register, the head teacher will make a return to the LA, which will include:

- All the particulars which were entered in the register.
- The address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides.
- The grounds upon which the pupil's name is to be removed from the register.

11.4. Any return to the LA will be made as soon as the grounds for removal are met and no later than the date in which the pupil's name was removed.

11.5. If a pupil's name has been removed from the register and a discrimination claim is made, the pupil may be reinstated following a decision made by the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) or County Court.

11.6. Whilst a pupil's name remains on the admissions register, the appropriate code will be used to mark the pupil's attendance:

- Code B: Education off-site
- Code D: Dual registration
- Code E: Absent and not attending alternative provision

12. Independent review panel

12.1. The Local Authority will review the governing board's decision not to reinstate a permanently excluded pupil, if the parents submit their application for this within the required time frame.

12.2. Parents are required to submit their applications within:

- 15 school days of the governing board's notification of their decision.
- 15 school days of the final determination of a discriminatory claim made under the Equality Act 2010.

12.3. Any application made outside of this timeframe will not be reviewed.

12.4. Parents are able to request an independent panel review even if they did not make a case to, or attend, the governing board's initial consideration of the exclusion.

12.5. The Local Authority will adhere to all statutory guidelines when conducting an independent panel review, as outlined in the DfE's statutory guidance document 'Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England' 2017.

3. Appointing a SEND expert

13.1. If requested by parents in their application for an independent review panel, the Local Authority will appoint a SEND expert to attend the panel and cover the associated costs of this appointment.

13.2. The Local Authority will make arrangements to indemnify the SEND expert against any legal costs and expenses reasonably incurred as a result of any decisions or actions connected to the review and which are taken in good faith.

13.3. Parents have a right to request the attendance of a SEND expert at a review, regardless of whether the school recognises that their child has SEND.

13.4. The SEND expert's role is set out in section 14 of this policy.

13.5. Individuals will not serve as a SEND expert if they have, or at any time have had, any connection with the Local Authority parents or pupil, or the incident leading to the exclusion, which might reasonably be taken to raise doubts about their ability to act impartially; however, an individual is not taken to have such a connection solely because they are an employee of the Local Authority

13.6. The SEND expert will be a professional with first-hand experience of the assessment and support of SEND, as well as an understanding of the legal requirements on schools in relation to SEND. Examples of

suitable individuals might include educational psychologists; specialist SEND teachers; special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs); and behaviour support teachers.

13.7. Recently retired individuals are not precluded from fulfilling this role; however, the Local Authority will, during interview, assess the knowledge of such individuals in order to ensure that they have a good understanding of current practice and the legal requirements on schools in relation to SEND.

13.8. Whilst individuals are not automatically taken to be partial simply because they are an employee of, or contracted by, the Local Authority they will not have had any previous involvement in the assessment or support of SEND for the excluded pupil, or siblings of the excluded pupil. The Local Authority will request that prospective SEND experts declare any conflict of interest at the earliest opportunity.

13.9. The final decision on the appointment of an SEND expert is for the Local Authority to make, but it will take reasonable steps to ensure that parents have confidence in the impartiality and capability of the SEND expert. Where possible, this will include offering parents a choice of SEND expert. In order to meet its duties within the statutory time frame, the Local Authority will consider maintaining a list of individuals capable of performing the role of SEND expert in advance of a request.

13.10. The Local Authority will determine the amount of any payment in relation to the appointment of the SEND expert, such as financial loss, travel and subsistence allowances.

14. The role of a SEND expert

14.1. The SEND expert's role is analogous to an expert witness, providing (orally, in writing or both) impartial advice to the panel on how SEND might be relevant to the exclusion. The SEND expert will base their advice on the evidence provided to the panel. The SEND expert's role does not include making an assessment of the pupil's SEND.

14.2. The focus of the SEND expert's advice will be on whether the school's policies which relate to SEND, or the application of these policies in relation to the excluded pupil, were legal, reasonable and procedurally fair. If the SEND expert believes that this was not the case, they will, where possible, advise the panel on the possible contribution that this could have made to the circumstances of the pupil's exclusion.

14.3. Where the school does not recognise that a pupil has SEND, the SEND expert will advise the panel on whether they believe the school acted in a legal, reasonable and procedurally fair way with respect to the identification of any SEND that the pupil may potentially have, and any contribution that this could have made to the circumstances of the pupil's exclusion.

14.4. The SEND expert will not criticise a school's policies or actions simply because they believe a different approach should have been followed or because another school might have taken a different approach.

15. Appointing a clerk

15.1. The Local Authority will decide whether to appoint a clerk to the independent review panel, or to make alternative arrangements to administer the panel.

15.2. Where a clerk is appointed. The Local Authority will ensure that the clerk did not serve as clerk to the governing board when the decision was made not to reinstate the pupil.

16. The role of a clerk

16.1. The clerk's role is to provide advice to the panel and parties to the review on procedure, law and statutory guidance on exclusions.

16.2. The clerk will:

- Identify, in advance of the meeting, whether the excluded pupil wishes to attend the panel hearing, taking reasonable steps to enable the pupil to feedback their views, irrespective of their attendance.

- Identify, in advance of the meeting, whether any alleged victims of the incident(s) leading up to the exclusion wish to attend the panel hearing, taking reasonable steps to enable them to feedback their views, irrespective of their attendance.
- Ensure that the panel is able to hear from any witnesses to the incident(s) leading to the exclusion, taking into account the fact that some of these people may be pupils at the school (Pupils under 18-years-old will not be allowed to appear in person without parental consent).
- Inform the parents, head teacher, governing board and the Local Authority that they are entitled to: make oral and written representations to the panel; attend the hearing; and be represented.
- Ensure that all parties are: - Provided with copies of relevant papers at least five school days before the review, notifying the panel if any requested documents have not been provided in case the panel wishes to adjourn until a later date. - Informed about who is attending the meeting, and what their roles are.
- Attend the review and ensure that minutes are produced in accordance with instructions from the independent review panel.

16.3. Where a clerk is not appointed, the Local Authority will undertake the functions outlined in paragraphs 16.1 and 16.2 of this policy.

17. The duties of independent review panel members in the conduct of a review panel

17.1. The role of the panel is to review the governing board's decision not to reinstate a permanently excluded pupil. In reviewing the decision, the panel will consider the interests and circumstances of the excluded pupil, including the circumstances in which the pupil was excluded, and have regard to the interests of other pupils and people working at the school.

17.2. The panel will apply the civil standard of proof, (i.e. 'on the balance of probabilities' it is more likely than not that a fact is true) rather than the criminal standard of 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

17.3. Following the review, the panel will do one of the following:

- Uphold the decision.
- Recommend that the governing board reconsiders reinstatement.
- Quash the decision and direct that the governing board reconsiders reinstatement.

17.4. The panel's decision does not have to be unanimous and can be decided by majority vote. It is binding on the pupil, parents, the governing board, head teacher and the LA.

18. Reconsidering reinstatement following a review

18.1. Where the independent review panel instructs the governing board to reconsider their decision not to reinstate a pupil, they will do so within 10 school days of being given notice of the review panel's decision.

18.2. The school is aware that if the governing board does not offer to reinstate the pupil, then a £4,000 adjustment will be made to the school's budget.

18.3. If, following reconsideration, the governing board offers to reinstate the pupil but the parents decline, no adjustment will be made to the school's budget.

18.4. Following reconsideration, the governing board will notify the parents, the head teacher and the LA of their reconsidered decision and the reasons for this.

19. Criminal investigations

19.1. The head teacher will not postpone taking a decision to exclude a pupil due to a police investigation being underway, or any criminal proceedings that are in place.

19.2. The head teacher will give particular consideration when deciding to exclude a pupil where evidence is limited by a police investigation, to ensure that any decision made is fair and reasonable.

19.3. If the governing board is required to consider the head teacher's decision in these circumstances, they will not postpone the meeting and will make a decision based on the evidence available.

20. Training requirements

20.1. The Local Authority will ensure that all independent review panel members and clerks have received training within the two years prior to the date of the review.

20.2. Training will cover:

- The requirements of the legislation, regulations and statutory guidance governing exclusions.
- The need for the panel to observe procedural fairness and the rules of natural justice.
- The role of the chair of a review panel.
- The role of the clerk to a review panel.
- The duties of head teachers, governing boards and the panel under the Equality Act 2010.
- The effect of section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the need to act in a manner compatible with human rights protected by that Act.

20.3. Clerks will also have an up-to-date understanding on developments in case law which are relevant to exclusion.

21. Monitoring and review

21.1. This exclusion policy will be reviewed annually basis by the Head teacher, senior Leadership team and in conjunction with the governing board and with any published changes to the statutory DfE exclusion guidance.

21.2 The Headteacher monitors the number of exclusions every term and reports back to the Governors.

21.3 All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.

Signed: Chair of Governors

Date: February 2024