



Suspension, Permanent Exclusion and Placement Termination Policy

Approved by:	Paula Tucker	Date: 1/9/26
Review by:	1/9/27	

Contents

1. Policy statement and aims
2. Status and legal framework
3. Definitions and scope
4. Principles
5. Decision-making responsibilities
6. Suspension procedure
7. Permanent exclusion of a ReFocus-registered pupil
8. Ending a commissioned placement
9. Pupils with additional vulnerabilities
10. Education and welfare during suspension
11. Review and appeal
12. Reconsidering or rescinding a decision
13. Reintegration
14. Admission and attendance registers
15. Monitoring and oversight
16. Linked policies

1. Policy Statement and Aims

1.1 ReFocus is committed to providing high-quality education within a safe, structured and supportive environment. We recognise that many of our pupils have experienced challenges in mainstream education, and our approach prioritises relationships, consistency, inclusion and therapeutic support.

1.2 Restorative practice, appropriate support and reasonable adjustments will be used wherever possible. Suspension, permanent exclusion or ending a commissioned placement may nevertheless be necessary where this is a proportionate response to serious or persistent behaviour, or where continued attendance would create a serious risk to education, welfare or safety.

1.3 ReFocus aims to:

- make decisions fairly, consistently and transparently;
- listen to pupils and involve parents or carers;
- take full account of safeguarding, SEND, disability, trauma and other contextual factors;
- work closely with commissioning schools, local authorities and relevant professionals;
- maintain continuity of education and minimise the risk of a pupil becoming missing from education or NEET; and
- use permanent exclusion or placement termination only as a last resort, while maintaining a safe learning environment.

1.4 ReFocus will not use informal or unrecorded exclusions, unlawfully remove pupils from the admission register, or make a pupil's return conditional on a parent attending a reintegration meeting. A pupil will not be suspended or excluded because they have SEND or a protected characteristic. Where behaviour may be connected to disability or additional need, ReFocus will consider unmet need, appropriate provision and reasonable adjustments before reaching a decision.

2. Status and Legal Framework

2.1 ReFocus is an independent alternative provision school. The Department for Education statutory guidance Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement does not apply directly to ordinary independent schools. ReFocus nevertheless adopts its relevant principles as good practice, including fairness, proportionality, pupil participation and permanent exclusion as a last resort.

2.2 This policy has regard, where applicable, to:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the April 2026 guidance;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance, July 2026;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- DfE Arranging Alternative Provision guidance; and
- DfE Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance, July 2026, as relevant good practice.

2.3 The proprietor/owners retain legal accountability for this policy. The Headteacher manages its implementation and the governing board provides support, scrutiny and oversight.

3. Definitions and Scope

3.1 Suspension

A temporary, formally recorded removal from ReFocus on disciplinary grounds for a defined period. A suspension may cover one or more complete school days or part of a school day.

3.2 Permanent exclusion

The permanent removal, on disciplinary grounds, of a pupil for whom ReFocus is the school responsible for the exclusion decision. Removal from the admission register must follow the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

3.3 Placement termination

The ending of ReFocus's provision for a pupil whose place has been commissioned by another school or local authority. This is not the same as permanently excluding the pupil from their home or commissioning school.

3.4 Registration arrangements

- Sole registered at ReFocus: ReFocus may suspend or permanently exclude under this policy.
- Dual registered: ReFocus may suspend attendance at ReFocus or recommend that its placement ends, but cannot permanently exclude the pupil from the commissioning school's roll.
- Sole registered at a home school: ReFocus may suspend or end its provision, but the home school retains responsibility for registration and any statutory exclusion decision.

3.5 Each placement agreement should record the pupil's registration status, commissioner, named contacts, decision-making responsibilities and the procedure to follow if serious concerns arise.

3.6 Off-site direction and managed moves

Off-site direction is a temporary arrangement made by a maintained school under its statutory power, or by an academy under its corresponding powers, requiring a pupil to attend another setting to improve behaviour. ReFocus will usually be the receiving provider. A managed move is a voluntary, permanent transfer agreed by all parties. Neither should be confused with ReFocus terminating a commissioned placement.

4. Principles

4.1 Before deciding to suspend, permanently exclude or terminate a placement, the Headteacher will, so far as reasonably practicable:

- establish the facts on the balance of probabilities and consider all relevant evidence;
- give the pupil an opportunity, with appropriate support, to explain what happened and record how their views were considered;
- consider whether behaviour was connected to disability, SEND, communication need, mental health, trauma, exploitation, safeguarding concerns or unmet provision;
- consult the DSL and SEND lead where relevant and consider whether reasonable adjustments were made;
- review previous support, intervention and its impact;
- consider the effect of the decision on the pupil's safety, welfare and education; and
- ensure that the decision is lawful, reasonable, fair and proportionate.

4.2 ReFocus will not operate an automatic or blanket sanction. However, the school will not maintain an unsafe placement solely to avoid suspension, permanent exclusion or placement termination.

4.3 Permanently excluding a ReFocus-registered pupil or terminating a placement will normally be considered only in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the Behaviour Policy and where continued attendance would seriously harm the education, welfare or safety of the pupil or others.

5. Decision-making Responsibilities

5.1 Headteacher

- Only the Headteacher, or a formally appointed Acting Headteacher, may suspend a pupil.
- The Headteacher investigates, considers the pupil's circumstances and records the reasons for the decision.
- Where permanent exclusion or placement termination is being considered, the Headteacher makes a written recommendation to the proprietor and initiates the appropriate review arrangements.
- The Headteacher ensures prompt communication with parents or carers, commissioners and relevant professionals.

5.2 Proprietor and governing board

The proprietor retains legal accountability and makes the final decision to permanently exclude a ReFocus-registered pupil. To support balanced, fair and well-informed decision-making, the proprietor will use members of the governing board to provide impartial scrutiny and appropriate challenge.

A governing-board member who has not been materially involved in the original decision will normally chair a permanent-exclusion review panel. The panel will consider the evidence, hear representations and make a reasoned recommendation to the proprietor. The proprietor will take that recommendation into account and issue the final decision in writing. This is ReFocus's own independent-school procedure and is not the statutory governing-board or independent-review-panel process used by maintained schools and academies. No person who was materially involved in the incident, investigation or original recommendation will chair the panel or determine an appeal.

5.3 Commissioning school or local authority

For a commissioned placement, the commissioner retains oversight of the provision and responsibility for decisions concerning the pupil's home-school registration and any statutory exclusion from that school. ReFocus will provide timely information, attend reviews and work collaboratively to maintain education and safeguard the pupil.

6. Suspension Procedure

6.1 Every suspension will have a stated start and end date, including where it covers only part of a day. It will not be open-ended, retrospectively imposed or implemented informally by simply asking a parent to collect the pupil.

6.2 ReFocus adopts a maximum of 45 suspended school days in an academic year as a good-practice safeguard. This is a ReFocus limit rather than a statutory limit applying directly to an ordinary independent school.

6.3 The school will promptly inform the parent or carer by telephone where possible and confirm in writing:

- the reason and evidence relied upon;
- the start and end date and arrangements for safe collection or transport;
- how education will continue;
- contact and welfare arrangements;
- the expected return date and reintegration arrangements; and
- how the parent or pupil may raise concerns or seek a review.

6.4 The commissioning school or local authority will be notified without delay. Where relevant, the social worker and/or Virtual School Head will also be notified promptly.

6.5 The Headteacher will consider the duty of care before a pupil leaves the site. A pupil will not be sent away without safe supervision, collection or transport arrangements appropriate to their age, vulnerability and circumstances.

7. Permanent Exclusion of a ReFocus-registered Pupil

7.1 Permanent exclusion is a last resort. Before making a recommendation, the Headteacher will review the matters in section 4 and, wherever practicable, convene an urgent multi-agency meeting when the pupil has an EHC plan, a social worker, is looked after or has other significant vulnerabilities.

7.2 The Headteacher's written recommendation will set out the alleged behaviour, findings of fact, pupil voice, relevant contextual and equality considerations, previous intervention, alternatives considered and reasons why permanent exclusion is proposed.

7.3 A governing-board member will normally chair a permanent-exclusion review panel. The parent or carer and pupil will be invited to submit written information, attend and be accompanied by a supporter. The panel may seek suitable SEND or other professional advice where it would assist fair consideration.

7.4 The panel may recommend that the proprietor uphold the proposal, require further investigation, direct reconsideration or decide that permanent exclusion is not justified. The proprietor will consider the recommendation and provide a written final decision with reasons.

7.5 ReFocus will work urgently with the parent or carer, local authority and relevant professionals to protect the pupil's welfare and continuity of suitable education.

8. Ending a Commissioned Placement

8.1 ReFocus cannot permanently exclude a pupil from the register of another school. Where serious concerns place a commissioned placement at risk, ReFocus will notify the commissioner at the earliest stage and normally request an urgent placement review before ending provision.

8.2 The review will consider:

- the incident, pupil voice and current risk assessment;
- whether the placement remains suitable and whether risk can be managed safely;
- unmet SEND, safeguarding, therapeutic or health needs and reasonable adjustments;
- the views of parents or carers and relevant professionals;
- whether an EHC-plan or other statutory review is required;
- interim educational and safety arrangements; and
- a planned transition and information transfer if the placement cannot continue.

8.3 ReFocus will not abruptly terminate a placement unless an immediate and unmanageable risk makes temporary cessation necessary. In such circumstances, the commissioner and parent or carer will be contacted immediately and an urgent review convened. Ending funding or a commissioning agreement does not, by itself, authorise deletion from ReFocus's admission register.

9. Pupils with Additional Vulnerabilities

9.1 Particular care will be taken where a pupil has SEND or a disability, an EHC plan, a social worker, is looked after or previously looked after, is experiencing mental ill-health, is at risk of exploitation or has other significant vulnerabilities.

9.2 As applicable, ReFocus will promptly involve the commissioning school, parent or carer, social worker, Virtual School Head, responsible local authority, SEND caseworker and other relevant professionals.

9.3 Permanent exclusion or placement termination for a looked-after child should be exceptionally rare and preceded, wherever practicable, by an urgent multi-agency review. Where a pupil has an EHC plan, ReFocus will ask the responsible local authority to consider an early review where the placement or provision may no longer be suitable.

10. Education and Welfare During Suspension

10.1 ReFocus will provide suitable, accessible work and educational contact during a short suspension wherever practicable. Work will be appropriately adapted and marked or reviewed. Remote education will not automatically be treated as suitable full-time alternative provision.

10.2 For a commissioned placement, ReFocus will immediately agree with the commissioning school or local authority who will provide education, welfare contact and safeguarding oversight. The pupil's education must not simply cease because attendance at ReFocus has been suspended.

10.3 Where the pupil is solely registered at ReFocus and the absence is likely to extend, the school will work urgently with parents or carers, the local authority and relevant professionals to secure continuity of suitable education.

11. Review and Appeal

11.1 A parent or carer, or a pupil aged 18 or over, may ask the proprietor to review a suspension, permanent exclusion or placement-termination decision. Requests should normally be made in writing within five school days of the written decision, although a later request may be considered where there is good reason.

11.2 A suspension review will be considered by the proprietor or an impartial governing-board member not involved in the original decision. A permanent-exclusion appeal will be chaired by an impartial governing-board member and considered under section 7. A placement-termination review will include the commissioner because ReFocus cannot determine the pupil's status at another school.

11.3 The reviewer will consider the evidence, pupil voice, equality and SEND matters, procedural fairness and whether the decision was reasonable and proportionate. A written outcome with reasons will be provided.

11.4 This review route is separate from the statutory independent review panel available for exclusions from maintained schools, academies and PRUs. Concerns about how ReFocus followed its procedure may also be raised under the Complaints Policy, but the complaints process will not be used to recreate a statutory exclusion process that does not apply to ReFocus.

12. Reconsidering or Rescinding a Decision

12.1 The Headteacher may rescind or revise a suspension recommendation before the final proprietor decision where new evidence emerges, the original decision was materially flawed or circumstances change. A proprietor may also require further investigation or reconsideration.

12.2 The reason and outcome will be recorded and communicated promptly to the pupil, parent or carer, commissioner and relevant professionals. Records and attendance coding will be corrected where necessary, without retrospectively deleting an accurate registration entry.

13. Reintegration

13.1 Reintegration will be planned before the pupil returns and will be supportive and forward-looking rather than a further punishment. The pupil's views will inform the plan.

13.2 The plan may include reasonable adjustments, an individual behaviour-support plan, therapeutic or pastoral intervention, risk-management measures, identified trusted adults and review dates. The commissioner will participate where appropriate.

13.3 A parent's inability or refusal to attend a reintegration meeting will not extend the suspension or prevent the pupil returning on the stated date.

14. Admission and Attendance Registers

14.1 ReFocus will maintain admission and attendance registers in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current attendance guidance.

14.2 A pupil's name will be deleted only when a ground in regulation 9 is fully met. Deletion will not be retrospective, and attendance will be recorded until the lawful deletion date. ReFocus will make the required deletion return to the local authority and retain an accurate record of the reason and date.

14.3 For a dual-registered pupil, ReFocus will liaise with the other registered school before deletion. The ending of a commissioned placement, placement funding or attendance at ReFocus does not by itself authorise removal from the register.

15. Monitoring and Oversight

15.1 The Deputy Headteacher will monitor suspensions, permanent exclusions and placement terminations, including their duration, reason, site, registration status, repeat use, reintegration and educational destination.

15.2 Data will be analysed for patterns relating to SEND, disability, looked-after status, social-worker involvement and protected characteristics. It will also identify whether pupils remained in education and the longer-term outcome of each decision.

15.3 The Headteacher and SLT will review the effectiveness and proportionality of intervention. The governing board will receive termly data and provide challenge and oversight. The proprietor will ensure that the policy is reviewed annually and remains effectively implemented.