**Royal Greenwich Virtual School**

**Exclusion Policy**

**The Royal Borough of Greenwich is committed to ensuring that every child in our care, every child previously in our care and those with a social worker have the very best opportunity to succeed in their learning. These are the children “Known to the Virtual School”. The responsibility in achieving this does not lie with one individual but is shared by all adults who are involved with the young person. To achieve this aim the local authority expects schools to use suspensions only as a last resort and expects them to avoid permanently excluding children known to the Virtual School.**

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| **Context**  **The Royal Greenwich Virtual School has oversite for all children in our care, all children previously in our care and all those who have, or have ever had, a social worker.**  **The VS has a corporate parent role for children in our care. For children previously in our care and those with a social worker the VS does not have a corporate parent role.**  However, all three cohorts are some of the most vulnerable children in society. They have often experienced significant trauma in their lives which can impact on their ability to succeed in their learning. We therefore expect schools to follow this guidance for all children known to the Virtual School.  We know schools play a vital role in ensuring academic success and enabling children to achieve their very best. Schools provide a safe and stable environment for vulnerable children who may have experienced huge changes, shame, feelings of difference to peers and uncertainty in their lives. The Department for Education acknowledges that there is a disproportionately high rate of exclusion of children known to the Virtual School and that they are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of suspensions and exclusion. It states that schools should look to all alternatives to suspension and exclusion for these children.  The Virtual School, on behalf of the local authority, expects all schools to work proactively with the Virtual School and the wider local authority where they feel a child is at risk of exclusion and, wherever possible, avoid permanently excluding children in our care. |
| **Legal framework**  **In September 2022 the Department for Education published updated guidance around school suspensions and exclusions. This document is available** [**here**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101498/Suspension_and_Permanent_Exclusion_from_maintained_schools__academies_and_pupil_referral_units_in_England__including_pupil_movement.pdf)**.**  **The Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and child referral units in England, including child movement: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and child referral units in England states:**  Information sharing is vital in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, including their educational outcomes. Schools should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children. [Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101454/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2022.pdf) sets out the requirements for schools and colleges about information sharing in more detail.  Where schools have concerns about the emotional well-being of a child at risk of suspension/exclusion, it should, in partnership with the Virtual School consider what support or alternatives can be put in place. Where possible suspensions and exclusions should not be issued to children known to the Virtual School. However, in the case where this is not possible it is the headteacher’s responsibility to inform the Virtual School.  The school must report on the period of the suspension or permanent exclusion and the reason(s) for it.  The following information must be provided by the headteacher in writing to the Virtual School:   * The days of suspension on which the child must not be present in a public place at any time during school hours . * This information must be shared by the end of the afternoon session on the first day of the suspension or permanent exclusion. * If alternative provision is being arranged, then the following information must be included with this notice  1. The start date for any provision of full-time education that has been arranged for the child during the suspension or permanent exclusion 2. The start and finish times of any such provision, including the times for morning and afternoon sessions where relevant 3. The address at which the provision will take place and any information required by the child to identify the person they should report to on the first day. 4. Where this information on alternative provision is not reasonably ascertainable by the end of the afternoon session on the first day of the suspension or permanent exclusion, it may be provided in a subsequent notice, but it must be provided without delay and no later than 48 hours before the provision is due to start. The only exception to this is where alternative provision is to be provided before the sixth day of a suspension or permanent exclusion, in which case the information can be provided with less than 48 hours’ notice with parents’ consent.   Schools are required to minimise disruption to learning. Whilst the statutory duty on governing bodies is to provide full-time education from the sixth day of any exclusion, the Council would expect schools to provide this from day one for children in our care. For children previously in our care and those with social workers it is acceptable for the provisions to start on the sixth day of the suspension. Selecting the appropriate provision is vital for the success of the child.  The Designated Teacher for looked after and previously looked after children,  New Statutory guidance for roles and responsibilities February 2018 can be found [**here**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101454/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2022.pdf) |
| **The Royal Borough of Greenwich expects that schools will** **work in partnership with the Virtual School to avoid suspending/excluding children known to the Virtual School by:**   * Identifying when a child is at risk of suspension/exclusion and developing strategies to prevent behaviour escalating, including the implementation of individual behaviour plans and Pastoral Support Plans with a focus on early intervention. * Identifying an appropriate key worker with whom the young person can access for support. * Assessing and screening a child for special Educational Needs to ensure an appropriate match of curriculum and provision. * Contacting the Virtual School for advice and guidance to discuss support and alternatives, before considering a suspension/exclusion. * Inviting the named Virtual School worker to reintegration meetings on the rare occasions when it is deemed appropriate to issue a suspension/exclusion for a child known to the Virtual School. * Ensure the child’s voice is included at meetings. * Contacting the Virtual School to discuss alternatives to permanent exclusion for a child whose continued presence, would seriously harm the education or welfare of the child or others in the school. * Recognising that suspension/exclusions will have a negative impact on educational outcomes, reinforce feelings of rejection and low self esteem and in some cases lead to placement breakdown. Such serious long term consequences are not proportionate to breaches of a school behaviour code.   **Furthermore for children in our care:**   * Ensuring that the Designated Teacher for Children in our Care has access to appropriate training and resources to support them in their role and is empowered to champion looked after children and share their expertise with school staff, including pastoral support staff and governors. * Arranging an emergency Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting and if applicable, an emergency Education Health and Care Plan review where a child in our care has received more than 1 fixed-term exclusion.   **The Virtual School will work in partnership with schools to avoid exclusions by:**   * Responding quickly to requests from schools for advice and support. * Providing training to Designated Members and all staff in schools on issues affecting the lives of children known to the Virtual School. * Ensuring that Personal Education Plans/Pastoral Support plans identify support strategies to reduce the risk of suspension/exclusion. * Promoting understanding of why a child may present as oppositional or inappropriate. This can often strengthen the school’s understanding of how best to interpret the behaviour and inform them as to what strategies to put in place to best support their children. * Using the Child Premium grant (only available for those children in our care) creatively to support those at risk of suspension/exclusion. * Supporting schools to consider what alternatives there are to permanent exclusion.   **Alternatives to exclusion**   * *Academic and pastoral support*   Schools ensure that they have fully considered what the child is communicating and identify strategies to re-engage them with their learning or manage their emotions impacting on progress. Support may include access to a ‘trusted adult’, after school tuition, academic mentoring or TA support. Adults to use strategies linked to trauma training/ guidance.   * *Internal exclusion*   Where possible, schools are encouraged to avoid suspensions. If it is felt that a child would benefit from exclusion, schools are encouraged to consider internal short-term interventions.  However, where schools are considering an internal exclusion, they should consider the impact on the individual child, particularly where they are put in ‘isolation’. A high proportion of children known to the Virtual School have experienced significant abuse and neglect which may have included forced isolation with limited human interaction.   * *Restorative justice*   A process schools can use to enable a child to understand the impact of their behaviour on others and to take actions to amend. This can be undertaken with both teachers and peers.   * *Preventative programmes*   Short-term intervention programmes allowing a child to access support to enable them to re-engage in their learning.   * *Managed moves*   There are occasions where a child would benefit from a different setting and where possible, this should be another mainstream school. |