



Discipline and Exclusions Policy

Reviewed: August 2023

Next review date: August 2024

Reviewed by: Deputy Head Pastoral

Introduction

Bedford Girls' School seeks to reward and reinforce positive behaviour as its primary method of promoting school values. The school's Positive Behaviour Policy sets out in more detail our expectations with regards to standards of behaviour at Bedford Girls' School. The Positive Behaviour Policy identifies the measures we take to reward and reinforce positive behavior, using restorative practice to identify, monitor and address behaviour which we consider to be unacceptable.

We attach importance to courtesy, integrity, good manners, good discipline and respect for the needs of others. We expect students to take a full part in the activities of the school, to attend each school day, to be punctual, to work hard, to be well-behaved and to comply with the school rules about the wearing of uniform and general appearance. The student, if selected for a team, will represent the School in sporting or other activities with respect to our behavior expectations.

The following Discipline and Exclusions Policy specifically deals with major or persistent disciplinary issues of the utmost seriousness. In some cases these sanctions will be evoked sequentially through an exhaustion of the measures outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy (for example dialogue with students and with parents, detentions, report cards and the withdrawal of privileges). However, a single breach of school discipline of a major kind may justify permanent exclusion without any previous significant sanction having been invoked.

Sanctions

The Governing Body make available to the Headmistress two major sanctions:

- Fixed term temporary exclusion (sometimes referred to as suspension)
- Permanent exclusion (sometimes referred to as expulsion)

Only the Headmistress, or, in her absence, the Deputy Heads, may decide that a fixed term temporary exclusion is required. If the student is of Junior School age, the Head of Junior School will liaise closely with the Headmistress or Deputy Head.

Before deciding to suspend a student the Headmistress/Deputy Heads /Head of Junior School

- ensure that an appropriate investigation has been conducted
- ensure that all the relevant evidence has been considered including the particular circumstances of the student (e.g. are they considered vulnerable?)
- give the student an opportunity to be heard
- consult other relevant people if necessary

Parental Contract

All parents with a student at Bedford Girls' School are contractually bound by the terms and conditions contained in the parental contract, which is available on the website. Section 7 of that contract confirms under what circumstances the Headmistress may temporarily or permanently exclude a student.

A complaint or rumour of misconduct will be investigated. The student may be questioned and her belongings may be searched in appropriate circumstances. If the student has a mobile telephone, the member of staff may remove that from her whilst the investigation is proceeding. There should normally be 2 members of staff present during the search - the person doing the search and the search witness. Searches should normally be done by someone the same sex as the child. The search witness must also be the same sex as the child if possible. The child must not be asked to remove clothes, other than outer clothing like a coat. If there is a risk of serious harm to a person if the search is not conducted immediately, a child may be searched by a person of the opposite sex and without another member of staff present.

All reasonable care will be taken to protect the student's human rights and freedoms and to ensure that the parents are informed as soon as reasonably practicable after it becomes clear that the student may face formal disciplinary action, and also to make arrangements for the student to be accompanied and assisted by the parents, education guardian or a teacher of the student's choice.

The student may be given the opportunity to provide a biological sample under medical supervision if involvement with drugs is suspected, or a sample of breath to test for alcohol consumed in breach of school rules or policy. A sample or test in these circumstances will not form part of the student's permanent medical record.

Fixed Term Temporary Exclusion (Suspension)

If after the appropriate investigation has taken place and the school decides a fixed term temporary exclusion is appropriate, the student concerned will be withdrawn from her lessons and parents will be contacted and asked to collect their daughter. When they arrive, they will meet the Headmistress/Deputy/Head of Junior School/Assistant Head/Head of Year who will explain the circumstances leading to the fixed term exclusion. The duration of the exclusion will be communicated to the student and her parents at this point.

Generally, the duration will be dependent on the seriousness of the offence. The stage of the week/half term or term may also have a bearing on the duration. The student will be asked to collect their belongings before they leave and the expectation is that she will complete work at home throughout the period of the fixed term exclusion.

When the student is to return to school following a fixed term exclusion, she and her parents will meet the Headmistress/Deputy/Head of Junior School/Assistant Head/Head of Year who will ensure that consideration is given to any relevant problems of the suspended student and how they might be addressed in the interim. They will ensure that the student understands what she needs to do to make her reintegration into the school community as positive as possible. She will be supported as required in this. The incident will be logged in the student's file, and an on-going record of students for whom the most significant sanctions have been applied, including fixed term exclusion, will be kept by the Headmistress and Deputy Head (Pastoral).

Permanent Exclusion (Expulsion)

On the very rare occasions when a student's behaviour is such that it is apparent that she is not benefiting from her Bedford Girls' School education and may, in fact, be significantly jeopardising the education of others, the Headmistress may inform parents that she is unable to continue to offer the student a place at the school in the future. Some parents may prefer, after due consideration, to voluntarily withdraw their child rather than school imposing permanent exclusion. However, it must clearly be understood that the Headmistress reserves the right to insist on permanent exclusion.

Only the Headmistress can permanently exclude a child and before doing so the Headmistress will follow the same procedure as for temporary exclusion. In making decisions about exclusion the Headmistress will take into account any particular learning support needs, disabilities, gender and cultural differences that may be relevant to the case.

The student may be formally permanently excluded from the School if the student persistently misbehaves and all other sanctions have been unsuccessful or it is proved on the balance of probabilities that the student has committed a very grave breach of discipline or a serious criminal offence. Permanent exclusion is reserved for the most serious breaches. The Headmistress shall act with procedural fairness in all such cases. The Headmistress's decision to expel shall be subject to a Governors' Review if requested by the parents. The parents will be given a copy of the review procedure current at the time. The student shall be suspended from the School pending the outcome of the Review.

If a student is to be permanently excluded, the Headmistress will be obliged to advise the parents of their right to appeal against this decision in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedure (a copy of which is available on the school website).

If the student is to be permanently excluded, there will be no refund of the acceptance deposit or of fees for the current or past terms. There will be no charge to fees in lieu of notice but, save for any contrary provisions in any other agreement made between the parents and the school, all arrears of fees and any other sums due to the school will be payable.

Unless the exclusion is based upon the fact that if the student remains in school she will seriously harm the education or welfare of other students at the school or welfare of school staff, at least a term's notice will usually be given of permanent exclusion. Exclusion is extremely rare and is a step which is only taken after extremely careful consideration and usually after extensive dialogue with parents.

Appeal

A decision to exclude a student permanently is not taken lightly and before it is reached the Headmistress will have given careful consideration to any representations by the parents. In the process, she will consult the Chair (or in their absence the Deputy Chair) of Governors. If the decision is confirmed, the parents will be informed immediately and they may, if they wish, communicate with the Governors by letter. Any such letter should be addressed to The Clerk to the Governors at the school. If parents wish Governors to review the case, they should set out the nature of their complaint in writing, detailing the nature of their complaint and the reasons they see for review.

Corporal Punishment

It should be noted that, pursuant to section 131 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, corporal punishment is strictly prohibited for all students in independent and maintained schools. The prohibition includes the administration of corporal punishment to a student during any activity, whether or not within the school premises. The prohibition applies to all members of staff including all those acting in loco parentis, such as unpaid volunteer supervisors. Any member of staff found to have used or attempted to use corporal punishment is likely to be subject to disciplinary action including the possibility of dismissal.

However, under subsection 548(5) of the Education Act 1996, teachers (not support staff) may use 'physical intervention' to avert 'an immediate danger of personal injury to, or an immediate danger to the property of, a person (including the child herself)'. Teachers' powers under section 4 of the 1997 Act to restrain students from engaging in certain activities remain.

See also the school's current Positive Behaviour Policy, available on the website and description of rewards and consequences.

Sources accessed

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1091132/Searching_Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf

[Government advice on school discipline and exclusions](#)