The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Suspensions and Exclusions Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Suspensions and Exclusions Policy	**Version**	V1
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Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

Exclusion from a specialist school is a profound event for a pupil who has often been excluded before. PACE shapes everything we do to avoid it, and how we hold the relationship if it nonetheless becomes necessary:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Statutory framework

This policy is in line with the DfE's Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance, the Education Act 2002, the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012, the Equality Act 2010, and the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

4. Our approach

The New Walk School treats suspension and exclusion as last resorts. Permanent exclusion is rare and reserved for situations in which allowing the pupil to remain at the school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others. We use the full range of relational, therapeutic and curriculum interventions before considering exclusion.

5. Suspensions

A fixed-period suspension is used only where: an incident has created a level of risk that cannot be safely held in school the same day; the school needs time to review provision; or — exceptionally — to give the family and school a planning pause. Suspensions are time-limited (most commonly one to three days), are confirmed in writing the same day, and are always followed by a re-integration meeting.

6. Re-integration meetings

Every suspension is followed by a structured re-integration meeting attended by the pupil, family, Headteacher (or delegate), the pupil's key adults and, where possible, the therapeutic mentor. The meeting is restorative in tone. It identifies what the school will do differently, what the pupil agrees to try, and what additional support is needed. A written summary is shared with the family.

7. Permanent exclusion

Permanent exclusion is taken only by the Headteacher, having taken advice from the DSL, SENCO and the Directors. It is used only where the school has exhausted reasonable adjustments and where a continued placement would not be in the interests of the pupil or others. Where a pupil is permanently excluded, the school: notifies the family the same day in writing; notifies the placing local authority within one school day; provides full educational records; works with the local authority and the family to support the pupil's onward placement; and reviews the case to identify learning for the school.

8. Pupils with EHCPs

Permanent exclusion of a pupil with an EHCP is exceptional and triggers an immediate review. The school engages with the local authority to consider whether the EHCP, or the school named in it, should be amended. The school continues to provide education for the pupil during this process, in line with statutory duties.

9. Equality considerations

Before any exclusion decision, the school considers its duties under the Equality Act 2010, including reasonable adjustments. Patterns of suspension and exclusion are reviewed by the Headteacher and Directors at least termly to identify any disproportionate impact by protected characteristic.

10. Right of representation

Families have the right to make representations about a suspension or permanent exclusion. The school will respond to representations in writing, and where the matter is unresolved, the family may pursue the school's Complaints Policy and (for permanent exclusion) any review mechanism that applies to independent specialist placements via the placing local authority and SEND Tribunal.

11. Recording and reporting

All suspensions and exclusions are recorded on the pupil's record and reported to the Directors and the placing local authority. The Headteacher reports termly on patterns and learning.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.