



Suspension, Required Removal and Exclusion Policy (Senior & Junior Schools)

Updated: July 2025

1. Policy Purpose

This policy explains how St John's School manages suspension, required removal and expulsion fairly, transparently and in line with our commitment to safeguarding, natural justice and equality. Decisions to exclude a pupil are not taken lightly and will only be made in response to a serious breach of school discipline and always with procedural fairness.

2. Definitions

Suspension: A pupil is temporarily removed from school for a defined period, either as a sanction or while an investigation is ongoing or pending a Director's Review.

Formal Expulsion: Permanent removal from school for a grave breach of discipline or serious criminal offence, proved on the balance of probabilities. Expulsion is reserved for the most serious breaches.

Required Removal: Parents may be required to withdraw a pupil if, in the opinion of the Head, their conduct means they can no longer benefit from the educational opportunities or community life offered by the school.

3. Possible Grounds for Exclusion

The following non-exhaustive list gives examples of behaviour that could merit suspension, required removal or expulsion:

- Physical assault against pupils or adults
- Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour, including blackmail
- Bullying, including cyberbullying
- Racial or homophobic abuse
- Sexual misconduct, including possession or supply of pornography
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Possession or supply of weapons
- Damage to property or vandalism, including computer hacking
- Theft
- Persistent disruptive behaviour
- Parental behaviour that adversely affects the school community

- Inappropriate online conduct
- Other serious misconduct that harms the school community or brings the school into disrepute, on or off premises

4. Initial Investigation Process

Key principles:

- Allegations of a serious breach of discipline must be reported to the Head of School immediately.
- The Head of School will appoint an appropriate person to conduct a fair and thorough investigation.
- The pupil will be informed of the allegation and given a fair chance to explain what happened.
- Parents will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable. If police or social services are involved, parents will be notified immediately.

Suspension:

A pupil may be suspended (internally or externally) while an investigation takes place. This would not normally exceed 5 school days. For boarders, suspension will usually involve remaining on site with restricted privileges but may require staying with guardians or returning home if appropriate.

Interviews:

- Pupils may be interviewed informally to establish if further investigation is needed.
- Formal interviews will always be conducted with a second adult present. Notes must be read back, agreed, signed and dated by the pupil.
- Pupils may be asked not to discuss allegations with others involved, as far as reasonably possible.

Searches:

Searches may be conducted if there is reasonable cause, in line with the School's *Searching Pupils and Their Possessions Policy*.

5. Report & Preparation for Hearing

- The investigator will compile a factual report with evidence, statements and interview notes.
- Witness statements must be signed and countersigned by the person collecting them and the witness.
- Ideally, separate staff should conduct the investigation, hearing and appeal to maintain fairness.
- The Head of School will review the report and consult with Directors if expulsion or required removal is being considered.

6. Disciplinary Hearing

If expulsion or required removal may result:

- Parents will be invited to a disciplinary hearing with the Head of School and investigator.
- Where a parent cannot attend (e.g., for boarders), the meeting may take place via video call or with a nominated adult present.
- Documents shared will include: the complaint, written statements, the investigator's report, relevant records and policies.
- The pupil and parents will have an opportunity to ask questions and present their side.
- Parents may be accompanied by a friend or relative but normally not a legal representative.
- Minutes will be taken.

7. Decision Making

Standard of proof:

Normally the civil standard (*balance of probabilities*) applies. If an allegation would constitute a criminal offence, the standard is *beyond reasonable doubt*.

Factors considered:

Before reaching a final decision, the Head of School will consider:

- Has the burden of proof been met?
- Was the pupil provoked (e.g., bullying)?
- Have mitigating circumstances been taken into account?
- Is the offence consistent with other exclusions?
- Are any other pupils involved being treated consistently?
- Are the interests of the school community best served by the decision?

The Head of School will consult the appropriate Director before confirming the decision.

Outcome:

The decision and reasons will be given within 24 hours (in person where possible) and always confirmed in writing. Where appropriate, parents may be offered the option to withdraw the pupil voluntarily.

8. Supporting a Pupil's Next Steps

- Parents will be consulted on how the leaving status will be recorded.
- The school may assist with finding an alternative placement.
- Deferred exclusions (e.g., sitting GCSEs) may be considered where appropriate.
- References provided will be fair, accurate and not misleading.

9. Appeals Procedure

Parents have the right to appeal the decision.

Request:

A request must be made in writing to a Director within 7 days of the decision being notified. The application must state the grounds for review and desired outcome.

Appeal Panel:

- At least two Directors with no prior detailed involvement will hear the appeal.
- An independent member may be included if requested.
- The Panel will consider whether the facts were sufficiently proved and whether the sanction was proportionate.

Hearing:

- Held privately at school (or online if required).
- Those present may include: Panel members, the Head, relevant staff, the pupil and their parents (with a friend/relative if they wish).
- Legal representation is not normally appropriate.
- The requirements of natural justice apply.
- Minutes will be taken.

Decision:

- The Panel will notify parents and the Head in writing with reasons within 5 days.
- The Head will respond to any recommendations within 3 days.
- Absent a significant procedural irregularity, the decision will be final.

10. Confidentiality

All proceedings will be handled with the strictest confidentiality, except where the law requires disclosure.

11. Police & Social Services

- The school will inform the police of suspected criminal behaviour where appropriate.
- Advice will be sought before conducting internal investigations alongside police action.
- The school will refer to social services if it believes a child is at risk of significant harm, usually with parental agreement where safe to do so.

12. Equal Opportunities

No exclusion decision will be made on the basis of a pupil's race, sex, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief.

13. Special Educational Needs

In line with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, the school will not treat a disabled pupil less favourably and will make reasonable adjustments to avoid substantial disadvantage.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of School and Directors.

