

Suspension and exclusion guidance July 2026: summary of changes

The updated guidance comes into force from 26 July 2026

The DfE has published a new version of its statutory [suspension and permanent exclusion guidance](#) for maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units (attached)

You should:

- Update your suspension and permanent exclusion policy
- Review your procedures on the use of off-site direction and managed moves
- Make your DSL aware of the new ability to temporarily forbid a pupil from the premises for safeguarding reasons (see below)
- **Academies:** follow transitional requirements if you have existing off-site placements (you'll find more detail about this later in the article)

You can temporarily keep pupils off-site for safeguarding purposes

The updated guidance explicitly allows you to temporarily forbid a pupil from attending your premises if you need to separate 2 or more pupils for safeguarding purposes. This wouldn't be considered an exclusion on disciplinary grounds.

You should only use this protocol in "rare circumstances" and only when:

- Separating pupils is essential, **and**
- There isn't a practical way to allow one or more pupils involved to remain on school premises

This could, for example, follow an allegation of harm by one pupil against another which requires physically separating a pupil from others.

Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, with your designated safeguarding lead (DSL) taking a lead role and using their professional judgement, supported by agencies like children's social care and the police as required.

Where a pupil is temporarily forbidden from attending school:

- You should inform their parents/carers of the reason why, and notify your governing board without delay
- The local authority (LA) must arrange education for the pupil, unless your school or the pupil's parents/carers choose to do so

- You should support the pupil to reintegrate into school life once they return

See pages 17 and 18 of the [updated guidance](#) for more details.

Managed moves are permanent and cannot be used as trials

A managed move is used to initiate a process leading to a **permanent** transfer of a pupil to another mainstream school, as part of a behaviour management process.

Previously, some schools have used "trial" managed moves where a pupil would attend a new school temporarily to see if it worked out. The updated guidance makes clear this is not allowed.

Where a **temporary** move (i.e. a time-limited placement at another education setting) needs to occur to improve a pupil's behaviour, you should use off-site direction instead. During the review of an off-site direction placement you may identify alternative options, including a permanent managed move.

The guidance now also states that a pupil must not be permanently excluded because of an unwillingness by the pupil and/or their parents/carers to agree to a managed move.

See pages 25 and 26 of the [updated guidance](#) for more details.

Follow the School Admissions Code for managed moves

The guidance clarifies that managed moves must comply with the [School Admissions Code](#) (unless the pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan). This means that:

- Managed moves cannot bypass normal admissions rules. The admission authority must apply its published oversubscription criteria. A pupil cannot jump ahead of others on a waiting list unless they meet the criteria more closely
- Managed moves are separate from the Fair Access Protocol (FAP). Only children in prescribed categories (see paragraph 3.17 of the admissions code) can be placed via the FAP. If a pupil is not eligible for the FAP, published admission arrangements apply

See page 26 of the [updated guidance](#).

Evidence decisions and follow registration requirements

Before a managed move:

- The original school should involve the pupil – support them to share their views and explain how you'll consider this as part of the decision-making process

- The original school should be able to evidence that appropriate initial intervention has been carried out, including, where relevant, multi-agency support or any statutory assessments
- The original school and the new school should make sure that relevant information is shared between them and the LA as appropriate, including:
 - Data on prior and current attainment
 - Academic potential
 - A current risk assessment
 - Advice on effective ongoing risk management and/or other pupil support strategies

The points above **also apply to off-site direction**.

Following a managed move, the original school should delete the pupil's name from their admission register as it will be added to the new school's admission register.

Where a managed move follows a period of off-site direction, the pupil will already have been registered at the school where they are receiving education off-site. In these circumstances, the deletion from the original school's register only takes place when the move becomes permanent. The pupil should be registered at one school only.

This information is set out in the [updated guidance](#) – pages 20, 25 and 26 (managed moves) and pages 20 and 24 (off-site direction).

Notify relevant parties in advance of a managed move for pupils with a social worker

You are now expected to notify relevant parties as soon as you start contemplating a managed move for a pupil with a social worker.

You should make the following people aware:

- The social worker
- Your DSL
- The pupil's parents/carers, unless this would lead to safeguarding risks
- The virtual school head (VSH), if the child is looked-after

If it's decided that a managed move is in the pupil's best interests, the original school and new school should make sure any personal education plan (PEP) the pupil has is reviewed and amended to take account of the move.

This is set out on page 29 of the [updated guidance](#).

The guidance now specifies the information to provide to parents about off-site direction

Maintained schools are already required to make sure that parents/carers (or the pupil if they're aged 18 or over, and the LA if the pupil has an EHC plan) are notified in writing about an off-site direction, as soon as practicable and no later than 2 school days before the placement begins.

Academies and pupil referral units (PRUs) are now required to do the same (see the next 2 sections below).

The updated guidance specifies that the notice must include the following information (this was already set out in [legislation](#), but is now included in the guidance too):

- The address where the educational provision will be provided
- The person the pupil should report to when they first attend the provision
- The number of days the requirement is to be imposed
- The reasons for, and objectives of, imposing the requirement; and in relation to the educational provision:
 - Where 2 sessions per day are provided, what time the morning session starts, the afternoon session ends and the break between them starts and ends, or
 - Where a single session per day is provided, what time the session starts and ends

This is set out on page 22 of the [updated guidance](#).

Academies must follow the same procedures for off-site direction as maintained schools

This is due to [The Education \(Educational Provision for Improving Behaviour\) \(Application to Academies and Pupil Referral Units and Minor Amendments\) Regulations 2026](#).

This also means academies must have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance on [alternative provision](#).

See page 21 of the [updated guidance](#).

What to do if you already have off-site directions in place

If your academy or alternative provision (AP) academy arranged an off-site direction before 26 July 2026, and the pupil remains there on or after this date, new transitional rules apply:

- You must send a written notification to parents/carers (or the pupil if they're aged 18 or over, and the LA if the pupil has an EHC plan) as soon as practicable **on or after 26 July 2026**, and no fewer than 6 days before the first review meeting
- This notification must include all the information set out in the above section of our article (except the person to report to when the pupil first attends the provision)
- You must hold the first review meeting as soon as reasonably practicable after **1 August 2026** – this applies even if you held a review in the previous 10 weeks
- Send invitations to attend the review meeting or submit written views at least 6 days before the meeting. Make clear that any written views need to be submitted before the meeting

See pages 24 and 25 of the [updated guidance](#) for more details.

There are new off-site direction powers for PRUs

Management committees of pupil referral units (PRUs) can now make off-site directions. Where they do so, they must follow the same procedural requirements as maintained schools and academies.

This is explained on page 21 of the [updated guidance](#).

Consider interim PEP reviews for looked-after children at risk of suspension or exclusion

It's already the case that where a looked-after child (LAC) is likely to be subject to a suspension or permanent exclusion, your designated teacher is expected to contact the LA's virtual school head as soon as possible.

When considering what additional assessment and support is needed, the guidance now notes that consideration should be given to:

- How effectively the current personal education plan (PEP) is being implemented, and whether an interim PEP review needs to be called
- How the school is using Pupil Premium Plus

This is explained on page 28 of the [updated guidance](#).

Be alert to off-rolling

Off-rolling is using unlawful means to remove a pupil from a school roll. The guidance now provides additional examples of what would be considered off-rolling:

- Moving a pupil to off-site AP where this is not in their best interests
- Encouraging a post-16 student not to continue with their course of study when this is against the best interests of that pupil
- Sending a pupil home without a formal suspension regardless of whether it occurs with the agreement of parents/carers
- Placing a pupil on a part-time timetable for behavioural reasons
- Intentionally removing a pupil from the school roll without correctly following regulations

These examples are set out on page 16 of the [updated guidance](#).

There are enhanced data monitoring expectations for governing boards

The role of your school's governing board remains to challenge and evaluate school data and leaders' decisions, but there is now greater detail around what they should be doing. This includes:

- Carefully considering the levels and characteristics of pupils leaving the school, whether through permanent exclusion, removal from the admission register, off-site direction, or any other form of pupil movement, to ensure that such actions are taken only as a last resort when necessary
- Using "maximum challenge" to school leadership to understand these movements and identify any emerging patterns that may require further scrutiny or action
- Reviewing data on the separation of pupils for safeguarding purposes, where this approach is used

This is set out on page 41 of the [updated guidance](#).

Using performance data and benchmarking

To effectively hold leaders to account and make informed decisions, your governing board should consider understanding and making use of performance data in the following areas:

- Pupil numbers, attendance and exclusions

- Attainment and progress
- Curriculum planning and class sizes
- Financial management and governance
- Quality assurance
- Safeguarding and wellbeing
- The school community, including staff, pupils, parents/carers, and the governing board

In addition, your board should consider building an evidence base from the most recent and accessible data to identify successes and root causes of issues, and using data to benchmark and analyse trends to improve educational and financial outcomes.

You'll find this information on page 42 of the [updated guidance](#).

Be aware of these additional clarifications on meetings

There are some small changes to clarify existing processes:

- Where the governing board is legally required to consider the reinstatement of a suspended or permanently excluded pupil, the guidance now states that **more than 1** friend or representative can be permitted to accompany the parents/carers and their child (the board would need to consider what would be a reasonable limit on numbers attending the meeting)
- Academies **are not required** to agree to a request from parents/carers for a representative from the LA to attend a suspension or exclusion review meeting (and it's still the case that any representative from the LA who does attend can only make representations if the governing board gives consent)
- The role of an independent review panel (IRP) is “to review the governing board's decision not to reinstate a permanently excluded pupil” (the guidance in place until July says it's to “assess whether a pupil's exclusion has been lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair”)
- Whether for a suspension or exclusion review meeting or an IRP meeting, remote meeting requests by parents/carers can be refused if there are safeguarding concerns following a risk assessment which mean that a remote meeting won't allow full participation or can't be held fairly and transparently

These clarifications can be found on pages 40, 45, 63 and 71 of the [updated guidance](#).