



THE LOUGHBOROUGH Schools Foundation

Policy Title:	Student Serious Disciplinary Policy
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Approved By:	Governing Body
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Point of Contact (Reviewer):	Head of Operations & Compliance Manager

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope

- 1.1.1 This policy contains guidelines which may be adapted as necessary, explaining the circumstances under which serious disciplinary allegations will be investigated and sanctions determined. This includes the circumstances under which a pupil/student may be excluded, either temporarily or permanently, from Loughborough Grammar School, Loughborough High School or Fairfield Prep School. This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's respective Behaviour Management Policy as its purpose is to set out the procedures to be followed if a pupil/student commits serious misconduct and, as a result, a serious sanction may need to be imposed by the school.
- 1.1.2 The Behaviour Management Policy addresses sanctions for general misbehaviour. This policy applies specifically to incidents of serious misconduct or cases where misbehaviour persists despite previous sanctions.
- 1.1.3 This policy applies to all pupils within the Loughborough Schools Foundation (LSF) while under the care of a School. It does not apply to cases where a pupil leaves due to ill health, non-payment of fees or withdrawal by parents.

1.2 Interpretation

- 1.2.1 References to the '*Head*' include Deputies.
- 1.2.2 '*Parent*' includes one or both parents, a legal guardian or education guardian.
- 1.2.3 '*Withdrawal*' takes place when a parent voluntarily withdraws a pupil/student. This may happen on the initiative of the parents or the Head. It is always a decision of the parents and is a consensual action. A withdrawal may not therefore lead to a governor's review but may lead to a complaint under the LSF Complaints Policy.
- 1.2.4 '*Separation*' means a pupil/student will not attend formal lessons.
- 1.2.5 The Heads may apply the sanctions of removal, suspension, or exclusion.
 - 1.2.5.1 '*Removal*' means that a pupil/student has been required to leave, but without the stigma of exclusion. It is therefore a decision taken by a Head and is contrary to the parents' wishes. A removal takes place when the parents have been asked to withdraw a pupil/student but have indicated unease or an unwillingness to do so.
 - 1.2.5.2 '*Suspension*' means that a pupil/student is debarred from attending a school for a specific period but may return at the conclusion of that period.
 - 1.2.5.3 '*Exclusion*' is reserved for the most serious cases and normally means that a Head cannot recommend a pupil/student to another school. Parents are entitled to seek a governor's review or may make a complaint under the LSF Complaints Policy.
- 1.2.8 The subheadings are for ease of reference and do not form part of the policy.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of this policy are:

- To support the behaviour and discipline policies of the Schools.
- To ensure procedural fairness and natural justice.
- To promote co-operation between the Schools and parents when it is necessary for a pupil/student to leave earlier than expected.

2.2 Serious Misconduct

2.2.1 The main categories of serious misconduct, in or out of School, which may result in exclusion or removal are:

- The intent to supply or supply/possession/use (when under the jurisdiction, or not, of the School) of certain drugs and solvents, or their paraphernalia, or substances intended to resemble them, and alcohol and tobacco and vaping.
- Theft, blackmail, physical violence, intimidation, racism, sexism, homophobia, and persistent bullying.
- Misconduct of a sexual nature; supply and possession of pornography.
- The possession or use of unauthorised firearms or other weapons.
- Vandalism and computer hacking.
- Persistent attitudes or behaviour which is inconsistent with the ethos of the Schools.
- Other serious misconduct on or off the premises (either single or repeated episodes), which brings a School into disrepute.

2.3 Other Circumstances

2.3.1 A pupil/student may be required to leave if, after appropriate consultation, the Head of the school concerned is satisfied that it is not in the best interests of the pupil/student or of the school for them to remain.

3.0 INVESTIGATORY PROCEDURES

3.0.1 All misbehaviour or disciplinary incidents will be dealt with by the pupil's/student's School as soon as it is possible to do so.

3.0.2 In the event of serious misconduct, an investigation may be carried out to establish the facts. An investigation of a complaint or allegation about serious misconduct will normally

be coordinated by the Deputy Head, or an appropriate member of senior staff, and the findings will be presented to the Head for consultation and consideration.

The person who investigates an allegation of serious misconduct will not take the decisions on the outcome.

- 3.0.3 Parents will be informed, as soon as reasonably practicable, if a complaint or allegation relates to potential serious misconduct, or where misbehaviour has persisted despite sanctions being imposed.
- 3.0.4 The Chair of the School Board will be informed of an investigation. A short cooling-off period for the pupil may take place if the appropriate Head considers that this course would be helpful.
- 3.0.5 A pupil/student may be required not to attend formal lessons and to remain at home or follow a separate routine in school during the investigation. Work may be set during this time. For boarders, this could include living at home or with a guardian until the matter is resolved.

3.2 Search and Reports to the Police (and others)

- 3.2.1 The appropriate school staff may decide to search a pupil's/student's space, possessions (including electronic devices), desks and lockers and ask the pupil/student to turn out the contents of pockets or a bag, if it is considered there is reasonable cause to do so. Clothing will not be searched until it has been removed from the wearer and care will be taken to ensure reasonable privacy. This policy does not authorise an intimate search or physical compulsion in removing clothing. If necessary, the police could be called.
- 3.2.2 The Police will be called to report any activity which the school reasonably suspects may amount to criminal activity.
- 3.2.3 Other agencies may also be notified where necessary and appropriate to the facts of the case.

3.3 Interview

- 3.3.1 As part of the investigation process, a pupil/student may be interviewed informally by a member of staff to establish whether there are grounds for a formal disciplinary meeting. At this interview, arrangements should be made for the pupil/student to be accompanied by an additional member of staff whose duty is to support them. Ideally this should be their HoY or tutor, but if they are not available there can be any pastorally experienced member of staff.
- 3.3.2 A pupil/student who is waiting to be interviewed may be separated, but made as comfortable as possible, accompanied, or visited regularly by a member of staff, and given access to a toilet and adequate food and drink.

3.4 Ethos

- 3.4.1 An investigation and all meetings will be conducted fairly and in a manner which is appropriate to a school, without formal legal procedures.

4.0 DISCIPLINARY MEETING

4.1 Preparation

- 4.1.1 A formal disciplinary meeting is necessary where the investigation has identified a case for the pupil/student to answer for which expulsion is a possible outcome, and/or the pupil/student has been suspended pending the outcome of the disciplinary process.
- 4.1.2 The disciplinary meeting will be held as soon as is practicable/without delay and within a guideline of 48 hours, after the completion of any investigation, during term time.
- 4.1.3 Parents/guardians of the pupil will be informed of the reason for the disciplinary meeting, the nature/scale of the incident and the potential sanctions available to the Head.
- 4.1.4 Where possible, all relevant written evidence and information relating to serious misconduct, will be circulated in advance of the meeting. Any such documents may be redacted, or a summary provided, for reasons of confidentiality and/or data protection.

4.2 Attendance

- 4.2.1 The pupils parents/guardians will be asked to attend the disciplinary meeting with the Head. The pupil, dependent on their age and understanding, should be in attendance throughout the disciplinary meeting and may be accompanied by their HoY or tutor, but if they are not available can be any pastorally experienced member of staff. The Head should be informed of all attendees at least 24 hours before the disciplinary meeting.

4.3 Proceedings

- 4.3.1 The process to be followed at the disciplinary meeting shall be determined by the Head. The meeting will be conducted in a manner appropriate to the age, understanding and maturity of the pupil/student involved, considering any additional needs of the pupil/student in all circumstances.
- 4.3.2 Notes will be taken by the School during the disciplinary meeting and a copy of the notes will be provided to the parents.
- 4.3.3 The pupil/student will have an opportunity to provide their account of the circumstances surrounding the incident and both the pupil/student and their parents will be able to ask questions. The parents will also be able to address the Head on the issue of sanctions.
- 4.3.4 There are normally three distinct stages of a disciplinary meeting:

- Breach of Conduct

The appropriate Head will consider the conduct and the evidence, including statements made by and/or on behalf of the pupil/student. Unless the Head considers that further investigation is needed, they will decide whether the complaint has been sufficiently proven. The standard of proof shall be the civil standard, i.e., the balance of probabilities. Appropriate reliance may be placed on hearsay evidence, but the Head will not normally refer to the pupil's/student's disciplinary record at this stage.

- **The Sanction**

If the complaint or allegation has been proven, the Head will outline the range of disciplinary sanctions which they consider are available. He or she will consider any further statements which the pupil/student and or others present on his or her behalf may wish to make. The pupil's/student's disciplinary record will be considered. The Head will make a written decision about the incident and the appropriate sanction, together with reasons for those decisions, as soon as reasonably practicable.

- **Leaving status**

If the Head decides that a pupil/student must leave the school, they will discuss the matter with the parent(s)/guardians before deciding on the pupil's/student's leaving status (see below).

4.4 Delayed Effect

- 4.4.1 A decision to exclude or remove a pupil/student shall take effect 72 hours after the decision was first communicated to a parent. Until then, the pupil/student shall remain suspended and away from school premises. If within 72 hours the parents have made a written application for a Governors' Review, the pupil/student shall remain suspended until the Review has taken place.

5.0 LEAVING STATUS

5.1 Explanation

- 5.1.1 If a pupil/student is excluded or required to leave, his or her leaving status will be one of the following: 'excluded', 'removed' or 'withdrawal by the parents'.

5.2 Detail

- 5.2.1 Additional points, which may need consideration, are:

- The form of letter which will be written to the parents and given the provisions of the Data Protection Act, the form of announcement in the school that the pupil/student has left.
- The form of reference, which will be supplied for the pupil/student.
- The entry, which will be made on the school record and the pupil's/student's status as a leaver.
- Arrangements for the transfer of any course and project work to the pupil/student, the parents or to another school.
- Whether (if relevant) the pupil/student will be permitted to return to school premises to sit public examinations.
- Whether (if relevant) the school can help in finding an alternative placement for the pupil/student

- Whether the pupil/student will be eligible for membership of the associated alumni association and, if so, from what date.
- The conditions under which the pupil/student may re-enter school premises in the future.
- Financial aspects: payment of any outstanding fees and extras; whether the deposit will be returned or credited; refund of prepaid fees.

6.0 GOVERNORS' REVIEW

6.1 Request for Review

- 6.1.1 If permanent exclusion or removal by a Head has been deemed appropriate, a pupil/student, or his or her parents, may make a written application for a Governors' Review. The application must be received by the Head of Governance within 72 hours of the Head's decision being received by the parent(s), or longer by agreement and must clearly set out the grounds on which they are asking for a review and the outcome that they seek. This right is not available in the event of suspension unless the suspension has exceeded 11 school days or more or would prevent the student from taking a public examination.

6.2 Review Panel

- 6.2.1 The Review will be undertaken by a three-member sub-committee of the Board of Governors. The Panel members will have no detailed prior knowledge of the case or of the pupil/student or parents and will not include the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will select the members of the Review Panel, and the members of the Panel will elect a Panel Chair. Parents will be notified in advance of the names of the panel members. Fair consideration will be given to any bona fide objection to a particular member of the panel.

6.3 Review

- 6.3.1 The Review Panel may, depend upon the circumstances and after consulting the appropriate parents/guardians and the Chair of Governors:
- Stage a hearing under the arrangements described at paragraphs 7.1 to 7.8 (inclusive) or:
 - Reach a decision based on written representations provided by the parties under the arrangements described at paragraphs 8.1 to 8.5 (inclusive).

7.0 THE REVIEW HEARING

7.1 The Hearing

- 7.1.1 The hearing will take place at the school premises, normally between 3 and 14 working days after a request for appeal has been received, during term time. A Review will not normally take place during school holidays but may do so by the agreement of the parties. A Review Hearing is an internal procedure and all of those who are involved, or who are concerned in the procedure, are required to keep its proceedings confidential, subject to law.

7.2 Attendance

7.2.1 Those present at the Review Hearing will normally be:

- Members of the Review Panel and a note taker;
- The Head and any relevant member of staff whom the Head considers should attend to secure a fair outcome for the pupil; and
- The pupil/student together with his or her parents and, if they wish, then parents may be accompanied by a friend or relation.

7.3 Conduct of Meetings

7.3.1 The review hearing will be chaired by a member of the Review Panel. It will be conducted in a way that is appropriate to the pupil's age, understanding, and maturity, taking into account any additional needs.

7.3.2 A note taker will be appointed to record minutes of the hearing.

7.3.3 The Head of Governance may attend to advise on procedural or legal matters, where appropriate.

7.3.4 A copy of the minutes will be provided to the parents or guardians after the meeting. All attendees may take their own notes if they wish.

7.3.5 The Chair will lead the meeting to ensure that everyone present has a fair opportunity to ask questions and make relevant comments. Courtesy, restraint and good manners are expected from all participants.

7.3.6 The Chair may, at their discretion, adjourn or terminate the hearing if necessary.

7.4 Procedure

7.4.1 The Panel will consider each of the issues raised by the pupil/student or their parents so far as they are relevant to:

- Whether the facts of the case were sufficiently proven when the decision was taken to exclude or remove the pupil. The civil standard of proof, namely 'the balance of probabilities' will apply; and
- Whether the sanction was warranted, that is, whether it was proportionate to the breach of discipline or the other events which are found to have occurred, and to the legitimate aims of the school's policy in that respect.

7.4.2 The requirements of natural justice will apply. If for any reason the pupil/student or their parents are dissatisfied with any aspect of the meeting they must inform the Chair at the time and ask for their dissatisfaction and the reasons for it to be noted in the minutes.

7.5 Identification of Witnesses

- 7.5.1 If the Head considers it necessary in the interests of an individual or of the school that the identity of any person should be withheld, the Panel Chair may require that the name of that person and the reasons for withholding it be written down and shown to the Panel Members. At their discretion, the Chair may decide whether or not the person should be identified.

7.6 Pupil's/Student's Character

- 7.6.1 Up to two members of the school staff may speak generally about the pupil's/student's character, conduct and achievements at the school if they are willing to do so.

7.7 Leaving Status

- 7.7.1 If, having heard representations from all parties, the Panel is minded to confirm the Head's original decision, it is open to the Panel, with the agreement of the Head, the pupil/student and their parents to discuss the pupil's/student's leaving status with a view to reaching agreement.

7.8 Decision

- 7.8.1 When the Chair decides that all issues have been sufficiently discussed and if there is no consensus then, they may adjourn the meeting; alternatively, the Chair may ask those present to withdraw while the Panel considers its decision. The Panel may uphold or, alternatively, refuse to confirm the conclusions or decisions reached by the Head. In the former event the Panel will confirm the sanction awarded; in the latter event the Panel will determine the sanction. The decision will be notified, with reasons, to the Head and the parents by the Chair of the Review Panel or the Chair of Governors in writing within five working days of the review hearing. If necessary, the Review Panel may seek professional advice before reaching or notifying their decision. In the absence of significant procedural irregularity, the decision of the Review Panel will be final.

8.0 CONSIDERATION ON THE BASIS OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

8.1 Procedure regarding written submissions

- 8.1.1 If a Review Panel decides that the circumstances are such that it will consider the complaint or allegation, the Head's decision, and the sanction based on written submissions from the parties, the following procedure is to apply:

8.2 Attendance

- 8.2.1 Those present at the Review Meeting will normally be the members of the Review Panel and a note taker.

8.3 Conduct of Review Meeting

- 8.3.1 The meeting will be chaired by one member of the Review Panel and will be conducted in a suitable room and in an informal manner. Each of the parties must be given an opportunity to comment on their written representation on the points made by the other party in their representation.

- 8.3.2 A note taker will be appointed to record minutes of the meeting.
- 8.3.3 The Head of Governance may attend to advise on procedural or legal matters, where appropriate.
- 8.3.4 A copy of the minutes will be provided to the parents or guardians after the meeting.
- 8.3.5 Panel members will review the written submissions provided by all parties in advance of their discussion of the case.

8.4 Procedure

- 8.4.1 The Panel will consider each of the issues raised by the pupil/student or their parents so far as they are relevant to:
 - Whether the facts of the case were sufficiently proved when the decision was taken to exclude or remove the pupil/student. The civil standard of proof, namely 'the balance of probability' will apply; and
 - Whether the sanction was warranted, that is, whether it was proportionate to the breach of discipline or the other events, which are found to have occurred.

8.5 Decision

- 8.5.1 When the Chair decides that all issues have been sufficiently discussed, the Panel will need to consider its decision. The Panel may uphold, or alternatively refuse to confirm the conclusions or decisions reached by a Head. In the former event the Panel will confirm the sanction awarded; in the latter event the Panel will determine the sanction. The decision will be notified, with reasons, to the Head and the parents by the Chair of the Review Panel or the Chair of Governors by letter or telephone. If necessary, the Review Panel may seek professional advice before reaching or notifying their decision. The decision of the Review Panel will be final.

9.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 9.9.1 All those participating in the application of this policy including parents and pupils are required to keep all statements, correspondence, notes, and documents confidential except where legally required to disclose them.

10.0 AVAILABILITY

- 10.0.1 This policy is made available to parents of current and prospective pupils either via the school's website or upon request as a printed copy from the school. The policy is reviewed biannually.