

DISCIPLINE AND EXCLUSIONS POLICY

Introduction

All schools have the legal right to impose reasonable sanctions if a pupil misbehaves. Physical punishment is illegal; but DCFS guidance advises that sanctions that a school might use include: a reprimand, a letter to parents or guardians, removal from a class or group, loss of privileges, confiscation of a possession that is inappropriate in the classroom, detention, or exclusion. Exclusion, whether temporary or permanent, is a last resort. Permanent exclusion is used only in the most serious circumstances.

GENERAL REWARDS & SANCTIONS

At Blundell's we encourage the establishment of good teacher/pupil relationships and support for the school's values through a system of recognitions, rewards and sanctions which are designed to promote a calm, disciplined learning environment.

Recognitions and Rewards

Our system of recognition and rewards includes:

- Verbal praise and written praise for good work
- Academic Commendations, Merit and Honours Awards for both effort and achievement, which are celebrated in the House and with the School at Latin Prayer
- Annual subject and year group prizes
- Annual prizes are also given for leadership and contributions to the life of the school
- Exhibiting examples of excellent work
- Achievements in sports, drama, music and other activities are recognised at Latin Prayer (a copy of which is posted weekly on the school's web site), so that the community can celebrate success
- Good behaviour and contributions to school life are also acknowledged at House meetings and Latin Prayer
- Full School Colours are awarded for achievements and contribution to areas such as Sport, Music, Drama and the Academic life of the school.
- Reports to parents, which are worded to be as constructive as possible.

Sanctions for breaches of discipline that do not merit exclusion

The teacher is responsible in the first instance for dealing with minor infringements, such as lateness, casual rudeness in class, late or poorly completed work. Additional work may be set as Sides, or the pupil may be required to re-do unsatisfactory work. The pupil may be brought back at lunch break or another time during the school day. Repetition of this behaviour will be reported to the Head of Department and to the pupil's House Master/Mistress.

Persistent lateness to lessons will be reported to the pupil's House Master/Mistress, and may lead to a 45 minute supervised Wednesday detention. Repeated lateness or deliberately missing a lesson will lead to a 90 minute supervised Wednesday detention. In serious cases of absenteeism a Sunday Detention will be considered.

If a pupil falls badly behind with their work the Head of Department may require a pupil to attend a detention on a Wednesday afternoon. Persistently poor academic performance may result in the Head of Department or House Master/Mistress requiring a pupil's teachers to make written comments in a

Report Book on his/her performance at the end of every lesson that he/she attends for a period of one or two weeks. A Pink Card may be given as an alternative requiring a weekly assessment of effort and attainment. If there are major concerns about work effort and attitude then the pupil will be sent to see the Head Master.

Minor indiscipline in the House or elsewhere may lead to a pupil being set a domestic task for a designated time, usually no more than an hour, such as collecting litter, or cleaning an area in the House. If these low level behavioural concerns persist then the Second Master or Head Master may be informed.

For persistently poor dress a Uniform card will be given requiring the pupils to obtain a member of staff's signature at regular intervals during the day. For regularly missing meals a Meal card will be issued requiring pupils to attend all meals.

For repeated antisocial behaviour or some serious breaches of discipline pupils will be gated usually for one or two weeks. Where they are allowed to go will be restricted and they will need to sign in at regular intervals. The Second Master will be informed through the Sanctions Log.

The Head Master may suspend a pupil, for a period of between 48 hours and one week for very serious indiscipline, or less serious offences, where repeated punishment has proved ineffective. If suspension is ineffective, the school may be forced to exclude the pupil, or to require him/her to leave the school under the procedure described below.

RESPONSES TO SERIOUS BREACHES OF DISCIPLINE THAT MAY HAVE TO RESULT IN EXCLUSION.

This procedure for handling serious breaches of discipline and exclusions is based on a Farrer & Co guide on Excluding Pupils published in August 2005. A full copy of which is held by the Head Master and Second Master.

What sorts of behaviour merit exclusion

Examples of such behaviour include

- Drug abuse
- Alcohol abuse
- Theft
- Bullying
- Physical assault/ threatening behaviour
- Fighting
- Sexual harrassment
- Racist abuse
- Sexual misconduct
- Damage to property
- Persistent disruptive behaviour
- Parental behaviour

Rules of natural justice

Blundell's will take decisions in a manner that is consistent with the rules of natural justice. These can be summarised in the following two basic rules:

1. No person is to be a judge in their own cause; and

2. No person is to be condemned unheard.

The rules are therefore concerned with the manner in which a decision is taken. Blundell's recognises the over-arching principle is a duty to act fairly. Whilst the precise procedure to be followed in a given situation depends on the circumstances of the case, some key principles are as follows:

- a fair and thorough investigation will take place
- pupils will be informed of the allegation and the evidence relied upon
- pupils will be given a fair opportunity to exculpate themselves
- an appeal will be offered.

i. The procedure

Blundell's will follow the correct procedures so that a fair decision-making process is followed from the outset.

First Steps

When a potential exclusion presents itself, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- *What exactly is the allegation?*

The pupil will be informed of the case against them. For example, if the allegation is that pupil A supplied drugs to pupil B, pupil A will be told all the elements of this (i.e. the identity of the other pupil, what was allegedly supplied, when and where) and asked to explain what happened.

- *What information is available and what further information is required?*

We will consider what evidence is already available to support the allegation and whether any additional information is required.

- *Is anyone at risk (i.e. do the police or social services need to be informed?)*

This is an important issue that is addressed more fully in Section iii.

- *Who should be dealing with this?*

The rules of natural justice dictate that, where possible, a different person should conduct each of the following stages:

- interviews with witnesses and general investigation of the allegations;
- the hearing; and
- the appeal.

In most circumstances the investigation will be carried out by the Second Master or another member of the Senior Leadership Team, the hearing will be conducted by the Head Master and any appeal will be held by the Governors. The Head Master will avoid taking part in the investigation if at all possible, so as to avoid compromising his impartiality at the actual hearing.

Investigation

The following issues will be considered:

- *Information gathering*

Before a decision to exclude can be fairly taken, it will be essential to establish the facts. If exclusion is being considered then statements will be taken from all pupils and staff who were involved in or witnessed the incident. The original statement will be kept on file.

- *Should another adult be present?*

Where possible another adult will be present when pupils are being interviewed by the person charged with the investigation. This will normally be a neutral adult such as the school secretary or another member of staff.

- *When should the parents be informed?*

This will always depend on the facts of the particular case. As a general rule, however, parents will be informed after initial investigations have been made but sufficiently in advance of any hearing to allow them time to prepare for that hearing. Clearly, where a pupil has been suspended pending the outcome of a disciplinary process, then parents will be informed immediately of this. Similarly, in cases where Social Services or the Police become involved, parents will be informed as soon as possible - although see Section iii for further details in this respect.

- *When is suspension appropriate?*

In particularly serious cases as listed above, it may be appropriate for the pupil to be suspended. Any suspension will in principle be as brief as possible. If a relatively lengthy suspension is unavoidable, arrangements will be made for work to be sent home and marked. Parents will be told immediately of any decision to suspend and this will be followed within one school day by a confirmatory letter.

Hearing

Once the information gathering stage has been completed, the hearing itself will be heard. The hearing will generally be heard by the Head Master and attended by the pupil, parents, a note taker and any other person required (e.g. witnesses or the member of staff who carried out the investigation). Guidelines for conducting the hearing are held by the Head Master.

Sanction

Once the hearing has been held the decision-taker (almost certainly the Head Master) will have a range of sanctions open to him/her. If it is decided that an exclusion is necessary, then in fairness an appeal will be offered.

Appeal

Parents or guardians may apply for a review of the decision to exclude a pupil from the School. The procedure and request form is available from the School office and guidelines can be found in the Parents' Handbook section 'Review Procedure for parents appealing against an exclusion'.

ii. The Aftermath

The decision to exclude is always a serious matter for both the pupil and the school. We will do all we can to manage the process in a humane way both during and after the process. Having followed a fair procedure, the school will do all it reasonably can to minimise the educational impact. In giving references schools owe a legal duty both to the pupil and also the recipient. Any reference must therefore be fair, accurate and not misleading.

iii. Other points for consideration

Confidentiality

Exclusion cases will normally be treated in the strictest confidence.

The Police

As a rule, Blundell's School will report to the police anything that is believed to amount to a criminal activity. Drugs and weapons will be confiscated and held for the police as potential evidence. If the

school believes a pupil may have taken drugs then medical advice will also be sought. Sexual offences will generally be reported to the police immediately, including in cases where a pupil is only suspected or alleged to have committed such an offence provided a reasonable amount of evidence is available. The alleged victim's parents will also be informed immediately of the incident and told that the police have been informed. Whether the victim and parents then speak to the police is a matter for them.

Social Services

The obligation to refer matters to social services applies in all cases where the school believes a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering, significant harm. Such a move will not be taken lightly. Both the child and parents will be treated sensitively and with respect and generally any concerns will be discussed with the family first and, where possible, their agreement will be sought to making a referral to social services. However, this will only be done where such discussion and agreement-seeking will not place the child at increased risk of significant harm.