



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

2026-2027

Group Policy Document

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1. Introduction

ARK Inclusive Education LTD recognises that the young people we serve are often those who have experienced suspension or permanent exclusion from mainstream schools. Many have complex Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and have historically struggled within traditional educational settings.

We are committed to providing a supportive, nurturing environment where pupils can re-engage with education and develop the skills and resilience needed to succeed. We recognise that suspension within an alternative provision setting must be approached differently from mainstream schools, given the vulnerability of our cohort and the risk of further disengagement.

This policy has been developed in line with DfE guidance on suspensions and permanent exclusions, while recognising the unique context and needs of our pupils.

2. Policy Statement

ARK Inclusive Education LTD is committed to:

- Providing a safe, supportive environment for all pupils and staff
- Using suspension only as a last resort
- Recognising that suspension can be particularly damaging for pupils with a history of school exclusion or SEMH needs
- Ensuring that any suspension is proportionate and considered
- Prioritising reintegration and continuity of education
- Working closely with pupils, parents/carers and referring bodies to address underlying issues
- Complying with the Equality Act 2010 and avoiding discrimination against pupils with SEND
- Recognising that the impact of suspension differs based on a pupil's attendance pattern and taking a tailored approach
- Notifying the referring mainstream school of any suspensions for pupils who remain on roll with that school

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out the circumstances in which suspension may be considered
- Ensure that suspension is used proportionately and as a last resort
- Outline the process for suspension based on the pupil's attendance pattern
- Ensure that pupils continue to receive education during any suspension
- Support successful reintegration following suspension
- Protect the welfare and safety of all pupils and staff

4. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils placed with ARK Inclusive Education LTD
- All staff, including tutors, support staff and DSL

- Parents/carers of pupils
- Referring bodies (schools and local authorities)
- All premises used by ARK (village halls, gym spaces, office spaces)

5. Key Principles

The following principles underpin this policy:

Principle	Details
Last Resort	Suspension will only be used when all other reasonable alternatives have been exhausted
Proportionality	Any suspension must be proportionate to the behaviour and consider the pupil's individual circumstances
Trauma-Informed	We recognise that challenging behaviour often stems from trauma and unmet needs
Reintegration Focus	The goal is always to support the pupil to return to provision successfully
Partnership Working	We work closely with parents/carers and referring bodies throughout the process
Continuity of Education	Pupils must continue to receive education during any suspension
SEND Consideration	We consider whether behaviour is linked to a pupil's SEND and whether reasonable adjustments have been made
Restorative Approach	We use restorative practices to repair relationships and address underlying issues
Attendance-Based Approach	The suspension process will be tailored based on the pupil's attendance pattern and number of sessions they attend per week
Notification	For pupils on roll with a mainstream school, we will notify the school of any suspensions

6. Understanding Our Pupil Cohort

We recognise that the pupils we serve are among the most vulnerable in the education system. Many have experienced:

- Permanent exclusion from mainstream schools
- Multiple fixed-term suspensions
- Persistent absence and school refusal
- Trauma, neglect or adverse childhood experiences
- Complex SEMH and ASD needs
- Unmet SEND needs
- Breakdown of previous placements

For these pupils, suspension can trigger feelings of rejection, shame and further disengagement. It can reinforce negative beliefs about themselves and education. Therefore, we approach suspension differently, focusing on understanding and addressing the root causes of behaviour rather than simply removing the pupil.

We recognise that challenging behaviour in our setting is often a form of communication. Our staff are trained in trauma-informed practice and positive behaviour support. We work to understand what the behaviour is communicating and how we can better support the pupil.

We also recognise that pupils attend our provision with varying attendance patterns. Some pupils attend full-time (five sessions per week), while others attend part-time with reduced timetables. The impact of a suspension is significantly different for these groups, and our policy reflects this.

7. When Suspension May Be Considered

Suspension may be considered in the following circumstances, but only after all alternative interventions have been attempted:

Circumstance	Details
Serious Physical Violence	Where a pupil has caused significant harm to another pupil or staff member
Serious Verbal Abuse	Where a pupil has used extremely abusive language, including threats
Serious Damage to Property	Where a pupil has caused significant damage to premises or equipment
Drugs or Alcohol	Where a pupil has been in possession of or under the influence of illegal substances on premises
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	Where a pupil's behaviour consistently prevents others from learning and other interventions have failed
Breach of Safety	Where a pupil's behaviour poses a serious risk to their own safety or the safety of others

Important Considerations:

- Suspension will not be considered for behaviour that is a direct manifestation of a pupil's SEND
- We will consider whether reasonable adjustments have been made
- We will consider whether the pupil's behaviour is a trauma response
- We will consider whether the pupil has the capacity to understand the consequences of their behaviour
- We will always seek to understand the underlying cause of the behaviour

8. Alternatives to Suspension

Before considering suspension, we will attempt the following alternatives:

Alternative	Details
Restorative Meeting	A meeting between the pupil and those affected to repair relationships
Behaviour Support Plan Review	Review and update the pupil's behaviour support plan
Pastoral Intervention	Increased pastoral support from the DSL or mentor
Risk Assessment Review	Review and update risk assessments for the pupil
SEND Review	Consider whether additional SEND support or assessment is needed
Parent/Carer Meeting	Meeting with parents/carers to discuss concerns and develop a joint approach
Referral to External Services	Referral to CAMHS, educational psychologist or other support services
Reduced Timetable	Temporary reduced timetable (with agreement from the referring body)
Managed Move	Consideration of a managed move to another provision (as a last resort)

9. The Suspension Decision

The decision to suspend a pupil will only be made by the Director or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in consultation with the referring body where appropriate.

Decision-Making Process:

Stage	Action
1. Incident Review	Review the incident and gather all relevant information
2. Consider Alternatives	Confirm that all reasonable alternatives have been attempted
3. Assess Proportionality	Consider whether suspension is proportionate to the behaviour
4. Consider SEND	Consider whether the behaviour is linked to the pupil's SEND
5. Consult	Consult with the referring body and parents/carers (where possible)
6. Decision	Make a decision on whether to suspend and the length of suspension
7. Record	Record the decision and the reasons for it

Length of Suspension:

- Suspensions will be for a maximum of **5 school days** per incident
- Total suspension days in an academic year will not exceed **45 days** (in line with DfE guidance for maintained schools)
- Where possible, suspension will be for the shortest period necessary
- The length of suspension will be considered in the context of the pupil's attendance pattern

10. Suspension Process Based on Attendance Pattern

We recognise that pupils attend our provision with varying attendance patterns. The suspension process will therefore be tailored based on the number of sessions a pupil attends per week.

10.1 Full-Time Pupils (Five Sessions Per Week)

For pupils who attend full-time (five sessions per week), a suspension from education will follow this process:

Stage	Action	Timescale
1. Immediate Response	Ensure the safety of all pupils and staff. Support the pupil involved. Seek support from DSL.	Immediately
2. Investigation	Conduct a fair and thorough investigation of the incident. Gather witness statements where appropriate.	Within 24 hours
3. Decision	Director or DSL makes decision on whether to suspend.	Within 24 hours
4. Notification	Notify the referring body, parents/carers and (where applicable) the mainstream school. Provide clear reasons for the suspension and the length of suspension.	Immediately following the decision
5. Suspension Commences	The suspension will take effect on the following day. The pupil will not attend the provision for the duration of the suspension.	Next school day
6. Educational Provision	Arrange educational provision for the pupil during the suspension (remote learning).	By the start of the first day of suspension
7. Return to Provision Meeting	Arrange and hold a return to provision meeting with parents/carers.	On the first day of return
8. Reintegration Plan	Develop and implement a reintegration plan following the meeting.	Within 5 school days of return

10.2 Part-Time Pupils (Two Sessions Per Week or Less)

For pupils who attend part-time (two sessions per week or less), a suspension from education will follow a different process. This recognises that these pupils have limited attendance and that a traditional suspension would represent a significant proportion of their weekly education.

Stage	Action	Timescale
1. Immediate Response	Ensure the safety of all pupils and staff. Support the pupil involved. Seek support from DSL.	Immediately
2. Investigation	Conduct a fair and thorough investigation of the incident. Gather witness statements where appropriate.	Within 24 hours
3. Decision	Director or DSL makes decision on whether to suspend.	Within 24 hours
4. Notification	Notify the referring body, parents/carers and (where applicable) the mainstream school. Provide clear reasons for the suspension.	Immediately following the decision
5. Next Available Session	The pupil will not attend the next available session. Parents/carers are required to attend the provision on this date with the pupil.	Next scheduled session
6. Reintegration and Assessment Meeting	On the next available session, parents/carers attend with the pupil. A reintegration and assessment meeting is held to: • Discuss the incident and the pupil's behaviour • Assess whether the young person is safe to return for the session • Agree support and interventions moving forward • Develop or update the reintegration plan	Next scheduled session
7. Decision on Return	Following the assessment meeting, a decision is made on whether the pupil can return for the session or whether further support is needed.	At the meeting
8. Educational Provision	Where the pupil does not return to the session, educational provision (remote learning) will be arranged for missed sessions.	As required

10.3 Other Attendance Patterns

For pupils with other attendance patterns (e.g., three or four sessions per week), the DSL will determine the appropriate process based on the individual circumstances. Factors considered will include:

- The severity of the incident
- The pupil's individual needs and vulnerabilities
- The pupil's history of attendance and engagement
- The proportion of the pupil's weekly education that would be lost
- Any SEND considerations

The goal will always be to use the most proportionate approach that protects safety while minimising disruption to the pupil's education.

11. Communication with Parents/Carers and Referring Bodies

11.1 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will be notified of a suspension:

- **By telephone:** Immediately following the decision to suspend
- **In writing:** Within 1 school day of the decision

The written notification will include:

- The reason for the suspension
- The length of the suspension (start and end dates)
- The date of the return to provision meeting or reintegration and assessment meeting
- Arrangements for educational provision during the suspension
- Contact details for the DSL
- The right to make representations

Support for Parents/Carers:

We recognise that receiving notification of a suspension can be distressing for parents/carers, particularly where their child has a history of school exclusion. We will:

- Communicate in a sensitive and supportive manner; listen to parents/carers' concerns
- Work collaboratively to support the pupil's return
- Provide information about support services where appropriate

11.2 Referring Bodies and Mainstream Schools

For pupils who remain on roll with a mainstream school, ARK will notify the school of any suspensions.

Notification will include:

- The reason for the suspension
- The length of the suspension
- The date of the return to provision meeting or reintegration and assessment meeting
- Arrangements for educational provision during the suspension
- Any support or interventions being put in place

Notification will be made:

- **By telephone:** Immediately following the decision to suspend
- **In writing:** Within 1 school day of the decision

Where the pupil is placed via a local authority commission, the local authority will also be notified.

Purpose of Notification:

- To ensure the mainstream school is aware of any issues affecting the pupil's education
- To enable the school to fulfil its statutory duties in relation to the pupil
- To support effective partnership working and information sharing
- To ensure that any decisions about the pupil's placement are made with full information

12. Educational Provision During Suspension

Pupils will continue to receive education during any suspension. This provision will be arranged by ARK Inclusive Education LTD in consultation with the referring body.

Educational Provision will include:

- A minimum of 5 hours of education per day (in line with DfE expectations for alternative provision)
- Remote learning (online tuition) where appropriate
- One-to-one tuition where appropriate
- Work set by the pupil's tutor
- Pastoral support and check-ins

Where the pupil has an EHCP:

- The EHCP remains in force during suspension
- We will ensure that provision is consistent with the EHCP
- The SEND team will be consulted

13. Review and Reintegration Meeting

13.1 Full-Time Pupils

A return to provision meeting will be held on the first day of the pupil's return to provision. The meeting will include:

- The pupil
- Parents/carers
- The pupil's tutor
- The DSL
- A representative from the referring body (where appropriate)

The meeting will consider:

- What happened and why
- The pupil's perspective
- The impact on others
- What support is needed to prevent recurrence
- Any changes to the pupil's behaviour support plan or risk assessment
- Whether any additional SEND support is required

13.2 Part-Time Pupils

A reintegration and assessment meeting will be held on the next available session. The meeting will include:

- The pupil
- Parents/carers
- The pupil's tutor
- The DSL

The meeting will:

- Discuss the incident and the pupil's behaviour
- Assess whether the young person is safe to return for the session
- Agree support and interventions moving forward
- Develop or update the reintegration plan

Decision on Return:

Following the assessment meeting, the DSL will make a decision on whether the pupil can return for the session. If the pupil is not able to return, further support will be put in place and a revised plan for reintegration will be developed.

Outcome of Either Meeting:

- A reintegration plan will be developed
- SMART targets will be set
- Review dates will be agreed
- A record of the meeting will be kept

14. Returning to Provision

The pupil will be supported to return to provision through:

- A planned and structured reintegration
- One-to-one support on the first day back
- The reintegration plan developed at the review meeting
- A restorative meeting with any affected pupils or staff (where appropriate)
- Regular check-ins with the DSL or tutor

We recognise that returning after a suspension can be particularly difficult for our pupils.

We will:

- Ensure the pupil feels welcomed and supported
- Avoid punitive approaches on return
- Focus on rebuilding relationships
- Celebrate positive behaviour

15. Record Keeping

The following records will be maintained for all suspensions:

Record	Details
Incident Report	Detailed record of the incident leading to suspension
Suspension Record	Record of the suspension decision, including reasons, length, and attendance pattern considered
Parent/Carer Correspondence	Copies of all communications with parents/carers
Referring Body Notification	Copy of notification sent to the mainstream school/local authority
Educational Provision Record	Record of provision made during suspension
Review Meeting Record	Record of the return to provision meeting or reintegration and assessment meeting
Behaviour Records	Updates to behaviour support plan and risk assessment

Records will be retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

16. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently if required by:

- Changes to DfE guidance
- Changes to legislation
- Learning from safeguarding audits and reviews
- Analysis of suspension data
- Feedback from pupils, parents/carers and staff

Data Monitoring:

We will monitor suspension data to identify patterns and trends, including:

- Frequency of suspensions (individual pupils and overall)
- Length of suspensions
- Reasons for suspensions
- Effectiveness of reintegration
- Any disproportionate impact on particular groups of pupils (e.g., SEND, gender, ethnicity)
- The impact of attendance patterns on suspension outcomes

17. Definitions

Term	Definition
Suspension	A temporary removal of a pupil from their education setting for a fixed period of time (previously known as a 'fixed-term exclusion')
Permanent Exclusion	A pupil being removed from their education setting permanently (previously known as 'expulsion')
Session	A period of education delivery. Full-time pupils attend five sessions per week (one per day). Part-time pupils attend fewer sessions.
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs – one of the four areas of SEND
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan – a legal document setting out a pupil's needs and provision
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead – the person responsible for safeguarding at ARK
Trauma-Informed Practice	An approach that recognises the impact of trauma on behaviour and prioritises safety, trust and empowerment
Restorative Practice	An approach that focuses on repairing harm and rebuilding relationships

18. Contact Details

ARK Inclusive Education LTD

- **Email:** enquiries@arkinclusive.co.uk
- **Phone:** [Insert Number]
- **Website:** www.arkinclusive.co.uk

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Darren Singh

Deputy DSL: [Vacancy]

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): lado@doncaster.gov.uk

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End of Policy Document