

Attendance, Suspensions and Exclusions Policy

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Substantive changes since last review:	<i>November 2023</i> Policy name changed to Attendance, Suspensions and Exclusions Policy FTE term replaced with 'suspensions' Procedure for daily home contact during suspension added to policy and flow chart	

Attendance, Suspensions and Exclusions Policy

Attendance Register

A young person is expected to attend all sessions (morning and afternoon) in their Acorn programme, unless absence has been authorised. Although it is the parent/carer who provides a reason for the absence, the decision as to whether it is authorised or not can only be made by Acorn or the referring school. Absence can be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness (I)
- Transport issue (C) or (Y)
- Religious observance (R)
- Compassionate leave (i.e. funerals, weddings of close family/friends) – (C)
- Attendance at referring school, i.e. for exams etc. (B)
- Attendance at meetings, i.e. health or welfare related (M) or (C) as appropriate
- On work experience (W)
- On a pre-agreed reduced timetable (C)
- Suspended (Fixed Term Excluded) by Acorn (E)
- Acorn not open due to planned closure (#)
- Other unavoidable cause, e.g. crisis in the home (C)

Holiday – A decision as to whether holiday during term-time is authorised or not should come from the referring school/agency, rather than be made by Acorn.

Attendance type must be recorded on the MIS at the start of each session (morning and afternoon).

Whenever young people are absent and their parents/carers have not told Acorn the reason for the absence, the young person is marked as an unauthorised absence for that session. Acorn can change this mark at a later stage if the parents/carers provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence.

Each morning, one member of staff will contact the parents/carers of any young people who are absent to obtain a reason why. If a satisfactory reason is given, this should be entered into the MIS. If an unauthorised reason is given, or if contact cannot be made, the mark remains unauthorised.

Acorn staff should inform the referring school or agency of any young people who are absent, along with the reasons given in order that they have the correct attendance information for their students. Schools will assume a student is present at Acorn unless they are informed otherwise.

Children missing from education

A child going missing from education (e.g. unexplained absences, absconders) can be a potential indicator of a child protection concern. Staff should consider that where children are missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, action may need to be taken to help identify any risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future. Where such concerns exist, staff should follow the procedures for reporting concerns as outlined in the Safeguarding – Child Protection Policy.

Staff should remain alert to safeguarding concerns including children missing or absent from education, child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, serious violence, radicalisation, and so-called honour-based abuse including FGM and forced marriage, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Referring schools must comply with the Children Missing Education statutory guidance and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 (Including updates) when removing pupils from a register or where attendance concerns arise. Acorn AP will support referring schools by providing timely attendance information and raising concerns where patterns of absence may indicate safeguarding risks. Acorn has a responsibility to keep in regular contact with referrers regarding young peoples' attendance.

Suspension and Exclusion (Fixed term exclusions are now suspensions)

Acorn AP is against exclusions. However, we do acknowledge that there are times when, as a last resort, or as a direct consequence of a serious behaviour incident, a period of suspension is necessary. We also recognise that it is the reflection and restorative conversations following a period of suspension, rather than the suspension itself, that presents the greatest opportunity for learning from mistakes made. To this end, suspensions may be referred to as 'reflection time' with the young person being expected to consider or carry out specific questions or activities that will help them begin to explore the events that led to the suspension. Prior to their reintegration, Acorn staff will facilitate a 'restorative conversation'. By using a restorative method, it is hoped that the young person will realise the impact of their actions, have a better understanding of another person's perspective and have a more positive outlook going forwards.

Suspensions

1. The Behaviour and Sanctions Table sets out behaviour types alongside first and second level sanctions. Before deciding that a suspension is necessary, staff should consider all other suggested sanctions and interventions. The decision to suspend is one that the Centre does not take lightly and will be sanctioned only when all other routes to supporting a young person have been exhausted or when a young person exhibits behaviour that would lead to harm if they remained with us.
2. Only the Head of Centre (or in their absence, the teacher in charge) is authorised to suspend a young person on a fixed-term basis. Before a decision is made, the Head

of Centre (or teacher in charge) should speak to a Director if possible. This is so that a dialogue can take place to establish whether there are any other options available. If it is not possible to contact a Director before the young person is required to leave site, the Head of Centre must speak to a Director before a decision is taken on the length of the suspension.

3. The Head of Centre and Director (both Designated Safeguarding Leads) should also consider any child protection concerns that may impact the notification and enactment of a suspension.
4. While the Acorn Centre may refer to exclusions as 'Reflection Time', a sending home of any type is a suspension and is to be recorded and dealt with as such. Sending young people home for poor behaviour or engagement on any other basis is unlawful and an alternative must be found for dealing with this.
5. Daily welfare checks should be made during periods of suspension.
6. Staff must follow the steps in the Suspension Flow Chart to ensure that all suspensions follow the correct legal process.

Permanent Exclusions

1. Because each young person remains the responsibility of their referrer while they are placed at Acorn, Acorn does not 'permanently exclude'. Instead, Acorn may close a young person's place in agreement with a referring school/agency.
2. Referring schools/agencies must be involved in discussions leading to any decision to close a place as the responsibility remains with them for making ongoing arrangements for that student.
3. On a case-by-case basis, the Acorn Centre will always be prepared to consider re-admitting a young person where it is clear that the circumstances for the original close of place have changed.

Suspension Flow Chart

These steps must be followed for all suspensions to ensure that the correct legal process takes place.

Please note – only the Head of Centre (or in their absence, a Director) is authorised to make a suspension.

