



Hampshire
County Council

Virtual School

Exclusions and Suspensions: Guidance for Schools

When a child in care, a previously looked after child, a child with a social worker or a child in kinship care, is excluded or suspended from school, it is essential to consider the broader context of their life. These children may already face vulnerabilities, and exclusion can compound feelings of rejection, instability and disengagement. Schools play a key role in working collaboratively with social workers and other professionals to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the child, and reintegration is handled with care and support.

Why It Matters

Exclusions and suspensions can disrupt a child's education, relationships and sense of belonging. For a vulnerable child, these impacts may be more pronounced due to existing challenges such as trauma, instability or unmet needs. Schools must ensure that exclusions are a last resort, and that all decisions are informed by a safeguarding lens and a trauma-informed approach.

Key Considerations for Schools

1. Multi-Agency Collaboration

If a child has a social worker, ensure that they are informed promptly about any exclusion or suspension. Work together to understand the child's context, plan support, and coordinate reintegration. Consider convening a Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting to develop a shared plan.

2. Safeguarding and Contextual Factors

Explore whether the behaviour leading to exclusion may be linked to safeguarding concerns, unmet needs or trauma. Consider whether the child's behaviour is a form of communication, and whether additional support or assessment is needed.

3. Pupil Voice

Ensure the child has a safe space to express their views about the exclusion and their experience at school. Use age-appropriate tools such as drawings, emotion charts or digital surveys. Demonstrate that their voice informs planning and support.

4. Trauma-Informed Practice

Use consistent adult relationships, predictable routines, and restorative approaches to support emotional regulation and reduce the likelihood of exclusion. Training and tools such as Reach2Teach and the PEP toolkit can support this work.

5. Reintegration Planning

Plan reintegration carefully with input from the child, family and, if involved, the child's social worker. Ensure the child is welcomed back warmly and that support is in place to help them re-engage. Consider using a transition plan or a reduced timetable only where appropriate and with regular review.

Useful Tools and Resources

Day in My Life Tools – Explore how home and school life interact: <https://www.hampshirescp.org.uk/professionals/toolkits/neglect-toolkit/practical-tools/day-in-my-life-tools/>

[Reach2Teach](#) & [PEP Toolkit](#) – Trauma-informed strategies and planning tools

[Virtual School Training](#) – Modules on pupil voice, transitions and relational practice

[Transition Partnership Arrangements](#) – Support good Team Around the Child meetings

Still Need Advice?

If you would like advice or guidance, contact us at virtualschool@hants.gov.uk (Children in Care) or VSExtendedDuties@hants.gov.uk (Previously Looked After Children, Children with a Social Worker and Children in Kinship Care)

