



# Information for parents and carers about exclusion



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education

Exclusion is a longer-term response to serious behaviour that is unsafe or repeatedly gets in the way of teaching and learning.

When a student is excluded, it means they don't go to school in the usual way (see 'Alternative learning programs' on page 3) for between 4 and 10 weeks, or until the end of the current school term.

The Principal, or someone acting for them, makes the exclusion decision.

A student can't be excluded for more than 20 weeks in a calendar year without the approval of the Education Director.

## What do I do if my child is excluded

Before a Principal can decide about an exclusion, they must first suspend your child for between 1 and 5 school days. This is called 'suspension pending directions'.

Within the 1-to-5-day suspension, a meeting called a 'Directions Conference' will be held so that:

- you, your child and the school can hear all the information and everyone else's points of view
- decisions can be made about the best approach to the behaviour of concern.

The school will contact you to explain why the Principal is considering excluding your child and share information about what happened.

It is important to hear all sides of the story and work with the school and your child. It can help to:

- stay calm
- talk with your child about what happened
- talk with the school about what happened.

Work together with the school and your child to prepare for the Directions Conference (see page 2 for information about the Directions Conference).

## Reasons why a principal might consider exclusion

Exclusion is a response to serious behaviour that is unsafe or repeatedly gets in the way of teaching and learning. Exclusion may be used:

- to help schools to be safe and positive learning places for everyone
- when other things have not helped the student to behave safely and positively
- to help the student, their parents or carers, and the school, to work out what needs to happen to support safe and positive behaviour in the future
- to support an alternative learning program that helps the student learn skills to be safe at school.

## Collecting information about what happened

The school will collect information to help the Principal understand what happened.

They will try to find out your child's point of view.

The school will do their best to be flexible about when and how your child shares their thoughts about what happened.

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## How the Principal makes the decision

The Principal must make a fair decision. There are lots of things they need to think about before making their decision. For example:

- information from other people
- your child's point of view
- the seriousness of the behaviour and how often it happens
- your child's needs and what support they have been given to help them behave safely and positively.

## What the law says

The law (Education and Children's Services Act 2019) says that a Principal can exclude a student if they believe that the student has:

- been violent or threatened violence
- behaved in a way that threatens the safety or wellbeing of a student, member of staff or other person associated with the school (for example bullying, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, racial abuse)
- acted illegally
- disrupted teaching and learning
- repeatedly broken the school rules about behaviour.

## The school will communicate with you

The Principal or another staff member acting for the Principal will contact you as soon as possible after a decision is made to suspend your child pending directions.

They will talk with you and your child about the following:

- reasons for the Principal considering exclusion
- length of the suspension pending directions (1 to 5 school days)
- that your child can't be on school grounds during the suspension
- that the school will give you a written notice and a copy of this fact sheet
- what to expect at the Directions Conference, for example, who will be there
- that you can bring a support person or advocate to the Directions Conference. The school can also provide a school-based advocate if you would like this to happen
- that a staff member will connect with you and your child before the Directions Conference.

## School based advocate

A school-based advocate is a member of staff at your child's school. They can:

- help you and your child to participate in the Directions Conference
- get your and your child's views before the Directions Conference
- tell the people at the Directions Conference what you and your child think
- help to make sure the Directions Conference is focused on what is best for your child
- help you to understand decisions made, what will happen next and your right to appeal if your child is excluded
- help to keep your child connected to school while they are suspended or excluded
- help your child to reconnect with school at the end of the suspension or exclusion.

## Suspension pending directions

Your child will remain at home in your care.

The school is not required to provide your child with schoolwork during the suspension.

The school may decide to provide work if it will benefit your child.

## Directions Conference

A Directions Conference will happen with:

- you
- your child
- school staff.

### Before the Directions Conference the Principal will consider:

- what services might help your child. The school will ask for your permission if they want to invite services from the Department for Education, other government departments or community-based organisations to the Directions Conference
- possible options for an alternative learning program. An alternative learning program will be needed if your child is 16 years of age or younger and the Principal decides to go ahead with an exclusion
- what will help everyone to participate in the Directions Conference. For example, if an interpreter is needed.

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At the Directions Conference you and your child will have an opportunity to:

- hear the school's concerns about the behaviour
- respond to the concerns
- provide any other information that you would like the Principal to think about when deciding if an exclusion should happen
- discuss how your child can repair the harm that may have been caused by the behaviour.

The Principal will then decide:

- if an exclusion will go ahead
- the length of the exclusion from 4 to 10 calendar weeks (or for the rest of the school term).

If the Principal decides not to exclude your child, your child can return to school at the end of the suspension.

A behaviour support plan will be developed with you and your child.

## Behaviour support plan

A behavior support plan is developed to support your child's safe and positive behaviour. The plan should include:

- the skills your child needs for safe and positive behaviour
- how your child will learn these skills and who will help them
- how things can be safe and positive while your child is still learning and practicing the skills
- how everyone will know that your child is making progress
- how your child will be supported if there are concerns about their behaviour in the future
- everyone's roles.

If your child already has a One Plan, their behaviour support plan can be included in the One Plan.

## During an exclusion

The school must provide an alternative learning program for your child if they are 16 years of age or younger. This will include a plan with learning and behaviour goals for your child to complete during their exclusion.

The school does not have to provide your child with an alternative learning program if they are 17 years of age or older.

## Alternative learning programs

An alternative learning program could be:

- placement at another school
- placement at a Learning Centre (metropolitan placements only)
- a program in an identified part of your child's own school
- a learning program at home.

Students only complete their alternative learning program at home if there is no other available option.

Students don't participate in a learning program during school holidays.

## Weekly monitoring

During the exclusion, staff will monitor your child's progress by checking in once per week.

## Mid-exclusion review

The Principal will organise a mid-exclusion review to:

- talk about your child's progress with their learning and behaviour goals
- update the behaviour support plan if the current plan is not helping your child.

## Reconnecting with school after an exclusion

A reconnection meeting will be held before your child returns to school to:

- support positive behaviour change
- repair relationships that have been harmed by the behaviour
- review their behaviour support plan or One Plan
- help your child understand the behaviour expectations
- identify the supports that will help your child.

If you cannot attend a reconnection meeting before your child returns to school:

- your child will return to school on an alternative program until the meeting can take place
- or
- the behaviour support plan is updated some other way.

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The school will try to arrange the reconnection meeting for a day and time that suits you. If you refuse to attend a reconnection meeting or you are not available to attend, the school can make decisions about your child's learning program and behaviour support without you.

## Other important information

### Children can be treated differently for the same behaviour

When a Principal thinks about the best response to student behaviour, they have to look at everything and think about the individual students involved. Two children may have behaved the same, but it may be fair to treat each child differently. For example, if 2 children were fighting, 1 might be excluded and the other not.

### Behaviour that did not happen at school

Your child can be excluded for behaviour that happened outside of school hours and off school grounds if there is a reasonable connection between your child's behaviour and the school or school relationships.

### Your child can't be on school grounds while they are suspended or excluded

It is against the law for your child to be on school grounds while they are suspended or excluded. If your child comes on to school grounds, they are committing a criminal offence.

Your child can be on school grounds to attend their Directions Conference, mid-exclusion review meeting and reconnection meeting.

If your child has other good reasons to be on school grounds, for example to:

- get services provided on school grounds
- attend an agreed alternative learning program

the Principal can approve this in writing.

## Enrolment in another school

You can't enrol your child at another school while they are excluded. If your child will enrol at a new school after the exclusion, your child's behaviour still requires support. The Principal of the current school and the Principal of the new school will talk about your child's behaviour and a behaviour support plan will be worked out between both schools, you and your child.

## If you are unhappy with the Principal's decision to exclude your child

You, your child or an adult acting on your request or on the request of your child can appeal against:

- the exclusion
- an extension to the exclusion.

You can appeal a Principal's decision to exclude your child if you think that:

- the Principal has excluded your child on the basis of wrong information. For example, your child did not do the things the Principal has excluded them for
- the school has not followed the correct process. For example, the school did not conduct a Directions Conference
- the exclusion is too long. For example, the length of the exclusion is longer than the school needs to put in place support for your child to safely return to school
- the conditions of the exclusion do not meet your child's needs. For example, the alternative learning program does not provide enough support for your child.

The process to appeal against your child's exclusion must be explained to you at the Directions Conference. The school will give you the appeal form.

If you decide to appeal the Principal's decision, you must provide the paperwork to the Education Director at your local education office, within 5 school days of the Directions Conference. If you don't know which local education office to contact:

- ask your child's school
- phone the Department for Education on 8226 1000
- search for your child's school on [www.education.sa.gov.au/findaschool](http://www.education.sa.gov.au/findaschool). The name of the Education Director, the education office and phone number are on the school's listing.

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## Contact details for more information

You can find out more about exclusion and the appeal process by:

- making an appointment with the Principal or another school leader
- contacting your local education office
- calling the Department for Education on 8226 1000
- going to the Department for Education website at <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/> and search 'exclusion'.

## Additional supports

For additional support you can contact Parent helpline Phone 1300 364 100 (24-hour service).

If your child needs to talk to someone, you can encourage them to contact:

- [Headspace](#)  
Mental health support for children and young people aged 12 to 25 years. Phone: 1800 650 890.
- [Kids Helpline](#)  
Peer to peer support, self-help resources and phone and online counselling for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. Phone: 1800 55 1800.