



Information for parents and carers about expulsion



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Expulsion is the longest and most serious response to behaviour that poses an unmanageable risk to the health, safety and welfare of members of the school community.

If the student is expelled from their own school, it means they don't attend their school for between 6 and 18 months. This decision is made by the Principal, or someone acting for them.

If the expulsion is from all government schools, it means the student can't attend any government school for between 12 months and 5 years. The Chief Executive, Department for Education makes these decisions.

Only students who are aged 16 years or older can be expelled.

What should I do if my child is expelled

Before a Principal can make a decision about an expulsion from the school, they must first suspend your child for 20 days. This is called 'suspension pending directions'.

If the Principal wants the Chief Executive to consider expelling your child from all government schools, they must first suspend your child for 30 days.

Within the 20 day or 30-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 expelling your child and share information about what happened.

It is always 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 Principals might consider expulsion

Expulsions are the most serious response that can be given.

Expulsions are used in situations where the behaviour presents an unmanageable risk to the health, safety and welfare of members of the school community.

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 expel 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.

The law (Education and Children's Services Act 2019) says that the Chief Executive may expel a student from all government schools 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.

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 expulsion
- length of the suspension pending directions (20 days or 30 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 expelled
- help to keep your child connected to school while they are suspended
- help your child to reconnect with school at the end of the expulsion, if they return after the expulsion period has ended.

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
- Department for Education staff from Student Support Services or Aboriginal Education Services.

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Before the Directions Conference the Principal will think about:

- what services might help your child. The school will ask for your permission if they want to invite other services from the Department for Education, other government departments or community-based organisations to the Directions Conference.
Student Support Services must attend Directions Conferences when a Principal is considering expulsion, for Aboriginal students, students with disability and students in care
- educational or training pathways depending on the age of your child
- what will help everyone to participate in the Directions Conference. For example, if an interpreter is needed.

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 expulsion should happen
- discuss how your child can repair the harm that may have been caused by the behaviour.

The Principal can then decide to:

- expel your child from their school
- recommend to the Chief Executive that your child should be expelled from all government schools.

If the Principal decides not to expel your child, they may decide to exclude your child for between 4 and 10 weeks. You can find out more information about exclusion on the [Information for parents and carers about exclusion fact sheet](#).

If the Principal decides not to expel or exclude your child, they 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 expulsion

If your child has been expelled from their school and they are under 17 years of age, they will be supported with options that help them meet their compulsory education requirements.

The Principal does not have to offer education options if your child is over compulsory education age (17 years and over).

Information will be given to help you and your child decide about other education and pathways to support you and your child.

If your child is expelled from their school and they are 17 years of age, the Principal may cancel their enrolment.

If your child has been expelled from all government schools, their enrolment will be cancelled.

At the end of the expulsion period, if your child is 18 years of age or older, they can look at adult education options. You can find this information on the Department for Education website at <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/> by searching 'Adult Enrolment Policy'.

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Reconnecting with school after an expulsion

Your child may be able to reconnect with their school after the end of their expulsion period. This will depend on how long your child was expelled for and their age.

You and your child will need to contact the Principal of your child's school 8 weeks before the end of the expulsion to talk about the possibility of reconnecting with the school.

If the Principal decides it is possible for your child to return, a reconnection meeting will be held 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.

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 expelled or excluded and the other not.

Behaviour that did not happen at school

Your child can be expelled 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, excluded or expelled. 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 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 expelled. They may enrol at a new school after the expulsion. The Principal of your child's 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 expel your child

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

You can appeal a Principal's decision to expel your child, or the decision of the Chief Executive to expel your child from all government schools, if you think that:

- the Principal or Chief Executive has expelled your child on the basis of wrong information. For example, your child did not do the things they have been expelled for
- the school has not followed the correct process. For example, the school did not conduct a Directions Conference

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- the expulsion is too long. For example, the length of the expulsion is longer than the school needs to put in place support for your child to safely return to school
- the conditions of the expulsion do not meet your child's needs.

The process to appeal against your child's expulsion 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 to expel your child from their school, you must provide the paperwork to the Chief Executive, within 10 school days of the Directions Conference.

If you decide to appeal the Chief Executive's decision to expel your child from all government schools, you must provide the paperwork to the Minister for Education, within 10 school days of the Directions Conference.

Contact details for more information

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

- 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 'expulsion'.

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.