

PRIOR'S FIELD SCHOOL

GODALMING SURREY

GSA BSA Girls' Boarding and Day 11-18

GOVERNORS' POLICY REGARDING THE EXCLUSION OF PUPILS

1. **Authority to suspend or exclude.** The Head has the authority to suspend, require the removal of or expel a pupil, so long as she has had prior consultation with the Chairman of the Governors. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all actions taken should be fair and in accordance with the rules of natural justice. In doing so, they fully accept that the principles and practices discussed below would in all probability be followed anyway, without this written statement. Put simply, the aim is clarity.

2. **Grounds for exclusion.** The decision to require removal of or expel a girl on less than a term's notice will be a breach of the school's contract with the parents unless:

the decision was taken in good faith for an offence that is sufficiently serious according to the authorised and published policies, principles and rules of the school, and

Guilt has been reasonably well established by fair procedures, with the reasons given and clearly understood.

It is expected that expulsion will be used only as a sanction of last resort. It should be considered only for offences of a particularly grave nature such as the deliberate wounding of another pupil, possession or trafficking of drugs, persistent abuse of alcohol or tobacco, serious cases of cheating or theft or vandalism, systematic hacking of the school's computer systems, or persistent refusal to conform to the demands and behavioural expectations of the school.

3. **Factors to be considered.** The factors may be summarised as follows:

a. **The pupil:** her age, state of health, and previous record at the school.

b. **The offence:** its severity, frequency of occurrence, and likelihood of recurrence;

the degree to which the offence was a violation of rules of behaviour, and the relative importance of those rules;

whether or not the behaviour impaired or will impair the normal functioning of the girl or other girls in the school.

c. **The circumstances:**

whether any particular circumstances unique to the girl should be taken into account, such as domestic situations or personal stress;

the extent to which parental or peer or other pressure may have contributed to the behaviour;

whether the incident was perpetrated by the girl on her own or as part of a group.

4. **The decision and its consequences.**

- a. **Expulsion.** This is the most serious. The girl departs forthwith; a formal letter of expulsion is written to parents; notices stating the fact and reason for expulsion is posted on the school and staff noticeboards; the fact and reason of expulsion would be stated in reply to any enquiry about the girl at any time in the future; she would not be entitled to claim any connection with the school nor to return.

Fees due and unpaid up to and during the term of expulsion would be payable in full, together with any extras or disbursements. Fees in lieu of notice would not be payable, but the deposit would be retained by the school.

- b. **Parents are asked to withdraw their daughter.** For offences that do not justify formal expulsion but which, in the opinion of the Head, require the girl to leave permanently, full consultation is required between the Head and the parents, and also with the girl if of sufficient age and maturity. It must be clearly explained why the girl cannot remain, what will be her leaving status (discussed below), and what help will be offered towards a fresh start at another school. The girl's chosen courses of study, and the possible approach of public exams need careful consideration.

Fees due and unpaid up to and during the term of expulsion would be payable in full, together with any extras or disbursements. Fees in lieu of notice would not be payable, but the deposit would be returned to the parents, subject to recovery of costs incurred by reason of the offence (eg vandalism).

If following this consultation process, the Head remains satisfied that the girl must leave, but the parents refuse to withdraw her, the Head should suspend the girl from school and inform the parents that consideration will now be

given to formally requiring the girl's removal, and the Head will notify her decision to the parents in writing within three days.

- c. **Required removal.** The Head should explain to the parents that if she comes to the conclusion that the girl must be removed, the parents will be entitled to a governors' review but that, if her decision is upheld, the girl may be accorded a different leaving status, and that the Head may be less able to offer the same level of help in finding a fresh start. The deposit will not be returnable.

When writing to require removal, the Head should state the facts found, the reasons for the decision, the girl's leaving status and the financial position. An application form for a governors' review should be sent at the same time, together with a copy of the Exclusion of Pupils Procedure, (appendix to this policy document).

5. **Leaving status.** The process of exclusion can be stressful for all concerned and it is not a time for flexing muscles. It is an unhappy event to be worked out with kindness and understanding on all sides. The Head's decision will be much more palatable if matters of leaving status can be resolved. Factors to be considered are as follows:
 - a. What help will be offered in making a fresh start? Can the girl continue her studies elsewhere? Will course and project work be passed to another school? What about approaching public exams?
 - b. What announcements will be made? How will interest by the press be handled?
 - c. What record will be entered in the girl's file?
 - d. How will the school respond to enquiries for a reference for the girl?
 - e. What sums of money will be payable by the parents or returnable from the school? What can be done with the girl's uniform?
 - f. How will the girl's departure be recorded in the school magazine? May she attend end of term or year functions? Will she be listed as an old girl? May she play in old girl teams? Will she be allowed to return to the school premises?

Date of Next Review: April 2010.

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EXCLUSION OF PUPILS PROCEDURE (Appendix to Exclusions Policy)

Introduction

1. This procedure is prepared having regard to the terms of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003 and any subsequent amendments.

Informal stage

2. It is hoped that most concerns in relation to a proposed exclusion will be resolved quickly and informally. Parents with concerns about such a proposal should in the first instance raise these informally with the Head.

Formal stages

3. If the parents remain dissatisfied with the outcome, they should put their complaint in writing addressed to the Head and request a formal meeting with the Head. Following that meeting the Head will advise the parents in writing of the consequent decision.
4. If parents remain dissatisfied, then within 3 days of receiving that decision they should write again to the Head requesting a formal Panel Review.

Review Panel

5. The Review Panel will normally comprise the member of the Board of Governors appointed by the Board to act as Chairman of such Review Panels, one or two other members of the Board nominated by the Chairman of the Governing Body and one other person who shall be independent of the management and running of the school.
6. The members of the Panel will so far as reasonably possible have had no previous detailed knowledge of the case or of the pupils and parents and will not usually include the Chairman of the Governing Body.

Review Hearing

7. The hearing will take place at the School or such other place as the Chairman of the Review Panel should determine. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and, so far as reasonably possible, confidentially within the requirements of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003.
8. Those present at the hearing will normally be:-
 - The Review Panel
 - The Head
 - Parents or those with parental responsibility
 - The pupil (if appropriate)

 - Any friend of the applicants who may speak on their behalf.
 - Clerk to the Governing Body or someone to take a note of the hearing

Documents

9. Each member of the Review Panel will be supplied with a copy of the relevant documents. The parents shall be entitled to copies of any documents which will be considered at the Review Hearing.

Proceedings

10. The proceedings will be chaired by the appointed member of the Board (or another member of the Board nominated by that person for the purpose) and conducted in an informal manner but with regard to the principles of procedural fairness. A minute will be kept of the main points that arise.
11. If the Head considers it necessary in the interests of the individual or the School that the identity of any person should be withheld, the Chairman of the Review Panel may require that the name of that person, and the reason for withholding it, be written down and shown to the Review Panel. The Chairman may then, if it is considered necessary by the Panel, direct that the person be identified.
12. The Head will first be given an opportunity to explain to the Panel the circumstances that gave rise to the decision under consideration and the parents or other representative(s) of the pupil will then have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the pupil
13. The Review Panel can investigate further as it sees fit.

Decision

14. The Review Panel will consider the circumstances giving rise to the Head's decision in the light of the representations of the parents and any other evidence gathered and will reach a decision. That decision and any recommendations of the Review Panel will be final and will be notified in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governing Body (and where appropriate any person complained of) by the Chairman of the Review Panel, usually within three days of the hearing.

15. In exceptional circumstances, to ensure that the principles of procedural fairness are properly observed, a departure from the foregoing procedure may be authorised by the Review Panel. Parents will be notified of any such departure which will be within the standards set out in The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2003 and any subsequent amendments.

Date of Next Review: April 2010