

Hartstown Community School

Suspension Policy

Revised May 2018

The Suspension and Expulsion Policy of Hartstown Community School has been set out in accordance with the NEWB Guidelines and complies with Section 23(2) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 which states, “The Code of Behaviour shall specify the procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned”.

Suspension

The Board of Management recognises the requirement by law to follow fair procedures when proposing to suspend a student.

For the purpose of these Guidelines, a suspension is defined as: *requiring the student to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days*. During the period of a suspension, the student retains their place in the school.

Authority to suspend

The Board of Management of Hartstown Community School has the authority to suspend a student. The Board has also delegated this authority to the Principal and it has also been delegated to the Deputy Principals who have the authority to do so in consultation with the Principal. The Principal is authorised to suspend for a period of up to three days and this may be extended to five days with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board of Management. The period of suspension may be extended for up to nine days in exceptional circumstances such as where there is an on-going investigation, where a parent/guardian is unavailable or where the Board of Management is unable to meet at short notice. The approval of the Chairperson is also required in this regard.

The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as

- the student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- the student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the morale of other members of the school community
- the student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a risk/threat to health and safety
- the student is responsible for theft or damage to property
- A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension also.

The Principal is obliged to review all investigations to ensure that they have been fully and fairly conducted and satisfy the Board of Management in this regard.

Before suspending a student, the following factors will have been taken into account

- the nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- the context of the behaviour
- the impact of the behaviour
- the interventions tried to date
- whether suspension is an appropriate response
- the possible impact of suspension

Suspension as part of a behaviour management plan

Suspension is part of an agreed plan to address the student's behaviour. The suspension will:

- enable the school to set behavioural goals with the student and parents/guardians
- give school staff an opportunity to plan other interventions
- impress on a student and their parents/guardians the seriousness of the behaviour

Procedures in respect of suspension

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirm serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the school will observe the following procedures:

- inform the parents/guardians about the complaint
- give parents/guardians and the student an opportunity to respond

Parents will be requested to attend at the school with the student and they will, where possible be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed.

Immediate suspension

In exceptional circumstances the Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary,

- Where the continued presence of the student in the school represents a serious risk/threat to the health and/or safety of students or staff of the school or any other person.
- The student's presence in the school is impacting on good order and teaching and learning.

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for reasons of the safety of the student, other students, staff or others, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension. The formal investigation will immediately follow the imposition of the suspension. Parents/Guardians will be notified and arrangements made for the student to be collected from the school.

Suspension during a State Examination

This sanction will only be imposed by the Board of Management and will only be imposed where there is

- a threat of poor order in the conduct of the examination
- a threat to the safety of other students and personnel
- a threat to the right of other students to do their examination in a calm atmosphere

Implementing the suspension

The Principal will notify the parents/guardians of the student in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter will confirm:

- the period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reason for the suspension
- the study programme to be followed where relevant
- any other information deemed relevant by the Principal
- the arrangements for returning to school
- the right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills (Education Act 1998, Section 29) where the period of suspension has reached twenty days or more in the current school year

The Principal will notify the Board of Management and the NEWB of all suspensions.

Re-integrating the student

Arrangements are put in place for a member of staff to provide support to the student on his/her return. The student starts with a clean slate and the school expects the same behaviour of this student as of all other students.

Section 29 Appeal

Where the total number of days in which a student has been suspended in the current school year has reached twenty days, the parents/guardians may appeal the suspension under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998. Information on the Appeal process is available from the Principal.