



Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Statement

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1. Statement of Intent and Principles

Education My Life Matters (EMLM) is an independent school providing alternative provision for learners aged 11–16. EMLM is committed to ensuring that every learner receives education within a safe, caring, supportive and inclusive environment.

Many learners join EMLM following significant disruption or crisis in their education. They may have experienced barriers to accessing mainstream education, periods of non-attendance, repeated suspensions or permanent exclusion, or previous placements that have been unable to meet their needs. Many of our learners have diagnosed or emerging special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have experienced trauma, or have social, emotional, mental health, communication and/or behavioural needs.

For these reasons, EMLM's **primary aim is to avoid suspension and permanent exclusion wherever reasonably possible**. We recognise that learners are often referred to EMLM because other educational placements have broken down and therefore further exclusion may increase disengagement, vulnerability and the risk of the learner becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

We recognise that behaviour can communicate an underlying need. Where concerns arise, our priority is to understand the individual learner, identify contributing factors and provide appropriate support, intervention and reasonable adjustments while maintaining the safety and wellbeing of the whole school community.

EMLM will work closely with parents/carers, the commissioning local authority and, where appropriate, other agencies and professionals to support the learner and maintain their engagement in education.

Where concerns are significant or EMLM considers that a learner's placement may no longer be able to meet their needs safely or appropriately, our priority will be to work with the commissioning local authority and relevant professionals **to review the placement and identify suitable alternative provision**, wherever this is appropriate, rather than using permanent exclusion as a means of ending a placement.

Suspension or permanent exclusion will therefore only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where other appropriate strategies, interventions and support have been considered and where such action is necessary and proportionate.

In applying this policy, EMLM will:

- ensure decisions are fair, consistent, reasonable and proportionate;
- place the safety and welfare of learners and staff at the centre of decision-making;
- consider the individual learner's circumstances, SEND, disability, communication needs, safeguarding needs and known vulnerabilities;
- consider whether reasonable adjustments or additional support are required;
- seek to understand the underlying causes and functions of behaviour;
- work collaboratively with parents/carers, the commissioning local authority and relevant professionals;
- consider alternatives to suspension and permanent exclusion wherever these can be safely and appropriately implemented;
- seek to maintain continuity of education and minimise further educational disruption;
- support learners to successfully reintegrate following any suspension;
- ensure learners and their parents/carers understand decisions that affect them; and
- seek to prevent further educational disengagement and reduce the risk of learners becoming NEET.

EMLM will have regard to relevant Department for Education guidance on suspension and permanent exclusion as an important source of good practice, while recognising that the statutory exclusion framework for maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units does not apply to independent schools in the same way.

Our approach will be implemented alongside EMLM's Behaviour Policy, SEND Policy, Equality Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with the Independent School Standards, Equality Act 2010 and other legal requirements applicable to independent schools.

1.1 Maintaining Education Where On-Site Attendance Is Temporarily Unsafe

EMLM has a strong commitment to maintaining learners' engagement in education and has not historically used permanent exclusion as a means of managing complex behaviour, safeguarding concerns or difficulties with a learner's placement.

Where a serious safeguarding, health and safety or risk-management concern arises which means that a learner cannot safely attend the school site, EMLM's priority will be to work collaboratively with the learner, parents/carers, the commissioning local authority and relevant professionals to identify a safe and appropriate way forward.

Where appropriate, this may include requesting an urgent review of the learner's placement, provision, support arrangements or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Where a learner is temporarily unable to access education safely on the EMLM site, the school will seek to maintain the learner's education and engagement while longer-term arrangements are considered.

Depending upon the individual circumstances and risk assessment, this may include:

- supported home learning;
- remote learning;
- individual or small-scale tuition;
- education delivered at an agreed alternative venue, such as a library or other suitable community setting;
- regular contact with a named member of EMLM staff;
- pastoral and wellbeing support;
- adapted learning activities;
- continued SEND support and reasonable adjustments, where applicable; and
- liaison with the local authority and other professionals regarding suitable alternative provision.

Any such arrangement will be individualised, risk assessed, time limited and regularly reviewed. The rationale, educational arrangements and agreed next steps will be clearly recorded.

These arrangements will not be used as an informal suspension or exclusion, nor simply as a means of managing behaviour.

Where a learner's attendance on the school site cannot safely resume within a reasonable period, EMLM will work proactively with the commissioning local authority and relevant professionals to review the suitability of the placement and identify appropriate alternative provision.

Throughout this process, EMLM will seek to minimise disruption to the learner's education and avoid unnecessary disengagement. The learner will remain supported by EMLM for as long as EMLM retains responsibility for their education and/or until alternative arrangements have been formally agreed with the relevant parties.

Where there is an immediate safeguarding concern, EMLM's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. Where there is a significant health and safety risk, appropriate risk assessment and risk-management procedures will be implemented.

The safety, welfare and educational needs of the individual learner will be balanced alongside EMLM's responsibility to safeguard other learners, staff and members of the school community.

2. Responding to Serious Incidents and Concerns

Where a serious incident, safeguarding concern or health and safety risk arises, EMLM will consider the individual circumstances and take proportionate action to protect the learner, other learners and staff.

Before considering suspension or permanent exclusion, EMLM will, where appropriate:

- consider any safeguarding concerns, SEND, disability, communication needs and known vulnerabilities;
- consider whether reasonable adjustments or additional support are required;
- review existing risk assessments and support plans;
- seek the views of the learner and parent/carer, where appropriate; and
- work with the commissioning local authority and relevant professionals to identify appropriate support or alternative provision.

Where it is not safe for a learner to attend the school site, EMLM will work with the local authority to agree appropriate next steps while seeking to maintain the learner's education through suitable alternative arrangements.

Permanent exclusion will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort.

EMLM will not use informal or unlawful exclusion practices, including sending a learner home as a disciplinary measure without formally recording the action taken. A learner will not be removed from roll, or a parent/carer encouraged to remove them, primarily in the interests of the school rather than the learner.

3. Suspension and Permanent Exclusion

Suspension and permanent exclusion are not routine behaviour-management strategies at EMLM. Our priority is to understand and respond to the learner's needs, reduce risk and work with the commissioning local authority and relevant professionals to maintain the learner's engagement in education.

Where a suspension is considered necessary, the decision will be reasonable, proportionate and based on the individual circumstances. Relevant safeguarding, SEND, disability and equality considerations, including any reasonable adjustments, will be taken into account.

Permanent exclusion will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where there is a serious risk to the safety or welfare of the learner or others and where appropriate alternatives have been considered.

Where concerns indicate that EMLM may no longer be able to safely or appropriately meet a learner's needs, this will normally be addressed through discussion with the commissioning local authority and, where applicable, a review of the learner's provision, placement or EHCP, rather than through permanent exclusion.

All decisions and actions will be clearly recorded and communicated to the learner, parent/carer, commissioning local authority and other relevant professionals, as appropriate.

4. SEND, Equality and Safeguarding Considerations

EMLM recognises that behaviour may be linked to SEND, disability, communication needs, trauma, social, emotional and mental health needs or safeguarding concerns. These factors will be considered when responding to serious incidents and when determining appropriate support.

Before considering suspension or permanent exclusion, EMLM will consider whether:

- the learner's needs are understood and appropriate support is in place;
- SEND or disability may have contributed to the behaviour;
- reasonable adjustments have been made or whether further adjustments are required;
- there are unmet or emerging needs requiring further assessment or support; and
- there are safeguarding concerns or vulnerabilities that require additional action.

A learner will not be suspended or permanently excluded simply because they have SEND or a disability, or because their needs have become more complex.

Where EMLM believes that it may no longer be able to meet a learner's needs safely or appropriately, we will work with the commissioning local authority, parents/carers and relevant professionals to review the learner's provision and placement and, where applicable, request a review of their EHCP.

Any safeguarding concerns identified during this process will be managed in accordance with EMLM's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

5. Maintaining Education and Reintegration

EMLM is committed to minimising disruption to a learner's education wherever possible.

Where a learner is temporarily unable to attend the school site because of a serious safeguarding or health and safety concern, EMLM will work with the learner, parents/carers, the commissioning local authority and relevant professionals to agree appropriate arrangements while longer-term plans are considered.

Depending on the learner's needs and the circumstances, this may include:

- home learning or remote learning;
- individual tuition;
- learning at an agreed alternative venue, such as a library or other suitable community setting;
- regular contact with a named member of staff; and
- pastoral and wellbeing support.

Any alternative arrangement will be based on an individual risk assessment, will be regularly reviewed and will not be used as an informal exclusion.

Where a learner is able to return to EMLM, staff will support a planned reintegration. This may include a meeting with the learner and parent/carer, a review of support or risk-management plans, and agreement on any additional support or reasonable adjustments needed to help the learner return successfully.

Where it is clear that EMLM can no longer safely or appropriately meet a learner's needs, the school will work with the commissioning local authority and relevant professionals to identify suitable alternative provision while seeking to maintain the learner's engagement in education throughout the process.

6. Monitoring and Review

EMLM will maintain appropriate records of any suspensions, permanent exclusions and serious incidents where a learner's access to the school site has been temporarily restricted due to safeguarding or health and safety concerns.

The Head of School will monitor these arrangements and ensure that the commissioning local authority, parents/carers and relevant professionals are involved as appropriate.

The Proprietor and Independent Executive Board will maintain oversight of any use of suspension or permanent exclusion and will consider any emerging patterns, including those relating to SEND, disability, safeguarding or equality.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are changes to relevant legislation, statutory guidance or the needs of EMLM.

7. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following EMLM policies and procedures:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality Policy
- Attendance Policy

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Complaints Policy
- Positive Handling/Use of Reasonable Force Policy
- Relevant risk assessments and individual learner support plans