

St Columba's College Exclusions Policy

A. In formulating this policy, every effort has been made to do so in accordance with the provisions of education and equality legislation. It should be read alongside the College's Code of Behaviour and the College Rules.

B. There are times when, despite the best efforts of the College, it is necessary to implement the exclusion procedure. The Warden is empowered by the Fellows to exercise his professional judgement in the use of exclusion. In the absence of the Warden, the Sub-Warden may exclude a pupil for a fixed term.

C. Before deciding to exclude a pupil, either permanently or for a fixed period, the Warden will:

- ensure that an appropriate investigation has been carried out
- consider all the evidence available
- take into account the College's written policies on behaviour/discipline/anti-bullying
- ensure that all legislation, including that relating to equality, has been considered
- allow the pupil to give his/her version of events
- take care that questioning techniques are not oppressive, based on leading questions or conditioned by threats of punishment
- ensure that someone acts *in loco parentis* during questioning
- check whether the incident may have been provoked, for example by bullying
- consult others, especially House staff, but not anyone who may later have a role in reviewing his decision

D. The Warden will exclude a pupil if he is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that a pupil has done what s/he is alleged to have done.

E. The Warden, in his deliberations, will consider two other factors:

- the strategies adopted by the school to prevent the pupil from getting into this trouble
- the alternatives available to avoid having to exclude

The Warden may therefore ask:

- was the misdemeanour a one-off mistake?
- was the negative action a cry for help?
- does an exclusion offer the best way forward?
- was the poor behaviour a reaction or a lashing out after constant teasing, bullying or provocation?
- were there signs that the pupil was struggling with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties? Did the College respond in the best manner?

F. Where an exclusion is for a fixed period, the Warden may specify some expected outcomes that will lead to a full reintegration of the pupil. These expectations and the time-span will be fair and reasonable. The proposals will offer the most appropriate balance between punishment and efforts to encourage improvement.

G. There may be occasions when ‘a managed move of schools’ is in the pupil’s best interests. This will not be carried out under threat of exclusion and will be in consultation with parents.

H. Permanent exclusion is seen as a final step after all available strategies have been considered. It may follow persistent, defiant misbehaviour. However, the Warden also reserves the right to exclude a pupil solely on a one-off event that is serious enough to warrant a permanent exclusion. Instances where a person is embarrassed or humiliated on the internet or through social media fall into this category. The following exceptional circumstances are a guideline to offences considered serious enough to warrant a permanent exclusion:

- serious actual or threatened violence against another pupil or a member of staff
- sexual abuse or assault
- supplying an illegal drug or possession or use of an illegal drug on College premises
- carrying an offensive weapon
- persistent and defiant misbehaviour, including bullying in all its forms

The above list is a guide only and is not exhaustive.

I. Parents will normally be informed, by telephone initially, of any serious offence committed by their son/daughter and involving exclusion. A follow-up letter will be sent subsequently.

J. Parents have the right to appeal against a decision to exclude made by the Warden. This appeal will be heard by a group of people convened by the Fellows and including members of the Board of Management (see complaints/grievances procedure).

K. After the expiry of a fixed-term exclusion, the Warden will normally arrange a meeting with the pupil to make explicit his expectations about future conduct.