



Astrea Academy Trust

INSPIRING BEYOND MEASURE

Secondary Behaviour Policy Addendum

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Executive Approval:	Executive Board
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Purpose of this addendum: To reduce suspensions by amending the Trust Behaviour Policy to include the following changes:

- When a student is removed from class due to poor behaviour they will be placed within Triage until the next suitable social time break, at this point in the vast majority of cases they will reintegrate into mainstream lessons. Should this happen twice in a day they will then be placed in the Reset base for the following day (8:30 – 4:00).
- Detentions will be amended to reflect the policy of ‘certainty over severity’, subsequently reducing detention time to 30-minute slots. 30-minute detention will escalate to 60-minute detentions for non-completion or 2 significant incidents.
- Upon return from suspension a student will spend their reintegration day within the Reset Base
- Addition of 2 steps prior to deciding to suspend:
 1. Repeat of reset base for a day
 2. Issue an off-site direction (where appropriate)
- To bring in protocols for short term offsite direction
- To create a ‘How to guide’ to support parents / carers with what steps to take when their child is suspended.
- To carry out a series of trial period to assess the impact of the proposed changes and consult with school leaders about the changes to policy.

Reducing the number of suspensions

Rationale for Policy Change

The Trust Secondary Behaviour policy has now been in place for 4 terms, as part of our commitment to continually striving to reduce suspensions, and to obtain the right balance between high expectations and inclusivity, we wish to review the sanctions system to support suspension reduction, without lowering standards. For behaviour improvements to be sustained within our academies, the policy needs to be dynamic and responsive. The issues we were aiming to address through the policy in September 2023 are no longer applicable and as such, we need to help ensure we can maximise learning time for all students.

It is important to note that in all cases the students who are suspended are in the minority and that it is almost always choice behaviour that leads to a suspension being issued. The policy is designed to resolve poor behaviours early within their occurrence and at the lowest level and the vast majority of students in school thrive within the policy.

There is a danger of unintended consequences of simply arbitrarily reducing suspension figures. Whilst it may, in the short-term, mean that students miss less learning time, if in the long-term it leads to lower standards in classroom and around the school then it may lead to a greater loss of learning time.

Context

The main ambition of Astrea's Behaviour policy is to create a culture that positively influences student behaviour, so that this becomes the dominant force within the school. Through continued exposure to the positive culture within school, the character of students is shaped so that they engage positively in all aspect of education and are fully prepared to be active citizens of society when they leave. Alongside the policy, significant time is invested in the teaching and practicing of the right behaviours to support all students to be successful within school.

A year after the introduction of the policy, the initial spike in suspensions had gone away, but there were still a number of students with repeated suspensions. Our biggest area of suspension was from students failing in the Reset Base and it was this that we needed to address.

However, what we do not want to do is lower our standards. We needed to protect learning in the classroom and ensure that our standards in the Reset Base are maintained. Standards in Reset Base are the bedrock of the behaviour system as being sent to Reset should always be a choice that is never preferred by students.

Therefore, we have looked at how we can slow down the process of escalating to the Reset Base, as well as how we can do more to ensure students are successful in completing the Reset Base sanction.

Slowing down the escalation to suspension

As suspension is often the final outcome of poor behaviour choices, it is important firstly to review if changes can be made earlier within the 'behavioural issue' to slow down the escalation process towards suspension. Therefore, it is proposed that the following changes are made:

Current Process of Escalation (Current Policy 23-24)

In Classroom	
Step 1	Verbal warning

Step 2	45-minute detention
Step 3	Removal from lesson, 90-minute detention issued
Step 4	Triage assessment, leading to Reset Base (full day)
Step 5	Suspension (includes full day in Reset Base on return)

Proposed Escalation Process (Proposed Policy from HT4 2024)

In Classroom process		
Step 1	1 st incident	Verbal warning
Step 2	2 nd incident	After school 30-minute detention issued (same day)
Step 3	3 rd incident	Removal from lesson, 60-minute detention issued (same day) Period of time in Triage, expected return to lessons following the next appropriate break/lunch
Step 4	4 th incident	2 nd removal from a lesson, leading to Reset Base (full day – next day)
Step 5		<i>(dependant on incident)</i> Failure of the day in Reset – sanction = repeat the day Failure to attend the Reset Base – sanction = Suspension (includes full day in Reset Base on return)
Step 6		Permanent Exclusion
<i>NB: As is always the case, there are some incidents where the severity of a students' behaviours require leaders to sanction higher up the escalation process without working through all the steps.</i>		

Detentions

Reflecting on feedback from families and the phrase 'certainty over severity' from 'Running the Room', it is proposed that the length of detentions is reduced to 30 minutes. This ensures that detention is an inconvenience which is true to its purpose.

- DT1 – 30 minutes
- DT2 – 60 minutes

Reviewing Reset Base and Suspensions

Reset Base remains the most serious sanction leaders can issue and control. This needs to act as a deterrent for students to support them on their behaviour development journey until they have internalised that they behaviour well because 'its who they are'. For this reason, the Reset Base needs to be the best room in the school, a tall ask when it contains all the students from across the academy who have got it wrong in their individual lessons. The Reset Base needs to display the best of the core routines; silence is golden, warm strict and students needs to work hard. Likewise, it needs to restrict access to individual social time as it is the most serious sanction school can control. For this reason, it is right that the Reset Base should not have social time breaks (these are scheduled within the base) and that it should finish after the end of the school day. It must inconvenience students.

Suspensions are never issued lightly and are often issued as a result of one of the three main behaviours, all of which fall within the category 'Persistent or General Disruptive Behaviour':

- Refusal to follow the school behaviour policy and attend Reset Base
- Failure to successfully complete Reset Base
- Truancy from lessons / Reset Base

Due to the proposed change in detention time, it is proposed that the length of the Reset Base Day should be 08:30 – 4:00, instead of 4:30pm. There is also merit in exploring an earlier finish of 3:30pm (in line with the end of the first detention) for students who have succeeded throughout the day and not received any warnings – this may improve compliance within the Reset Base over the course of the day.

The introduction of these changes, particularly students returning to circulation after being removed from a lesson, needs to be considered carefully so that the messaging and the timing for the change is planned for with all stakeholders. Handled badly, this is likely to result in a backwards shift in the behaviour seen in lessons (which in most cases is extremely strong). We also need to ensure that we engage fully with school leaders as they need to deliver this message to staff to gain their buy-in without it appearing like the Trust no longer views disruption free learning as sacred.

Suspension, whilst the most serious sanctions a school leader can issue, are somewhat out of leaders' control as they cannot endorse what happens at home. Unfortunately, a large proportion of parents /carers choose to support their child over the school when a suspension is issued and subsequently this is not viewed with the level of severity that should be attached to the sanction. For this reason, the policy specifies that upon return from suspension, the student will spend the day within the Reset Base. This is to prevent students from escalating their behaviour to the point of suspension because this is less of a sanction in their eyes than the Reset Base, further adding to suspension numbers and increasing the students time out of lessons.

There is a moral purpose to suspension if it is used judiciously. There are certain behaviours, such as swearing at staff, the possession of drugs or serious violence towards another student, which have a serious impact on the school community, and it is important to communicate clearly how seriously these are taken. We were not prepared to compromise on these (though they are relatively rare).

Alongside these infrequent incidents there is a 'red line' which we suspend students for unless there is a compelling reason why they occur, this is if a student refuses to go to the Reset Base when sent from a lesson. Students do not get collected from their lesson, but instead are expected to go unaccompanied. This is important in terms of them taking ownership of their behaviour, but also not taking up a lot of senior staff time. This does, on occasion lead to suspension, but is a relatively small price to pay for this principle and maintaining good order for the remainder of the school community.

However, having reviewed our work around suspensions, we can be and need to be better at reinforcing the seriousness of a student receiving a suspension. In September 2023, we introduced a change to the policy that required schools to increase their response to students who receive multiple suspensions, through the issuing on a behaviour support plan. This document supersedes reintegration paperwork and is intended to ensure a higher level of engagement from parents / carers and a more sustained package of support over a longer duration of time. Regional Directors are in the process of reviewing these with each school, and further refinement will be needed. In addition, we recognise that further work is needed to build stronger cultural buy in with both students and parents, this would allow us to increase the severity of suspension for students by working in partnership with parents. For example, through greater buy in we could gain parental agreement for certain prized items to be held by the school for the period of suspension (e.g. mobile phone, games console). This would help

to reduce the number of days of suspension that a student might be issued with, as the reintegration process acts as more of a deterrent than the number of days of suspension issued. This is a step change we are aiming towards but, due to where we are on the improvement journey within our schools, if implemented now this would adversely impact on parental relations and not achieve a reduction in suspension.