

I am worried my child might be excluded from school

An information booklet for parents and carers



PINS

PUPIL INCLUSION NETWORK SCOTLAND

2 | An information booklet for parents and carers about school exclusion

This booklet explains what should happen if a child or young person is at risk of being excluded from school. It is based on Scottish Government guidance called **Included, Engaged and Involved: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions** (2017) If your child has been excluded from school, please see the other leaflet in this series: **MY CHILD HAS BEEN EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL.**

All children and young people need school to be a place where they are included, engaged and involved in their learning and the life of the school.

Schools, parents and children and young people should work together to make school a place where there are positive relationships and positive behaviours so that everyone can learn. Sometimes children and young people need extra support to get the best out of their school experience.

Excluding a child or young person from school should be a last resort. In the past, people might have talked about 'suspending' a child from school. Now, every time a child is told they must not come to school, no matter for how long, this is called an exclusion.

Excluding a child or young person from school must only be used when all other possible things a school can do have been tried and have been unsuccessful. Exclusion from school must not be used as a punishment, or as a way to cope with a child's additional support needs. Exclusion must have a positive purpose.

The Scottish Government has written guidance for schools about what they can do to include children and young people and prevent them from being excluded from school.

In this booklet when we talk about *parents* we mean anyone with parental responsibility, including carers, those providing foster or residential placement, or the Local Authority where full parental responsibility is with them.

WHAT DOES EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL MEAN?

Exclusion from school means that your child is told not to come to school. A child or young person can be excluded because of an incident in, or out of school, which leads the school to think that discipline and learning in the school will be badly affected if your child stays in school. They can be excluded because of their behaviour towards other pupils, teachers or staff. It may be they have caused disruption or they have been a danger to themselves or others.

Children and young people must not be sent home on an 'informal exclusion' or to 'cool-off'. If your child is told to leave school, this is an exclusion. All exclusions from school must be formally recorded, and you should receive formal notification.

The Scottish Government says that exclusion from school should be a last resort and must only be used when all other possible things a school can do to support your child or remedy a situation have been tried and have been unsuccessful.

Excluding a child or young person from school is not, and must not be used as a punishment.

An exclusion can be used to give the child or young person time to think about their behaviour. It can be time for you as a parent to think about your child's behaviour and how you can help. Or the school might need time to consider what support your child needs and then put that in place.

The length of an exclusion is up to the school (they must work within the policies/guidance that the Local Authority have on this) but this should always be for as short a time as possible. If your child is excluded the time should be used to sort out a problem and plan for a return to school. When a child or young person is excluded they still have the right to an education no matter how long the period of exclusion.

WHO CAN SUPPORT ME OR MY CHILD IN SCHOOL?

All the staff in a school have a part to play in supporting children and young people to be included in learning and the life of the school.

An important way to **include** all children and young people is to make sure they get the personal support they need. Nowadays schools and other agencies will talk about your child's wellbeing. Any teacher who provides personal support and who is responsible for looking after the wellbeing of your child will build a good relationship with you and your child. They should be available to talk with you or your child if you have a concern. They will also be part of any plan that is made to support your child with things like learning, or attendance, or behaviour at school.

In primary school the class teacher is responsible for the personal support of the children in the class, supported by the Deputy or Headteacher. In secondary school the school will have a team of teachers (perhaps called Guidance or Pupil Support or Pastoral Care) who will help look after each young person's support needs and wellbeing.

All those working with children and young people and families should work together to help provide the right support when it is asked for or needed; this is known as Getting it Right for Every Child or GIRFEC . As part of the Getting it Right for Every Child approach, a Named Person will be available to children and young people across Scotland from birth to age 18, or beyond if still in school. The Named Person will normally be a health visitor for pre-school children or a head teacher, guidance teacher or other promoted member of staff for school aged children and young people.

A Named Person is a clear point of contact that children, young people and parents can go to for advice, information and support. They will work with you and your child to get the help they need, when they need it.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO PREVENT EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL?

Every child and young person is entitled to the support they need at school. If you, your child, or your child's school thinks your child needs help with learning, school attendance, or behaviour, then it is time to talk.

The most useful step you can take is to talk about your child's circumstances and needs. This can help prevent an exclusion, but it can also stop your child being excluded again because problems are not sorted.

TALKING ABOUT CONCERNS YOU HAVE FOR YOUR CHILD

As a parent, you can ask to speak to a member of school staff with responsibility for personal support, or you can ask to speak to the named person for your child. These are some of the questions that you can talk about together. You can use these questions and your conversation to help prevent problems getting worse or happening again:

- What worries do I have about my child's experience of school?
- What worries, concerns or problems does my child talk about regarding school?
- What are school staff concerned about?
- What's going well for my child just now – in school and out of school?
- Do school staff have the information they need to help my child at school? If not, what do we need to talk about and share?
- As a parent, do I have all the information I need to help my child get the most out of school? If not, what does school need to talk about and share?
- What do we all need to do now to help my child?
- What extra help, if any, does my child need? And who can provide it?

As a parent, you can expect that other agencies who know your child should be involved in discussing their needs. For example, this might be a support worker from an organisation supporting your family, or if your child has a social worker they can be involved and offer support. This means that everyone has the best and fullest picture so that your child gets the right support from the right people.

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO PAUSE AND THINK ABOUT HOW TO AVOID EXCLUSION

Even if a problem at school has developed to the point where the school is considering excluding your child there is still time to pause and think again. It is especially important to do this if your child has been excluded before, and is at risk of being excluded again.

The Scottish Government suggests a list of questions and check points that a school can use to help prevent an exclusion. The school has this guidance. Some questions are provided below; they might be useful to help a conversation with school staff.

So, even at a very late stage, parents, the child or young person, and school staff (along with any other helpful support agency) can work together and talk through these questions:

- Briefly, what exactly is the concern or problem?
- What have we tried already?
- Because exclusion from school is a last resort, are there still things we can do?
- What would exclusion achieve?
- Rather than exclude, what alternative might be possible?
- If the child/young person is excluded what is the impact on them, their family and their wider circumstances?
- Does the child/young person need additional support? If they do, who from?
- What can we do now, rather than exclude?

Talking to someone and getting some good advice is always helpful. You can find out more about helping agencies on the next page.

MORE HELP AND INFORMATION

There is another leaflet in this series that will help if your child has been excluded: **'My child has been excluded from school'** which is available here: <http://www.pinscotland.org/theme-school-exclusion.html>

The full version of the Scottish Government guidance **'Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusion'** is available here: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/8877>

Information for parents on school attendance is also available here: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/294630/0091104.pdf>

ParentLine Scotland. At some time, all parents and carers find that parenting can be difficult or stressful. ParentLine Scotland is a free, confidential, telephone helpline, email and online chat service. You can call about any problem, however big or small. **Phone 08000 282233** or **email parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk**

Enquire is the advice service for additional support for learning. If your child needs extra help but you are unsure what to do phone 0345 123 2303. Enquire has factsheets that are very helpful for parents and carers. Visit: <http://www.enquire.org.uk>

RESOLVE: ASL is an independent mediation service that helps resolve conflict around meeting a child or young person's additional support for learning needs. Visit: https://childreninscotland.org.uk/our-work/services/resolve_

Scottish Child Law Centre helps children, young people, their families and carers by providing advice and information. Visit: <http://www.sclc.org.uk/>

Clan Child Law provide free legal advice and representation for children and young people. Visit: <http://www.clanchildlaw.org/>

Scottish Children's Reporter and Children's Hearings. This is the legal system for children and young people in Scotland who are either at risk or who have been caught offending. Families become involved if their child is getting into trouble with the police, or there are concerns for the wellbeing. Visit: <http://www.scra.gov.uk/parents-carers/>

Every Local Authority has its own guidance or policy on school exclusion, school attendance, behaviour and positive relationships. This should reflect the guidance provided by Scottish Government which is explained in this booklet. Your child's school will be able to tell you where you can see these. Or contact your Local Authority Education Department for information.