Separation of Pupils for Safeguarding Purposes

Guidance to Academies

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Audience:	School Safeguarding staff and senior leaders

Shaw Education Trust

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1. Aim of this Document

This document is intended to give school and trust leaders some guidance on the aspect of 'safeguarding separation' as noted in the updated DfE Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance (effective from 26th July 2026).

It is important to stress that this action is seen very much as a last resort and is not a 'capacity-management tool'. If a school can manage an incident without sending pupils home via a 'safeguarding notice', they must do so.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe is in line with the Equality Act 2010. It does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality.

2. Key statements from the new DfE guidance

Below are some relevant paragraphs taken from the new guidance with main aspects to note highlighted.

*26. In certain circumstances, a school **can temporarily forbid a pupil** from attending its premises, for example, due to an allegation of harm by one pupil against another which might require physically separating a pupil from one or other pupils……**This is not an exclusion on disciplinary grounds**.*

*27. The school **should inform parents** of the reason why the pupil has been temporarily forbidden from attending its premises and in conjunction with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy)……and **ensure this is used for rare circumstances** and only when separating pupils is essential and cannot practicably be done in a way that lets one or more pupils remain on school premises.*

*28. ……. Ultimately, any decisions…..are for the school to make on a case-by-case basis, with **the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a lead role** and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the police as required.*

*30. Schools should support pupils to **reintegrate successfully** into school life….*

3. Guiding Principles for the use of the 'Safeguarding Separation Notice'

It is important for us within the Trust to understand the purpose of this action and whilst each situation should be taken on a case-by-case basis, it is essential that we have some guiding principles for this to ensure it is used sparingly, and appropriately.

It is assumed that this process will only be used when a school does not have ample evidence at that given time to suspend a pupil and has considered relevant alternatives (some listed below).

This includes ensuring all process have been examined first, such as:

- **Suspension:** Where a pupil has been deemed to contravene the school's behaviour policy, then it may be more appropriate to sanction a suspension and not initiate a 'safeguarding separation notice'
- **On-site adjustments**: E.g. staggering lunchtimes, altering timetables/seating plans, utilising different areas of the school etc.
- **Internal isolation/suspension:** Temporarily removing a pupil from standard classrooms to an internal inclusion room to de-escalate situations
- **Mandatory off-site provision:** In highly severe cases (such as serious incidents cases of child-on-child sexualised behaviour in small primary schools), schools may enforce a direction to send a pupil to an alternative educational site for their own safety and the safety of others

4. Examples when this may be applied

The list below is not exhaustive but may give some guidance to possible uses of this process:

- **Child-on-Child Abuse (protecting the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator):** A pupil makes a credible disclosure that another pupil has sexually assaulted or seriously sexually harmed them. Both pupils attend the same provision, and the alleged victim may be experiencing significant distress at the prospect of attending school whilst the alleged perpetrator remains on site. It would be more likely that the alleged perpetrator would be the pupil that would receive the 'safeguarding separation notice', and not the alleged victim, as this is an instruction from school, not an optional choice for the pupil. Where an alleged victim has time away from school, this would likely be for a medical reason or 'C'



as agreed by the school. Initiating a notice to the alleged perpetrator protects the alleged victim against possible further child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment, or assault by ensuring they do not cross paths with the alleged perpetrator on school grounds. In addition, separating an alleged perpetrator from the wider school community may prevent possible retaliation or further incidents while investigations take place and from crossing paths with the alleged victim on school grounds.

- **Bullying and Harassment:** Preventing continuous, severe, or targeted bullying that causes significant mental or emotional harm whilst a resolution can be sought. Again, this is more likely to be used with the alleged perpetrator. Where clear evidence exists that bullying has occurred, the perpetrator should be suspended.
- Credible threat of targeted serious violence against a named pupil (this may be more relevant to schools supporting pupils with SEMH needs): Whilst a particular pupil has not explicitly indicated that they may be a threat to another pupil (doing so would warrant a suspension), school staff deem there may be some risk present. The temporary notice direction may be necessary to prevent foreseeable serious harm whilst risk assessments and multi-agency planning are undertaken.
- **Significant Community Tensions:** Managing gang affiliations, severe local rivalries, or group conflicts that pose an immediate physical threat to pupils, e.g. threat of external persons attending school site to confront school pupil(s). A pupil may be suspected of possibly bringing a weapon onto site or involved in criminal exploitation where intelligence indicates they may pose a serious risk to another pupil or group of pupils. Police or safeguarding partners may advise that immediate separation is necessary while investigations take place.

5. Steps for Headteacher to action if actioning a 'Safeguarding Separation Notice'

Before initiating a 'safeguarding separation notice', a Headteacher must:

- explore all other possible possibilities with keeping the pupil on-site
- consult with the DSL (and SENCo if a SEND pupil) to ensure the reasons are based on safeguarding reasons
- get approval from the National Education Director (Senior Director of Safeguarding can also be contacted if further guidance/advice is required)



parental permission is not required, but communication with parents is needed, which should be documented.

On actioning the 'notice', a school must:

- clearly communicate with pupil and parent (with follow up letter):
  - reasons for 'notice',
  - how long the period will be for (this should be as minimum as possible, approx. 1-2 days),
  - reintegration dates and process for return,
  - arrangements for safeguarding checks each day of the absence,
  - arrangements for educational work to be completed at home.

- document all actions on My Concern / CPOMs, including parental communications,
- record 'C' on attendance register for days absent,
- log parental response,

The reintegration meeting should be conducted in line with all reintegration meetings conducted on any pupil's return, ensuring a full programme of support is in place which may include risk assessments, safety plans, timetables alterations etc.

Annex A: Template letter to parents

[School Letterhead]

[Date]

Dear Parent/Carer,

As already communicated to you, following a safeguarding assessment, a Separation Notice has been issued concerning your child, [Pupil Name].

As a result, [Pupil Name] is being directed to remain at home and must not attend school from [start date] until [return date]. This measure has been taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all individuals involved while the matter is being managed. Please note that this is not a suspension on disciplinary grounds and will be an authorised absence, but it is a direction by school that must be adhered to under DfE guidance for 'Separation of pupils for safeguarding purposes'.

The reason for this notice is as follows:
[insert reason(s)]

The school will maintain contact with you regarding arrangements for your child's education and any updates relating to this situation.

If you have any questions, please contact [name/role] on [telephone/email].

If you disagree with the school's decision to implement this notice, please email or write to main school address and an appropriate member of school staff will respond within 2 school days of receipt of the complaint.
Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Yours sincerely,
[Name]

[Position]



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