

## GUIDELINE 5: SUSPENSION PROCEDURES

Policies must include in-school and out-of-school suspension procedures.

Schools and school divisions must develop procedures for suspension. Procedures should address all steps, responsibilities, and expectations in sufficient detail to ensure clarity and consistency. For example, policy and procedures should clarify the restrictions of in-school and out-of-school suspensions for both students and parents.

Policy and procedures should make clear that school personnel shall not dismiss from the school a student who presents an imminent safety risk to self or others before parents have been notified.

### Notification to Parents

School division policy must identify a mandatory process to inform parents and ensure safety any time a student is sent home for disciplinary reasons (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student Discipline*, p. 19).

As per The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA), all forms of communication should be produced in a way that enhances accessibility by using plain language and clear print, and by notifying the public that alternate formats are available upon request. For example, if actions or details are given verbally, they are also provided in a format that is accessible to the student and their parents.

If the student is suspended, the parents must be promptly notified of the reason and period of suspension by

- the principal of the school, if the student is suspended by a teacher or the principal
- the superintendent, if the student is suspended by the superintendent

Within 24 hours of the decision to suspend, a written letter will be sent to the parents with information that includes the following:

- the student's name, birthdate, and student MET number
- the nature of the suspension (in-school or out-of-school)
- the reason(s) for the decision to suspend in relation to the code of conduct and divisional policy
- the period of suspension (with beginning and end dates)

- information regarding the re-entry process
- the date, time, and location of the re-entry meeting
- information regarding the opportunity for parents to be provided with accommodations such as an interpreter or having a supporting person accompany them to the re-entry meeting
- the name and contact information of the school/division staff who will serve as the parent's initial contact for the purpose of arranging appropriate educational programming and maintaining regular contact with the student
- information regarding the parent's right to make an appeal and the appeal procedures of the school board
- clarity of any other restrictions

## Written Report

Within 24 hours following the decision to suspend, the principal will give the school board or designate a written report that includes

- the student's name
- the period of suspension
- a description of the behaviour for which the student was suspended

The report must be entered in the school division's student information system within 48 hours of the suspension.

## Access to Educational Programming during Suspension

School divisions must offer and arrange educational programming for students who are suspended for more than five days (M.R. 92/2013). Educational programming may range from work at home to alternative courses at a different location or remote learning, depending on the student's needs, length of suspension, or age.

Policy and procedures regarding educational programming and placement must align with those policies related to dispute resolution at the school and school division levels, as well as existing legislation, regulation, and the *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (MEECL, 2022).

During suspension, access to learning should be maximized by providing students with the resources they need and by utilizing universal design principles. The intention of accessing learning in an alternate, supervised environment must be viewed as an opportunity to offer continuity of learning, maintain connection to the school community, and build skills rather than convey a sense of punishment or discipline.

## Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

During an out-of-school suspension, students will not be permitted to be present at school and, at the discretion of the principal, may not be permitted to participate in school-sponsored activities, whether they occur inside or outside the school, on the school bus, or on school property.

Following a decision to suspend a student out of school, the principal will ensure that expectations are communicated with the student, parents, classroom teacher(s), in-school team, and relevant school/divisional staff with details such as the following:

- period of suspension (beginning and end dates)
- name of the school/division staff who will serve as initial contact for any questions/concerns
- arrangement of appropriate educational programming and regular contact with professional staff (e.g., virtual, telephone, in person)
- clarification of expectations noting any restrictions
- information regarding the time, date, and location of the re-entry meeting
- additional people or agencies and their contact information and any expectations set forth (if relevant)

School division policy on student discipline must direct staff to develop a student-specific plan for a student who has been suspended out of school more than two times during a school year (MEECL, *Standards for AEP*, 2022).

Manitoba schools and school divisions must work collaboratively with other agencies to develop a coordinated plan that involves appropriate parties and follows interdepartmental protocols. A multi-faceted approach is expected to be considered for students with

- two or more out-of-school suspensions (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student-Specific Planning, Student Discipline*, 2022)
- educational programming due to suspension for more than five days

The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act supports these collaborative and timely intervention efforts by enabling information sharing about supported children and their parents/guardians by service providers for the purposes of providing services or benefits to children.

Community agencies, organizations and associations, other education authorities, and regional health and children's services authorities should be invited to plan collaboratively in support of appropriate educational programming for students when they are currently involved with, or could benefit from, programs or services offered.

It is recommended that school teams familiarize themselves with The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act, which supports the timely information sharing and planning process for children.

## In-School Suspension (ISS)

An in-school suspension is to be carried out in a supervised educational environment with restricted contact to peers during the instructional day. During an in-school suspension, a student may be restricted from attending one or more classes and/or school-sponsored activities, whether they occur inside or outside the school or on the school bus.

Provided there is no safety risk to students or staff, the superintendent, principal, or designate may determine that a student observing an in-school suspension can continue to participate in school-sponsored activities with direct supervision, whether they occur inside or outside the school, in order to maintain connection, relationships, and a sense of belonging.

Following the principal's decision to suspend the student, the principal will ensure arrangements are made and communicated to the student, parents, classroom teacher(s), in-school team, and relevant school/divisional staff with details such as the following:

- date(s), including the expected date of return to classroom learning with peers
- location of alternative supervised learning environment
- expectations for contact with professional staff (who, when, purpose)
- expectations for non-structured times (e.g., lunch/breaks, extracurricular, transportation, arrival/dismissal), noting any restrictions to peers/activities
- a structured plan outlining the appropriate educational programming the student is to be engaged in during the suspension
- details of the re-entry process
- a meeting with the student prior to the date of re-entry to communicate expectations and to develop strategies to repair relationships

If a student receives two or more in-school suspensions during a school year, school teams should consider ways to support that student in an effort to decrease future suspensions.

The repeated use of an in-school suspension may indicate that a student-specific plan should be developed and/or revised.

## Suspension from Class by a Teacher

A suspension from class by a teacher is to be considered an in-school suspension. A teacher who suspends a student from class must promptly document and report the suspension to the principal (M.R. 92/2013).

Following the teacher's decision to suspend the student from class, the teacher will

- notify the principal, who will inform the parents of the reason and duration of the suspension, which may not exceed two days
- provide the principal with a written report outlining the antecedent event(s) and reason for suspension from class, and action(s) taken by the teacher
- arrange for a supervised learning environment and ensure appropriate educational programming continues
- discuss with the principal the re-entry process, as well as who will communicate this to parents
- meet with the student, principal, and parents prior to re-entry to communicate expectations and to develop strategies to repair the relationship

### GUIDELINE 6: RE-ENTRY PROCESS

Policies must include a written process and procedures for student re-entry.

School division policy must identify a re-entry process for students who are suspended. The process should involve the student, parents, and appropriate school team members, include timelines, and ensure re-entry occurs on the day following completion of the suspension (MEECL, *Standards for AEP: Student Discipline*, 2022).

The purpose of a re-entry process is to

- provide an opportunity to debrief
- review the reason for the suspension
- reflect upon the incident and circumstances
- clarify expectations
- work towards addressing relational problems, if applicable
- plan for the student to rejoin the classroom/school community
- restore a sense of safety and belonging for all

Suspension leads to a disruption in learning, routine, and connections. Schools are expected to use a restorative approach, which places focus on accountability, empathy, and healing.