



Information for parents and carers about suspension



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Suspension is a short-term response to concerning student behaviour that is unsafe or gets in the way of teaching and learning.

When a student is suspended, they don't go to school for between 1 and 5 days.

The Principal, or someone acting for them, makes the suspension decision.

A student can't be suspended for more than 15 days or on 4 separate times in a year without the approval of the Education Director.

What to do if your child is suspended

The school will contact you to explain why your child has been suspended and share information about what happened.

It is important to hear all sides of the story. It can help to:

- stay calm
- talk with your child about what happened
- talk with the school about what happened.

Work together with the school and your child to get them back to school after the suspension.

Reasons why Principals use suspension

Suspension is a short-term response to student behaviour that is unsafe or gets in the way of teaching and learning. Principals use suspension:

- to help schools to be safe and positive learning places for everyone
- when other things have not helped the student to behave safely and positively
- to help the student, their parents or carers, and the school, to work out what needs to happen to support safe and positive behaviour in the future.

Collecting information about what happened

The school will collect information to help the Principal understand what happened.

They will try to find out your child's point of view.

The school will do their best to be flexible about when and how your child shares their thoughts about what happened.

How the Principal makes the decision

The Principal must make a fair decision. There are lots of things they need to think about before making their decision. For example:

- information from other people
- your child's point of view
- the seriousness of the behaviour and how often it happens
- your child's needs and what support they have been given to help them behave safely and positively.

What the law says

The law (Education and Children's Services Act 2019) says that a Principal can suspend a student if they believe that the student has:

- been violent or threatened violence
- behaved in a way that threatens the safety or wellbeing of a student, member of staff or other person associated with the school (for example bullying, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, racial abuse)
- acted illegally
- disrupted teaching and learning
- repeatedly broken the school rules about behaviour
- repeatedly and deliberately not paid attention or shown interest in their schoolwork.

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The school will communicate with you

The Principal or another staff member acting for the Principal will contact you as soon as possible after the decision is made to suspend your child.

The school will talk with you and your child about the following:

- reasons for the suspension
- length of the suspension
- that your child can't be on school grounds during the suspension
- that the school will give you a written notice and a copy of this fact sheet
- that a reconnection meeting will be held before your child returns to class
- what to expect at the reconnection meeting, for example, who will be there
- that you can bring a support person or advocate to the meeting. The school can provide a school-based advocate if you would like that to happen
- if the suspension is for 4 or 5 days, a staff member will make contact with your child (for example, by phone) to keep them connected to school during the suspension.

During a suspension

Your child will remain at home in your care.

The school is not required to provide your child with schoolwork during the suspension.

The school may decide to provide work if it will benefit your child.

Reconnection meeting

A reconnection meeting will happen before your child returns to class.

The reconnection meeting is with:

- you
- your child
- school staff.

The reconnection meeting is to understand your child's needs and:

- develop a plan to support safe and positive behaviour (or update the plan if there is already a plan in place)
- repair relationships that have been harmed by the behaviour

- identify the supports that will help your child.

If you cannot attend a reconnection meeting before your child returns to school:

- your child will return to school on an alternative learning program until the meeting is held
- or
- the behaviour support plan is developed or updated some other way.

Behaviour support plan

A behaviour support plan is developed to support your child's safe and positive behaviour. The plan should include:

- the skills your child needs for safe and positive behaviour
- how your child will learn these skills and who will help them
- how things can be safe and positive while your child is still learning and practicing the skills
- how everyone will know that your child is making progress
- how your child will be supported if there are concerns about their behaviour in the future
- everyone's roles.

If your child already has a One Plan, their behaviour support plan can be included in the One Plan.

Other important information

Children can be treated differently for the same behaviour

When a Principal thinks about the best response to student behaviour, they have to look at everything and think about the individual students involved. Two children may have behaved the same, but it may be fair to treat each child differently. For example, if 2 children were fighting, 1 might be suspended and the other not.

Behaviour that did not happen at school

Your child can be suspended for behaviour that happened outside of school hours and off school grounds if there is a reasonable connection between your child's behaviour and the school or school relationships.

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Your child can't be on school grounds while they are suspended

It is against the law for your child to be on school grounds while suspended. If your child is on school grounds while suspended, they are committing a criminal offence.

Your child can be on school grounds to attend the reconnection meeting.

If your child has other good reasons to be on school grounds, for example to:

- get services provided on school grounds
- attend an agreed alternative learning program

the Principal can approve this in writing.

Enrolment in another school

You can't enrol your child at another school while they are suspended. If your child will enrol at a new school after the suspension, your child's behaviour still requires support. The Principal of the current school and the Principal of the new school will talk about your child's behaviour and a behaviour support plan will be worked out between both schools, you and your child.

If you are unhappy with the Principal's decision to suspend your child

If you think your child's suspension was not needed, try to work things out with your child's school. If you can't sort things out with the school, you can make a complaint to the Department for Education Customer Feedback Unit:

- Phone 1800 677 435 (toll free).
- Go to <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/> and search [School complaints](#) or [Support making a complaint](#).

Contact Details for more information

You can find out more about the suspension process by:

- making an appointment with the Principal or another school leader
- contacting your local education office
- calling the Department for Education on 8226 1000
- going to the Department for Education website <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/> and search 'suspension'.

Additional supports

For additional support you can contact Parent Helpline. Phone 1300 364 100 (24-hour service).

If your child needs to talk to someone, you can encourage them to contact:

- [Headspace](#)
Mental health support for children and young people aged 12 to 25 years. Phone: 1800 650 890.
- [Kids Helpline](#)
Peer to peer support, self-help resources and phone and online counselling for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. Phone: 1800 55 1800.